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*The debate over ordination . . . has become a distraction from the real discussion we should have about ministry. Ordination, after all, does not make a minister. God does that by calling men and women to ministry and giving the requisite gifts to those He has called.*

*This book is not proposing that women should take the place of men in pastoral ministry, but that both men and women working together lead to effective ministry. Each brings individual and unique gifts, insights, and talents to the task, thereby meeting the needs of all our members—men and women, young and old, single and married.*

NIELS-ERIK ANDREASEN, president, Andrews University

# **WOMEN** *and* **ORDINATION** Biblical and Historical Studies

# **WOMEN AND ORDINATION: BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL STUDIES**



**Seventh-day Adventist Leaders and  
Scholars Explore an Important Issue  
Facing the Church**



**Pacific Press®**  
Publishing Association

Nampa, Idaho | Oshawa, Ontario, Canada  
[www.pacificpress.com](http://www.pacificpress.com) 98833

Edited by John W. Reeve  
Layout and page editing by Page One Communications and Amy Rhodes  
Cover design by Gerald Lee Monks

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You can obtain additional copies of this book by calling toll-free 1-800-765-6955 or by visiting <http://www.adventistbookcenter.com>.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

ISBN 13: 978-0-8163--5787-1  
ISBN 10: 0-8163-5787-0

April 2015

In loving memory of Helen and Leona.

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# FOREWORD

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THE SEVENTH-DAY Adventist Church, along with other Protestant churches, supports gender-inclusive ministry. For example, Ellen and James White traveled together while preaching and ministering to the early Adventist believers. When she became a widow, Ellen White's son William worked closely with his mother. Since then, the "pastor's spouse" has played an important role in Adventist ministry, by bringing valuable gifts to congregational life and pastoral care. The same is true for most Protestant churches. Only the Catholic Church has limited pastoral ministry to men.

In recent decades that common pastoral team approach to ministry in our church has largely come to an end in many parts of the world. More often than not, the pastor's spouse has developed independent professional interests leading to full-time work unrelated to the congregation. That leaves the pastoral ministry principally in the hands of the generally male pastor. At the same time a growing number of women are pursuing pastoral education and sensing a call by God to ministry. Some have been added to the pastoral workforce alongside male pastors in the Adventist Church, as in many other Protestant denominations. The question before us is simply, should that practice be expanded and formalized in our church so that men and women will serve equally in pastoral ministry, both bringing their unique and individual talents with them?

The Bible that guides our life and faith in the Adventist Church is often read as indicating that elders, deacons, and bishops

were men who served alone in the early Church. Indeed, in subsequent centuries ministry did develop into an exclusively male calling, even requiring celibacy, thereby further separating women from ministry. However, there is ample evidence in the Bible that at many times, God called teams of both men and women with very distinct and exceptional gifts to serve together for the good of the community of believers. Moses and his sister Miriam served together celebrating the Hebrews' escape through the Red Sea; Deborah and Barak together saved the nation; Naomi and Boaz planned together for the future of Ruth and the ancestry of King David; Josiah and Huldah jointly brought reform to the nation Judah; Esther and Mordecai (niece and uncle)—one inside the palace and the other outside—saved the Persian Jews; Joseph and Mary, husband and wife, became the two earthly parents who jointly raised our Lord; Mary Magdalene joined Peter and took the good news of the resurrected Lord to the other disciples and followers of Jesus; Aquila and his wife, Priscilla, had a congregation meet in their house.

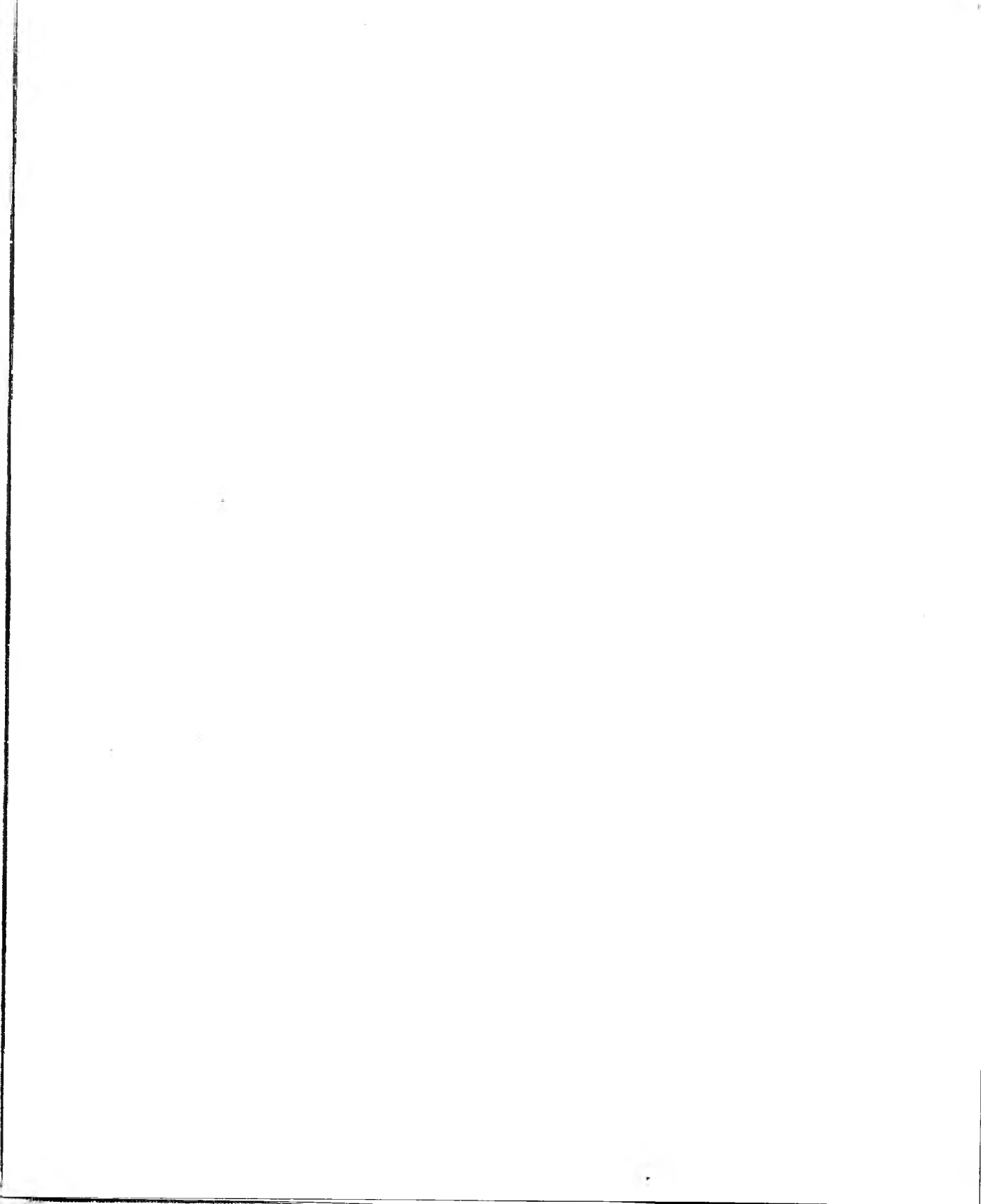
This book of essays is not proposing that women should take the place of men in pastoral ministry, but that both men and women working together lead to effective ministry. Each brings individual and unique gifts, insights, and talents to the task, thereby meeting the needs of all our members—men and women, young and old, single and married. The Bible encourages this kind of

diversity in ministry, because it is to the good of the believers. Nothing in the Bible prohibits it. On the contrary, the Creator seems to have made men and women—each distinct from the other, but both very much like Him—so that they would be able to serve Him equally and in full measure.

The discussion about women in ministry in our church right now is not at all about women's rights, or gender equality, power or authority, one over the other. It is about ministry, spiritual leadership, worship, Christian service, and pastoral care. The Bible is very clear on that subject. The debate over ordination—is it man's prerogative, or can it be extended to women as well?—has become a distraction from the real discussion we should have about

ministry. Ordination, after all, does not make a minister. God does that by calling men and women to ministry and giving the requisite gifts to those He has called. In fact, the real measure of effective ministry is sensed in the heart and minds of those many believers who, like me, sit in the pew Sabbath morning and listen to what the minister delivers from the pulpit and shares during occasional pastoral visits. I believe that if we were to ask those members who occupy the pew from week to week to speak back to the pulpit about the true meaning of real ministry, we would learn important lessons about men and women called to stand in God's place and serve His people. It is my hope that this book will encourage us to think about ministry in a whole new way.





# INTRODUCTION

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Quoting the Bible does not make a presentation, article, or lecture biblical. If someone is using biblical verses to support a theological position, it does not necessarily mean that this person stands for biblical truth and that his or her claims are biblically solid. Interestingly, both positions for or against the ordination of women appeal to the Bible as the final authority, yet with completely different results. Obviously, both cannot be right. Unfortunately, people are using the Bible for teaching that which in reality is in opposition to what the Bible actually teaches. For example, they quote many biblical passages to justify the rejection of the Seventh-day Sabbath in order to worship on Sunday, discredit the validity of clean and unclean food regulations, or defend the eternal torture of the wicked in hell and in support of the belief in the immortality of the soul. These conundrums should lead every student of the Bible to a careful, humble investigation that is led by sound rules of biblical interpretation. The biblical references do not make the theological claims biblical. This is why it is so crucial to build the arguments not only on a principle-based hermeneutics but also to be consistent with the applied interpretative rules, because what we say or write belongs to the whole system of truth one defends. The Apostle Paul relates to the Creation account three issues which are associated to the current discussion on ordination of women: women's silence in the church, their obligation to have long hair, and the requirement to have

their head covered. One cannot argue that two of these issues are cultural and then accept the third issue literally. Either all three practices are literal and need to be applied to contemporary life, or all three are culturally conditioned. Inconsistency is misleading. What tremendously complicates biblical interpretation is selectivity and arbitrary theological connections. Theology plays a crucial role in biblical studies because how one puts biblical texts together, what picture of God is presented by our interpretation, and what engagement in mission the resulting theology brings to the Church is foundational and determines the further understanding of God's revelation. The necessity of sound hermeneutics is evident. We need to cultivate the holy art of consistent Adventist hermeneutics. One needs to see the overall picture of the biblical metanarrative with the unfolding great controversy in order to understand how the details of God's revelation fit together in the plan of salvation. This hermeneutic needs to be liberated from arbitrary conclusions and literalism. Adventist theology is rooted in the theology of Creation and points to the Re-Creation at the end of time when all things will be restored to God's original plan. This is why our hermeneutics chapter is called "Toward Consistent Adventist Hermeneutics: From Creation through De-Creation to Re-Creation."

Those who are for gender-inclusive ordination return back to the ideal of Creation before sin; as we do, for example, with the doctrines of

the Sabbath or marriage. In like manner, other theological matters need to be dealt with, including the theology of ordination. At creation, Adam and Eve were created by God in His image. They were equal partners as well as priests in the Garden of Eden, which was the first sanctuary on earth.

Let me explain this very important point so that the reader will not be confused. The biblical teaching about the sanctuary doctrine did not begin with the appearance of sin. The first sanctuary, the Garden of Eden, was an earthly miniature of the heavenly sanctuary. The Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve lived, was a reflection of the heavenly Garden of Eden (Ezek 28:13). The heavenly temple, the sanctuary, the house/palace of God, and the Garden of Eden are all synonymous and together describe the seat of God's throne, His command center. The heavenly sanctuary was inaugurated in the very beginning, as Jer 17:12 affirms, in order that created beings would have a place where they could come together and praise the Lord. "From the beginning" the sanctuary was their place of worship. Doxology, songs of praise, resounded in the heavenly temple on the Holy Mount of God (Isa 14:13; Ezek 28:14, 16), the Mount of Assembly in the utmost cosmic North (Ps 48:1-2; Isa 14:13; cf. Job 37:22), in the heavenly Garden of Eden (Ezek 28:13). The earthly Garden of Eden was also the place of worshipping God and for building a relationship with Him (Gen 2:2-3; 3:8). As such, Adam and Eve were to cultivate, keep, and protect it (Gen 2:15). When sin occurred, there was added to the doxological activity the soteriological dimension with its sacrificial system for the purpose of teaching people how God treats sin and saves those who believe in Him. Thus, the earthly sanctuary services expanded. The Ssanctuary message is first of all about assuring God's followers that God is with and for His people,

tabernacling with them, and so they praise Him for His goodness. The sanctuary was not just for sacrifices; this element was added after the Fall.

Ordination of people to ministry is not a matter that humans have to decide, because it is God who calls, and His followers should only discern this call and acknowledge it. Ordination is a matter of public recognition and a setting apart for the gospel ministry (Acts 13:1-2). The biblical understanding of ordination is not that the act changes those who are set aside, but only that the church is acknowledging what God has already done by equipping them through the gifts of the Spirit. These gifts make them fit for this special gospel ministry. Ellen White clearly states: "It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God" (6T 322). And again: "This question is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled it. . . . There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry" (5MR 325). It is significant that Ellen White never once commented on 1 Cor 14:34-35 or 1 Tim 2:12 in order to limit women's ministry in the church.

It is crucial to recognize that already in the Old Testament various offices involved women in their ministry. There are women included in the prophetic office (like Huldah), priestly office (like Eve), leadership office (like Miriam or Esther), and as judges (like Deborah). Women were included in the New Testament times even among deacons (Phoebe) and apostles (Junia). Thus women were included in all aspects of ministry. One must also clearly differentiate between the priesthood of all believers and the particular priesthood for administrating the sacrifices in the Old Testament dispensation of time. Women were excluded from the particular priesthood and its sacrifices because it is not fitting for a woman to kill but to give life.

The historical part of this publication explains why many people, and particularly women, were excluded from the ministry in the Christian tradition. Nevertheless, it was not so in early Adventism (see for example G. C. Tenney's article in the *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* [June 5, 1894]; see also *AUSS* 51.2 [2013]: 177–218; *AUSS* 52.2 (2014): 235–273.) In Adventist understanding, ordination is always functional, not a character-changing experience nor an endowing of new graces. It is important to note that the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not ordain priests but commissions ministers to the gospel ministry!

Life is complex, and its issues complicated, but the Holy Spirit gives guidance through the Word of God. The biblical trajectory starts at Creation and though, due to the Fall, it goes through De-Creation, it ends in Re-Creation when all things will be restored to their original

purpose. We need to go forward as the Spirit leads. Joel speaks about the last days' movement that will be inclusive, when women are also used to proclaim the gospel (Joel 2:28–30; Ps 68:11). One does not need to enforce but only allow the new practice of ordaining women to ministry in order to maintain the unity of the Church. Unity in diversity has already been attested to in the early Church when the double practice regarding the ceremony of circumcision was approved. Circumcision was allowed for the Jewish believers in Christ if they chose to do so, but this rite was not required for Gentile believers (see Acts 15).

May our gracious and awesome Lord lead each reader of this book of studies by His Spirit to discern His will for His church in order to fulfill His mission in our postmodern world and prepare people for the soon Second Coming of Jesus Christ.



# TOWARD CONSISTENT ADVENTIST HERMENEUTICS: FROM CREATION THROUGH DE-CREATION TO RE-CREATION

Biblical-Theological Reflections on Basic  
Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics Applied  
to the Ordination of Women.

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## Importance and Need for Hermeneutics

1. No statement in the Bible commands: "Ordain women to ministry!" Moreover, there is also no opposite command: "Do *not* ordain women to ministry!" Yet, we want to have a biblical answer to our fundamental question of whether to ordain women to ministry. So we need to reflect on, evaluate, and interpret the biblical data in order to arrive at a sound conclusion about this matter.
2. Two groups of scholars who love the Lord and take the Holy Scriptures seriously as the Word of God come to opposite conclusions from the same Bible on the same subject. How can this be—that

they come to different results? Let me stress that this is not primarily a theological discussion between liberals and conservatives or between those whose main arguments for ordination of women are based on culture or social justice (even though these arguments also need to be taken seriously) and other scholars or theologians who maintain faith in God. Rather, it is a debate among those who strongly uphold the authority of the Holy Bible.

3. Our distance in time and space from the biblical world necessitates the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Today we use a different language, have a different culture and differing ways of thinking, habits, customs, and worldview—and we also deal with different issues and audiences.
4. To read or quote the biblical text is not enough; it is necessary to explain it. Even though the disciples of Jesus knew many biblical passages by heart, they did not understand that the Hebrew Scriptures testified about the Messiah, Jesus. "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:39, 40 NKJV). On the resurrection Sunday, two disciples on the way to Emmaus needed to understand the Scriptures regarding the role and mission of the Messiah, so Jesus explained the Old Testament teaching to them: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted [*diermeneuō*] to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27 ESV). The correct understanding of the Bible

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enables the understanding of Jesus, and the understanding of Jesus gives better insights into the Scriptures. The word “*interpreted*” (*diermeneuō*) points to hermeneutics. The apostle Paul asks how people can believe, and it is only if someone comes and proclaims the word of God to them: “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” (Rom 10:14 ESV). Furthermore, the Ethiopian eunuch answered the question of the evangelist Philip: “Do you understand what you are reading?” by stating “‘How can I, . . . ‘unless someone explains it to me?’ So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him” (Acts 8:31 NIV). The verb “*explain*” is a translation of the Greek word *hōdegeō*, which means “lead,” “guide,” “explain,” “teach,” or “instruct.”

This short overview demonstrates that there is an urgent need for proper hermeneutics—how to interpret the biblical texts in regard to the ordination of women. And it is also evident that the issue of the ordination of women is first of all a hermeneutical issue—it is about how we read and interpret the biblical text in this case and in all our theology. Therefore, establishing principles of interpretation of the Bible is crucial in order to arrive at an accurate meaning of the Scriptures concerning gender relationships in Christ.

This chapter summarizes and illustrates hermeneutical principles from an Adventist perspective, without going into minute detail and providing substantiation for each point, because other colleagues are presenting specific studies on these issues. The goal of this study is to set a biblical-theological pattern of thinking—a mindset on how to approach and

interpret biblical material in regard to the ordination of women.

### What Is Biblical Hermeneutics?

Biblical hermeneutics is the science of interpreting the Holy Scriptures in order to ascertain their meaning.<sup>1</sup> This science follows principles of interpretation, as well as a clear methodology. Hermeneutics deals not only with understanding of the Bible but also with the process of thinking about and evaluating biblical interpretation. One cannot manipulate the biblical text to say whatever the interpreter would wish. We need to follow sound principles. Exegesis then applies these principles to particular texts, and exposition in preaching or teaching becomes the actual communication of God’s message.<sup>2</sup> One cannot strictly distinguish between hermeneutics and exegesis. The goal of the hermeneutical-exegetical process is to discover what the message meant to the original audience and what it means for us today: What does the author mean by what he writes?

Biblical hermeneutics is also an art, because putting different texts together and understanding their theology and significance requires special insight into the whole biblical teaching. It must be done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is why it is important that this task is done by a dedicated believer in God.

As members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we accept the historical-grammatical-theological method of interpreting the Bible as a proper tool for understanding the Bible.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, we firmly reject the historical-critical method of the interpretation of the biblical material.<sup>4</sup> This historical-critical method can only discover the horizontal dimension of the biblical text and uses a distorted methodology of imposing some preconceived patterns on the text,

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such as reconstructed history (e.g., there was no worldwide Flood or Exodus from Egypt; the book of Daniel was written in the time of the Maccabean war around 165 B.C.) and literary compositions (such as the introduction of Deutero-Isaiah as the supposed author who wrote Isa 40–66; the book of Deuteronomy being the result of Josiah's reform of the 7th century BC; the composition of the Pentateuch being the result of imaginary authors called Jahvist, Elohist, Deuteronomist, and Priestly together with several editors—the so-called JEDP theory—going through a long process of composition and finally completed around 450 BC).

To use the right tools and follow the proper methodology of interpreting the Holy Scriptures is not enough; the exegete needs also to have the proper attitude toward the revealed Word:

- ▶ **To accept the Bible as the Word of God.** Of high significance is to emphasize that the ultimate Author of Scriptures is God, that the biblical writers were guided by the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Bible is God's inspired revelation (2 Tim 3:15–17; 2 Pet 1:20, 21). As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that the Bible is the Word of God, and we accept the so called “incarnational” or “thought” model of inspiration.<sup>5</sup>
- ▶ **To study the Word of God with a humble and teachable spirit.** The Lord declares: “These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word” (Isa 66:2b NIV). This is why the first task in doing exegesis is a prayer! Praying for the Holy Spirit and wisdom from above is existentially crucial so the interpreter will be in harmony and in tune with the Author

of the Bible in order to understand it. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the interpretation process is limited and in jeopardy. Bible reading is first of all a spiritual discipline, and we need to read it with open eyes. The leadership of the Holy Spirit enables the sincere and humble student of God's Word to discover the true intent and purpose of revealed Truth in order to admire, follow, and obey God joyfully and faithfully.

- ▶ **To be willing to obey and follow the revealed Word.** The practice of the discovered meaning of the biblical message is the key element in the interpretation of the Bible. This means that the interpreter must be open to different interpretative options and cannot approach the text with given preconceived ideas. Thus, the proper attitude to the text includes a readiness to follow God's instructions and not to try beforehand to reject a specific view, even if it goes against an established pattern of thinking or *status quo* behavior. Jesus aptly states: “If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority” (John 7:17 NKJV).
- ▶ **To recognize our human limitations.** The Bible contains propositional truth, but our understanding of it is partial, tentative, never final (1 Cor 13:9–13). The final word always belongs to God. All our statements of faith are under His judgment and authority. This is why we need to carefully study His revelation, tremble at His Word, and attentively listen to each other and study together so that we can advance in the knowledge of His truth.



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As time progresses, believers can better discern and understand the meaning of God's revelation:

- ▶ Jesus declared to His disciples: "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains" (Matt 24:15, 16 ESV). When Jesus' followers saw the "abomination of desolation" (fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy of 9:27), they were to flee from Jerusalem.
- ▶ Jesus proclaimed that His followers could understand and remember His Word better after certain things were fulfilled: "And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe" (John 14:29 NKJV; see also 13:19; 16:4).
- ▶ The New Testament church's radical discovery of the inclusion of Gentiles only gradually became clear for the Christian church (see Acts 10, 11, 15; Gal 2:11-16).

### Hermeneutical Principles for Interpreting the Holy Scriptures

The Bible is normative and has ultimate authority in doctrine and practice. As Adventists, we believe in the self-testimony of Scriptures, and we accept the general principles of *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone determines matters of faith and ethics) and *tota scriptura* (the use of Scriptures in their totality/entirety). The whole biblical canon needs to be seriously studied. We adhere to the principle of *scriptura sui ipsius interpres* (Scripture interprets itself); however, this does not mean that the student of the Bible will not look at the historical background, the context of the studied

verse(s), and the intent of the biblical passage. On the contrary, this principle requires the study of the historical and literary context in order to know to what issue(s) the particular text responds and thus avoid misapplying it.

We need to let the biblical text speak! Exegesis is not a luxury or a necessary evil. It is not a mere playing with words and sentences, but is a diligent work with the biblical text in order to discover its meaning. This process includes biblical theology as an inseparable part. Questions of relevance and practical applications cannot be separated from the exegetical process. It may also prove useful to the entire hermeneutical process to know the history of the interpretation of the studied biblical text(s) up to the present time in order to be informed by it, understand the current debate, and avoid the pitfalls of interpretation by not repeating the same mistakes (e.g., the Trinitarian and Christological discussions; understanding of the structure, role, mission, and authority of the church; debates on revelation and inspiration; the doctrine of the nature of humanity; interpretation of ordination and the role of women in the Old Testament and the Christian church; etc.).

The historical-grammatical-theological method of interpreting the Bible uses the following main hermeneutical principles:

### Historical Background— The Basic Six "Ws"

To understand the meaning of the biblical message, one needs to discover the basic historical background. Six "Ws" can help in this regard.

#### Who

Who wrote or said it? Deciding on the authorship of the book may radically affect the understanding of the book (e.g., Job, Isaiah, or Daniel). To know the authorship of some biblical books is very crucial for their

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interpretation. As examples, we accept that Genesis was authored by Moses in spite of the claim of the historical-critical scholars that this is not the case; we accept Paul's authorship of 1 and 2 Timothy even though they belong among the pastoral epistles, which some critical scholars regard as written later than Paul's time.

Who are the main protagonists, figures, or players in the studied text? What can be known about them (for example, see Junia, the apostle, in Rom 16:7)?<sup>6</sup>

### *When*

When was the book written, when did the event happen, and/or on what occasion was the mentioned speech/message given? For the majority of biblical books, it is very important to know when events took place. For example, see the background of the book of Deuteronomy (were they speeches delivered by Moses in 1410 B.C., or were they only fabricated around 622 B.C.?) or the events in the beginning of the book of Daniel (a real besiegement of Jerusalem in 605 B.C., or only a made-up story from Maccabean times)?

### *Where*

Where was it written or said? The historical place and what happened there may play a key role in the understanding of the biblical message (e.g., the book of Joshua) or even prophecy (e.g., the fall of Babylon and the drying up of the Euphrates River in Rev 16). Study of the historical background includes the knowledge of language, culture, habits, worldview, etc. (e.g., the extra-biblical Creation and flood narratives). The value of historical documents and archaeology for an understanding of the biblical world is indispensable, because it helps to better understand the ancient world and the worldview in which biblical history and polemic took place (e.g., understanding

the cult of Artemis or Diana and other cultural movements afoot in Ephesus at the time of Paul helps one to better understand Acts 19:23, 24 and 1 Tim 2).

### *To Whom*

Discovering the original audience determines its understanding and application (e.g., the audience of three speeches of Moses according to the book of Deuteronomy; or the audience of Ezekiel or Daniel). With regard to 1 Tim 2, what was the makeup of the believing community in Ephesus in Paul's day; in particular, who were the false teachers in Ephesus concerning whom the epistle gives counsel?

### *Why*

Why was it written or said? The author's purpose or intention reveals the main focus of the message. Discerning the intended drive of the biblical book is of utmost importance (e.g., the intent of the first and second Creation accounts points to the Sabbath and Marriage as their focus, i.e., vertical and horizontal relationships and dimensions of our life; the purpose of the Fall account is to demonstrate God's grace in the midst of His judgments; etc.). Again, regarding 1 Timothy, what was the particular problem or problems that Paul was addressing in the epistle?

### *What*

What was written or said? To summarize the message into one sentence or short paragraph helps to discover the content, basic message, main teaching, and principal thought(s).

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### Grammatical or Literary Study

#### *Literary Study*

#### Word Study

The careful study of words is necessary, because their meaning may change over time. The meaning of the biblical phrases is always determined by the context in which they are used.

For example, consider the different meanings of the words “head” or “authority.” The immediate context should decide the particular meaning of these terms. So for example, in 1 Cor 11:3, does the expression “head” (*kephalē*) mean “authority,” or does it mean “source”<sup>7</sup> or something else? Does it carry the same meaning in vv. 4–7, 10? What is the meaning of *exousia* (“authority”) in v. 10? Does it have the same meaning here as elsewhere in the NT? These are all good and legitimate questions.

In 1 Tim 2:12, does the word *authentēin* mean “to have authority,” or does it mean “to domineer over” or some other negative connotation? And what about the meaning of *hēsychia* in the same verse: does it mean that a woman must be totally “in silence, silent” (KJV, NKJV, NIV), or does it refer to her overall demeanor which should be “at peace” (CJB), acting “quietly” (NLT), as this same root word means just a few verses earlier with regard to all Christians (v. 2)?

For OT examples, in the Genesis Creation narratives, does the word “man” (*ʾadam*) in Gen 1:26–28 and elsewhere imply male gender (and thus hint at male headship) or is it a gender-inclusive word that means “human,” with no implication of maleness? Does the word *helper* (Hebrew *ʿezer*) in Gen 2:18, 20 imply a subordinate status for Eve, or is this term more neutral by having no reference to relative status, since even God is referred to as *ʿezer* (Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7, 26, 29; 1 Chr 12:19; Pss 20:3; 33:20; 70:6; 89:20; 115:7–11;

121:2; 124:8; 146:5; Hos 13:9)? The title *ʿezer* for Eve in Gen 2 is actually a great compliment!

#### Grammar and Syntax

Martin Luther already said that theology is grammar because on it depends the understanding of the text. Grammar, for example, helps to determine which time is involved in the text—past, present, or future (e.g., the eternity of the Word which became flesh in a precise moment of time according to the use of the Greek past tenses [like imperfect and aorist] in John 1:1–3, 14). The study of syntax is very important in discerning the relationship of words and sentences to each other. For example, “naming” of animals (Gen 2:20) and Eve (3:20) in contrast to “calling” the newly formed woman a “woman” (2:23), i.e., recognizing the closeness and unity between Adam and his wife (received as a gift from God).

Another example: Paul’s list of qualifications for elders in the masculine gender “husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). This can be explained on the basis of understanding the biblical languages—how they express their thoughts. An important feature of biblical languages is the simple recognition that when both genders are included in a biblical text, they are described in the masculine gender. Also Phoebe is described as *diakonos* (but also *adelphē*, [sister fem.] in Rom 16:1). The masculine gender is used throughout the Decalogue, but it does not exclude women from obedience too (the wife is not even mentioned, but is included in “YOU”). Jesus proclaimed: “I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt 5:28 NIV). However, it does not mean that women are free to look lustfully at men. For further examples, see 1 Cor 11:27–28, Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26–27, and Rev 3:5–6, 12, 21, which are expressed in the masculine gender, but clearly

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include both genders. Victory in Christ is available not only for believing men, but is equally intended for consecrated women.

We need to explain Scriptures using the meaning of the original languages, not only on the basis of current translations, or depending on the language of medieval or reformation times. Specific words and translations can be misleading. The lexicons often derive the meanings of biblical terms from the usage of these particular words in extra-biblical literature. This may not always be the best, because the theological and cultural context may change over time. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that several biblical lexicons, dictionaries, and encyclopedias be consulted, and that the study of the relevant terms be carried out not only synchronically but diachronically. Furthermore, Scriptures need to be interpreted into the language of the current generation in order to be properly understood and correctly passed on to the next generation; however, the chosen modern terms have to be filled with biblical content and meaning.

The *raison d'être* for biblical interpretation is not primarily to understand biblical history, though this is crucial, or to know doctrine, even though doctrine is indispensable for an intelligent following of Christ. The primary reason to interpret the Bible is to be engaged in a personal relationship with the loving and holy Lord and to grow in Him, in the experiential knowledge of His character and saving actions.

The use of extra-biblical material in the study of the Bible can illuminate truth for apologetic purposes. The reliability of God's Word can be demonstrated by showing how biblical truth matches extra-biblical findings. The plain reading of the biblical text helps to discover its literary genre and the author's intent and is aimed against a quick and superficial reading, against jumping to premature conclusions, against spiritualization of biblical realities,

and against allegorization of its teaching. Each word of the Bible is important and needs to be understood in its context, which includes careful study of the historical and cultural backgrounds, the original audience, and set authorship. The findings of biblical archaeology can be especially useful in this endeavor.

### Statistics

Biblical statistics will help to determine the importance of words or phrases, and to discover key, rare, or unique words (*hapax legomena*). So, for example, consider the meaning of the Hebrew word *teshuqah* in Gen 3:16. Since it appears only three times in the Hebrew Bible, it is important to note the only other time where it occurs in the context of a man-woman relationship, i.e., Song 7:11 (Eng. v. 10), where it clearly has a positive connotation of "[romantic, sexual] desire."

In 1 Tim 2:12, it is important to realize that the word *authentain* (to govern, have authority) is a *hapax legomenon*. Thus it is crucial to understand the meaning of this word in light of the meaning of the Greek current in the time of Paul, and not to import into the text a meaning current only several centuries later.

### Different Literary Features

Literary study helps to discover special literary features such as puns, grammatical anomalies, ironies, figures of speech, Hebrew parallelisms, inclusion (envelope construction), metaphors, etc. For example, the inclusion in Gen 2 makes clear that the man and the woman are presented as equals in this chapter, and the flow of the passage from incomplete to complete is just the opposite of that proposed by those who claim that this chapter emphasizes the priority of the man in Creation. Again, the Hebrew parallelism of Gen 3:16 helps to explain the meaning of the divine judgments given upon the woman.

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### *Contextual Study*

To study the particular biblical word, phrase, or sentence in its immediate and larger context is of utmost importance, because the context decides its meaning.

For example, Adam's wife is created as a "helper suitable to him [Adam]" (NIV). The Hebrew phrase *'ezer kenegdo*, literally translated, is "help as opposite to him" or "help as corresponding to him," meaning that they are equal partners in life, even though they are sexually different (the biblical Creation text stresses the sexuality of both of them). Thus, even though they have different physical functions, there is no subordinate or superordinate hierarchical status in their relationship. Their difference is good, and only because they are different can they be a contribution to each other.

Another example is that there is no causative connection between vv. 12 and 13 in 1 Tim 2: "And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For (Gr. *gar*) Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Tim 2:12 NKJV). The Greek conjunction *gar* in the beginning of v. 13 is explicative (as it is in v. 5) and needs to be translated as "for," and not as a causative "therefore or because." Otherwise, Paul's reasoning apparently does not make sense: Why should a woman or a wife be silent/quiet in the Ephesian church because Adam was created first and Eve second? In reality, to be silent or quiet has nothing to do with the sequence of the Creation of the first pair! This puzzle makes sense only if Paul is responding to a specific claim of his opponents; namely, their claim that a woman—the goddess Artemis—was created first, and from her everyone else. Paul is difficult to understand because he is very polemic; *he reacts to a special proto-gnostic heresy which uplifted the woman to cosmic supremacy built on the cult of Artemis (Diana)*. This woman's supremacy claimed that woman was created first and that everyone

(including men) should submit to this mother goddess. Because they worshiped this mother-goddess, women (especially wives) were probably domineering over men (including their husbands) in public meetings. The myth of Cybele and Attis, from which the Ephesian Artemis sprang, emphasized the Creation of the goddess first, then her male consort.<sup>8</sup> Paul simply argues in reference to the Creation account that Adam was created first (Paul does not explain the Creation account). On that basis, he urges that such noisy women teachers must be silent, because their teaching is disruptive and their claims do not agree with the biblical Creation account. So he categorically states that he does not permit them to teach.

### *Literary Genre*

Is the text under scrutiny history, prophecy, parable, song, genealogy, polemic, law, or prayer? This is an extremely important point, because on this recognition depends the whole approach to and the interpretation of the text. A different set of rules applies to the interpretation of parables, and again different ones apply to prophecies. The kind of literature determines the application of various interpretative rules. For example, if 1 Timothy is a polemical letter, then one needs to know the arguments to which Paul is responding and then interpret the text accordingly. In this polemical epistle Paul reacts to serious problems and writes against incipient gnosticism, false teachers' refusal of the Creation order, and their defense of multiple mediators, asceticism, and the women's cult of Artemis' supremacy (see 1 Tim 1:3-7; 2:3-6; 2:11-15; 4:1-5).

### *The Literary Structure*

The literary structure of the book and of the selected passage are crucial for understanding the message of the Bible. This will determine the literary units and delimit them in order to discover

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which verses belong together. It also shows the main flow of thought and helps to understand the principal points and the purpose of the biblical text (e.g., see the first and second Genesis Creation accounts; the Flood story; the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation). For example, the chiasmic structure of Gen 3 helps explain the order in which God addresses those under judgment in this chapter. Again, the symmetrical macrostructure of the Song of Songs underscores the egalitarian relationship between Solomon and the Shulamite.

### Theological Study

#### *Understand the Big Picture of Biblical Revelation*

The most important issue in our life is how we think about God, because everything in our life depends upon it. A proper understanding of God's character, the great controversy, and the plan of salvation are the key entry points to the interpretation of the Bible.<sup>9</sup> The goal of interpreting the Holy Scriptures is to know God and His plans and to understand how we should live. Our discussion of the ordination of women is related to the large theological picture of how we view God, but it comes down to the basic issue of what the masculine attitude toward women is and toward our sisters in the church. How do we think, perceive, and talk about them? How do we relate to them and behave toward them? What kind of jokes do we tell about them? Our studies on the ministry of women are not a mere theological exercise; at stake is how we treat women in general. In this context, we need to ask additional pertinent questions: What is God's view of women, and how does He value them? How should the relationship between men and women be cultivated among believers in Christ? This set of issues leads to the two other specific theological questions closely related to

our discussion: What kind of picture of God will be presented in my/our interpretation in favor of the ordination of women? What kind of picture of God will be painted by my/our denial of women's ordination?

#### *From the Clear to the Unclear Texts, From the Known to the Unknown, From the Plain to the Problematic Verses*

For example, consider the texts about Jesus as the beginning (*archē*) of God's Creation, as the begotten (*monogenēs*) Son of God, or as the firstborn (*prototokos*). Some have taken these passages to mean that Jesus is not fully God, or that He has eternally been subordinate to the Father. Others further the argument, based upon such passages, that if Jesus was subordinate to the Father, then this provides a model of female subordination to males in the home and the church. Such argumentation fails to start with the clear texts about the relationships in the Trinity and interprets the unclear in light of the clear.

Another example is the need to proceed from Moses (Gen 1-3) to Paul (1 Tim 2) and not to try to obscure the clear statements in Genesis by beginning with Paul and pressing this meaning upon the Genesis text in order to explain the difficult verses of the apostle Paul. To read Paul's statement—"Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman, who was deceived and *became a sinner*"—is very incomplete, because Adam also sinned *and became a sinner*, not only Eve. Yet Paul does not say one word here about Adam's fall and sinfulness. This verse makes sense only if Paul (while referring to the Genesis Creation story) reacts to the specific heretical claims of his opponents, who try to make the cult of a woman (Artemis) and the primacy of women dominant. In Romans, Paul shows that we are all sinners and points to Adam only. Is he contradicting himself? Not at all, because

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each text needs to be explained in its proper context! Romans is a doctrinal epistle which teaches about true faith and how to be saved in Christ Jesus, but 1 Timothy is a polemical letter.

### *Literal or Spiritual/Figurative Meaning?*

How should we read the biblical text? Does the Bible have *sensus literalis*, i.e., a literal meaning, or *sensus spiritualis*, i.e., spiritual meaning? Is it possible to speak also about *sensus plenior*, i.e., a deeper meaning? Our guiding principle is that we read the biblical text literally unless the context demands otherwise, because we encounter parables, symbols, songs, prophecy, metaphors, etc. For example, Gen 2:4 characterizes the Creation account as “genealogy,” i.e., as a historical, factual account, as are nine other genealogies in the book of Genesis, including the genealogies of Adam, Noah, Terah, and Jacob (5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2). If the genealogies of these patriarchs are historical and really happened in a literal way, so also must “the genealogy of the heavens and the earth” be historical.

A difference exists between the literal and literalistic meaning of the text. “Literal” means that one reads the biblical text in its context, with its intended message. On the other hand, a “literalistic” reading means that the biblical text is taken in a very narrow, dogmatic way without applying its contextual and larger theological considerations. For example, some have read 1 Cor 14:34 (“Let your women/wives keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak”) literally, to mean that women are not to speak at all in public worship services. But information in this same epistle of 1 Corinthians indicates that women were indeed speaking in worship services (11:5), with Paul’s blessing! Certainly this passage is not to be taken as a literal ban on all female speaking in church!<sup>10</sup>

As Seventh-day Adventists, we realize the complexity of the biblical message. We have never interpreted the biblical text in a literalistic or simplistic way. For examples: (1) We do not accept that texts like Rev 14:10, 11 and 20:10 teach eternal conscious torture in fire, even though they explicitly claim that; our reading of these texts is not literalistic or simplistic. (2) We refuse to believe that texts like Mal 4:2, 3 and Rom 9:15–24 speak about double predestination. (3) We do not believe in a literalistic way that after death we go immediately to heaven to be with Jesus, even though Paul sounds as if he is claiming that (see Phil 1:23; 2 Cor 5:6–9). (4) We do not accept a dichotomy between law and grace (that they are against each other), in spite of texts like Rom 6:14 and Gal 2:16, 17. As Adventists, we always seriously study the historical background, immediate and larger context, audience, theology, purpose, and intention of the text. Otherwise, it is easy to be misled and come to false conclusions. In other words, the safeguard of the balanced interpretation does not lie in a simple quotation of the Bible but in finding principles which need to be rightly applied. Spiritual things need to be interpreted spiritually (1 Cor 2:10–16). The principles must be discovered and wisely applied into practical life.

### *Prescriptive or Descriptive Texts?*

Does the biblical text only describe what happened (e.g., the behavior of people, the consequences of sin) or does it prescribe a certain behavior in stories, parables, or legal texts? Examples include Noah’s drunkenness, David’s adultery, Nehemiah’s beating of people for not knowing Hebrew and for intermarriage with unbelievers/idolaters, etc. Regarding Gen 3:16, is this a permanent prescription of male headship or a remedial, redemptive provision to facilitate a return to the Creation ideal

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(see Gal 3:26–29; Eph 5:21–33, similar to the “painful toil” for Adam in Gen 3:17b NIV)<sup>211</sup>

Additional questions always need to be carefully studied: To whom does the prescription apply? Is it temporal or universal? Does it apply to an individual or to all people? To Israel only or also to all nations? The scope of the biblical instruction is important. For example, in 1 Tim 2:11–15 Paul uses the ambiguous vocabulary (*anēr-gynē*) which may refer to the “man-woman” or “husband-wife” relationship.<sup>12</sup> Does Paul’s counsel in 1 Tim 2:11–15 apply to all women everywhere, for all time, or does it apply only to those in the specific situation in Ephesus (or similar situations which might occur elsewhere and/or later), in which women/wives domineer over men/their husbands in the worship service? Does Paul speak about the man-woman relationship or only about the husband-wife relationship, or has he in mind both relationships? Similarly, in 1 Cor 14:34, does the counsel regarding “women/wives” (*gynē*) apply to the man-woman relationship in general in society and/or the church, or only to the marriage relationship between husband-wife?

### *First Indicative and Then Imperative of the Gospel*

Grace always comes first; then the law follows. Faith and obedience go hand in hand, but faith is always the root of salvation, and an ethical life is its fruit. The Spirit of the law, i.e., its intention, has priority over its literalistic application (e.g., the six antitheses of Matt 5:21–48 in the Sermon on the Mount). The act of ordination needs to be understood as the result of experiencing God’s grace and the power of His Spirit in one’s life.

### *Importance of the Study Within the Overall Biblical Teaching*

Not all things taught in the Bible are equally

important. For example, the death of Jesus on the cross is the great center truth of the Bible, around which all other biblical teachings cluster.<sup>13</sup> We need to ask what place ordination has in God’s system of truth, how it belongs in the plan of salvation, and how it fits into great controversy issues. Is the ordination of men or women a central or peripheral Bible teaching? As a matter of fact, it is not something directly prescribed or repeatedly taught by biblical authors. Is it telling that Ellen White never once refers to crucial passages such as 1 Tim 2:8–14 and 1 Cor 11:3, which provide the foundational argument for those who oppose women’s ordination?

### *Intra- and Inter-Textuality*

How do different generations of biblical authors use previously revealed biblical material? Is it used in a dogmatic, ethical, exhortative, or polemical way? All related texts need to be a part of the conversation. At the same time, we need to be careful not to put together texts that do not belong together, even though at first glimpse they may seem to do so.

For example, note the use of Mark 7:19 or Acts 10 as a denial of the biblical teaching on the clean and unclean food of Lev 11. Another example: Peter actually gives the right interpretation of Paul (because he is so easily misinterpreted) in order to show the true meaning of the husband-wife relationship (compare 1 Tim 2:8–15 with 1 Pet 3:1–7).

As yet another example, the Song of Songs has been widely recognized as an inspired commentary on gender relations in Gen 1 and 2. There are numerous intertextual links between the Song and Gen 1 and 2. Furthermore, the Song links with Gen 3:16 and explicitly reverses the remedial provision of male headship and female submission as it underscores the possibility of returning to the Creation ideal for marriage as given in Gen 2:24. One cannot



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overlook this crucial inspired testimony in interpreting the relationships between men and women in the early chapters of Genesis.

### *Unity of the Bible*

Biblical authors do not contradict themselves. The analogy of faith is an important principle and needs to be maintained, because it is supported by inner biblical evidence. As examples: the harmony between Moses, the prophets, Jesus, Paul, and James on justification by faith; and the attitude toward women in the Old and New Testaments.

With regard to the role of women in the church, one cannot set Paul against Paul: one cannot interpret 1 Tim 2:8–14 in a way that contradicts Paul's numerous statements affirming women in positions of leadership in the church and his basic principled statement regarding gender relations in Gal 3:28. One cannot set Paul against Moses and Solomon by interpreting 1 Tim 2:8–14 in such a way that the passage contradicts the exegesis of Gen 1–3 and the inspired OT commentary on this passage in the Song of Solomon.

Therefore, we need to read the Bible wisely, i.e., prayerfully, humbly, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must read it in its historical, grammatical, literary, and theological context.

### **Dangers and Fallacies in Interpreting the Scriptures**

#### *Selectivity*

We need to *avoid being selective—choosing only some texts which fit our own interpretative construct.*

For example, the Rabbinic identification of the Messiah in the time of Jesus focused on the righteous King (Isa 11), while ignoring another Messianic figure, the Suffering Servant or the Servant of the Lord of Isa 53. When Jesus

Christ came as the Suffering Servant, they rejected Him, because He did not fit into their interpretative category. What a tragedy due to misunderstanding the Scriptures!

One needs to be willing to deal with a complexity of issues and to not avoid some tough problems, because the criteria we apply to interpret one problem may affect other issues. For example, we cannot speak only about the silence of women during worship in the church (1 Cor 14:34–35; 1 Tim 2:11–12) but avoid dealing with other closely related issues pertaining to women in the church—the head covering of women (1 Cor 11:5, 6, 13) or their obligation to have long hair (1 Cor 11:6). We need to have a good reason for taking so seriously 1 Tim 2 about women's silence (quietness), but ignoring Paul's instructions about women's long hair or their head covering. These two other practices are not advocated in our church even by those who argue against the ordination of women. Why not? It seems that Paul does not use different reasons for defending these three practices; he advocates all of them with reference to the Genesis Creation order (1 Cor 11:3–16; 14:34; 1 Tim 2:11–15). Can the knowledge of specific social habits, circumstances, or problems in the churches in Corinth and Ephesus help us to discern if these practices are or are not relevant to us?

#### *Inconsistency*

To speak about the silence of women in the church and to not allow them to teach according to 1 Tim 2:11, 12, and then to apply it only to the ordination of women and/or to the work of an ordained pastor is arbitrary and inconsistent. Generally speaking, in Adventist churches this rule is not applied to women, as they are teachers in schools and churches, they are Bible workers, preachers, elders, deaconesses, Sabbath School teachers, etc. They are not silent in the church—they sing, pray,

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make announcements, teach, preach, etc. We need to be consistent in the interpretation and application of the Bible.

### *Eisegesis*

Eisegesis is imposing on the text a meaning which is foreign to the whole thrust of the text. Thoughts coming from outside are pushed onto the meaning of the passage without substantive support or textual evidence. This imposition ignores the historical background, audience, the immediate and larger context, and the author's intention of what truth he really wants to communicate.

For example, the Bible testifies that we were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27). Some people would like to deduce from this fact that Adam and Eve were created with different functions, as there are different functions among the Godhead—one person of the deity cannot do what another person is doing—so the Son and Spirit must submit to the will of the Father. Therefore, they claim that women have different functions from men, and they must therefore submit to the authority of men. These interpreters are violating a basic theological assumption of the equality of the divine persons and the equality of their different functions. This reasoning is absolutely, theologically wrong, because it makes God in our image and tries from this theological construct to build our human relationships.

In contrast:

To be created in God's image does not mean that humans were created as junior or "small" gods, but that (1) humans can relate to God as a person and communicate with Him; (2) man and woman should rule over God's Creation as His representatives, exercise a delegated authority, and are responsible to Him; (3) humans should reflect His character as human beings and should cultivate loving and kind-hearted relationships together as living beings;

(4) humans are created as unique persons with unique faculties and abilities as God is also unique, so they need to cultivate this individual uniqueness in order to be a blessing to each other in order to bring an irreplaceable personal contribution.<sup>14</sup>

To construct God in the image of humans is a more philosophical approach to the biblical text, good for some gnostic, esoteric speculations, but absolutely out of place in the issues about the subordination of women to men. We cannot compare the incomparable. For example, it is absolutely unsustainable in biblical-theological thinking to develop a hierarchy among angels with their different functions and subordinations, and then transfer or compare it to the relationship between men and women. Humans were not created in the image of angels! We know absolutely nothing about angels' sexuality, their marriage or family life (see Matt 22:29, 30). There is evidently no analogy between the angels' hierarchy and man-woman or husband-wife relationships, because there is no gender relationship between angels (at least, it is not revealed in the Bible). We cannot project our own wishes or ideas onto the biblical text and its overall message.

Ellen White warns:

It is true that many theories and doctrines popularly supposed to be derived from the Bible have no foundation in its teaching, and indeed are *contrary to the whole tenor of inspiration*.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Not Recognizing and Defining Personal Presuppositions***

To come to the biblical text without cultural, theological, and other presuppositions is impossible. We cannot pretend to come with a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, and interpret the text purely and objectively without any bias. Though we cannot avoid coming with presuppositions, we can seek to recognize and define

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what presuppositions, preunderstandings, and assumptions we bring to the text. We can ask the Holy Spirit to show us our presuppositions and to help us evaluate these assumptions in light of Scripture, to see if they are truly biblical.

After discussing the ordination of women with some individuals, when they have heard all the exegetical arguments, finally they have made the statement which revealed their unexamined presupposition: "Everyone knows that it is part of human nature: men lead and women follow." Such a statement reveals a cultural bias that colors the interpretation of all relevant texts. Others come to the subject of women's ordination with presuppositions based upon liberal feminism or Western concepts of social justice, rather than the biblical understanding. These unconscious assumptions need to be recognized, defined, and then the Bible student needs to be open to the possibility for Scripture to verify, change, or correct one's presuppositions in harmony with the biblical teaching.

### *Circular Reasoning*

In our interpretation of the Bible we need to avoid circular reasoning. The exegete needs to be keenly aware of this trap, because it is so easy to fall into this danger. Each text needs to be interpreted in its proper historical, grammatical, literary, and theological context, and only then can it be put into dialogue with other texts (analogy of faith). An interpreter cannot import into the studied text the meaning taken from another text in order to "fit" together two seemingly contradictory passages, and then claim that these two biblical texts confirm each other. In reality this is reading into the studied text foreign ideas which are contrary to its intention and flow of thoughts.

For example, some interpreters are reading into Moses' Creation story (Gen 1 and 2) their own thoughts about the headship of man and

submission of Eve to Adam, as they think Paul is stating it in 1 Tim 2:11-14 (thus projecting the idea of headship and the submission of Eve to Adam into the Genesis accounts). They then interpret 1 Tim 2 and argue that this is what Paul says, since it is consistent with the teaching of Moses. In order to do this, they need to impose on the Genesis text their own philosophical construct of ontological equality but functional hierarchy (in matters of leadership) in Gen 2,<sup>16</sup> take things out of their immediate context, and severely violate the biblical concept of the original harmony and unity of the first human pair. Thus the intention of Gen 2 is ignored, and the idea of male headship is introduced, even though not once is this concept or category mentioned in this chapter.

### *Dismissing All Difficulties, Tensions, and Problems*

The student of the Bible needs to recognize that he/she will not solve all the problems related to the biblical text. However, these textual discrepancies have no power to overthrow the main thrust and teaching of the Bible. It will not diminish the certainty of the biblical message in its totality.

For example, 1 Tim 2:15 reads that women will be saved by bearing children. This statement presents a huge problem for interpreters; however, we may be sure of what Paul does not want to say through this statement: he is not advocating salvation by works—salvation by having children—because this thought runs completely contrary to what he teaches in his epistles. Otherwise, women with many children would be automatically saved, as having babies would be the cause of their salvation. So we know what Paul does not mean by it, but to be exactly sure what Paul wanted to say is a matter of interpretation, and several compelling theories have been presented. I

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think it should be understood in the context of Paul's sharp polemic against those who advocated a woman's supremacy and the gnostic teaching about despising physical and bodily activities and rejected marriage (1 Tim 4:3). He probably encourages believers in Christ to have children and tells wives that bringing children into the world does not endanger their salvation in Christ Jesus; they need only to continue in their "faith, love and holiness with propriety."

Apparent discrepancies and contradictions may help us to carefully study certain passages, avoid simplicity, and find a better solution. For example, compare the story about sending the spies into the Promised Land: Did God or the people initiate it? See the apparent contradictory statements in Num 13:1-3 and Deut 1:22, 23.

Another example: Are Paul and James in contradiction about justification by faith? No, if you know (1) how differently they define the two terms of faith and works; (2) what is the purpose of their statements (to what problem was each responding); and (3) who were their opponents (their different audiences). The harmony between both of them can then be established.<sup>17</sup>

Another example emerges where Paul is apparently contradicting himself when, on the one hand, he allows women to pray and prophesy publicly, as it is explicitly stated in 1 Cor 11:5: "*But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved*" (1 Cor 11:5 NKJV) (For Paul, to prophesy means to edify the church, strengthen, encourage, and comfort people [see 1 Cor 14:3, 4]), yet he forbids women to speak in the church (1 Cor 14:34, 35; 1 Tim 2:11, 12). We should not pit Paul against Paul! This must be a hermeneutical key for us. Only in two cities were there such big problems that

Paul did not permit women to speak publicly in worship; this happened in Corinth (see 1 Cor 11:3-16 and 14:34, 35) and in Ephesus (1 Tim 2:11, 12). Both cities were pagan centers with immense populations and many moral and syncretistic problems in the church. In Corinth, there was a disruption of worship by women through uncontrolled speaking in tongues, and there was a disturbing of worship in Ephesus by women who were still adhering to the cult of Artemis. So what Paul is really forbidding the women to do in those cities is disorderly speaking in worship (1 Cor 14:29-33, 40), because Paul is in favor of orderly, decent, fitting, and honorable worship.

### Acts 15: Jerusalem Council— A Hermeneutical Key

What are we to do as believers in Christ when we are seriously challenged in our practice or belief? The Apostolic Council in Jerusalem may serve as a pattern and the key to how to approach such difficulties.

The early church faced a huge new problem: the acceptance of believing Gentiles into the church. So far, it had only been a Jewish-Christian church. Gentiles were coming to the Jewish-Christian church, and believers in Jesus were growing in number. But the early church was not ready to open their arms to the uncircumcised Gentile believers, because for centuries the uncircumcised Gentiles had been excluded from the community of believers. God had to dramatically intervene with dreams and with the gift of the Holy Spirit before the church was willing to baptize and accept Gentile believers (see Acts 10 and 11).

The Jerusalem Council was called, because two main questions had arisen:

- ▶ Do Gentiles need to first become Jews in order to become Christians? Do they need to be circumcised, as the Abrahamic covenant requires?

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- ▶ What do Gentile Christians need to keep? Parts of the Mosaic law.

How were these questions decided? On what basis? By studying the Holy Scriptures, by going back to the Hebrew Bible, the apostles discovered biblical-theological principles. Judaizers, legalistic people, had plenty of “good” reasons and biblical-theological “proofs” to argue in asking Gentiles to be circumcised and keep all the requirements of the Mosaic law. Their arguments sounded good; they were logical. They could build their reasoning on the facts of God’s eternal covenant, the clear requirements of the Abrahamic covenant, the validity of God’s laws, the unchangeability of God’s teaching, the categorical language of Gen 17:14, and the necessity of faith and obedience to go together. However, the council decided on the basis of Amos 9:11, 12 (quoted in Acts 15:16, 17) that Gentiles should be part of the church without requesting them to become first Jews by circumcision. Then another question arose about what laws from the law of Moses were they to keep, and their decision was made on the basis of Lev 17 and 18.<sup>18</sup>

The apostles studied previously known Scriptures, but now, with a new comprehension and understanding of the Word of God, they applied them differently. They were willing to restudy familiar texts and to see them under the influence of the Holy Spirit in a new light. In this way they discovered the original intent of these texts that was not clear to them before, and they opened their arms to the Gentiles. This new study of the Word of God under new circumstances and the guidance of the Holy Spirit helped them to discover the right meaning and application of the biblical principles. The apostles could appeal only to a few texts, but they could show that in this time after Jesus’ first coming, God wanted all to be in His church, both Jews and Gentiles. They were not reading into the text, because the meaning

they stressed was always there and present in it. “*It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirement:*” (Acts 15:28 NIV). They were not using their apostolic authority, but the authority of the Word of God. They were not appealing to the Holy Spirit apart from the Word, but in combination with it. Moreover, they studied the Scriptures together and submitted to this new and correct interpretation.

All their decisions were made on the basis of the Scriptures and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. What is really important to catch is that, as for circumcision, their decision was made with a difference: Jews could go through this ritual if they wished to do so (because it was their national identity), but Gentiles were not obliged to be circumcised. This double practice was a radical step forward and a wise decision in harmony with the intention and spirit of the biblical text.<sup>19</sup> One decision was limited to the nation (for the Jews) and the other was universal (for the Gentiles)!

God intervened and gave them a new and fresh understanding of the Holy Scriptures. They knew the biblical texts before, but the meaning was hidden and obscure to them. The apostolic church had to reflect on the same Old Testament material from a new perspective—the first coming of Jesus Christ. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the leaders now saw new hints in the biblical texts and a new light in the original purpose that helped them, led them, and gave new direction to the decision-making process as to what to do in new situations.

### **Application to the Seventh-day Adventist Church**

#### *Establishing Biblical Principles Guiding*

We need to reflect on the biblical material and extrapolate principles from texts that can

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guide us in the process of making decisions regarding the ordination of women. Ellen White states: "We are to stand firm as a rock to the *principles* of the Word of God, remembering that God is with us to give us strength to meet each new experience. Let us ever maintain in our lives the *principles* of righteousness that we may go forward from strength to strength in the name of the Lord."<sup>20</sup> Ekkehardt Müller, in his articles in *Ministry* and the *BRI Newsletter*,<sup>21</sup> accurately argues for "using biblical principles to determine how questions on theological issues should be decided."<sup>22</sup> This approach, I would call "principled hermeneutics," or "principle-based hermeneutics."

We need to follow sound hermeneutical principles (not a proof-text method or literalistic reading of the Bible). We need a balanced and biblically informed understanding of the biblical text which must be built on solid theological reasoning. We need to reason, seriously reflect on the divine revelation, and cultivate biblical-theological thinking. These guiding principles can be established on the basis of the metanarrative of the Bible, biblical-theological thinking on the recognition of the flow of doctrines and main events, a prediction-fulfillment model, and the biblical trajectory.

If we explained biblical truth simply by proof texts instead of finding and applying principles (so-called "principled hermeneutics"), we would be not able to take a stand against smoking or the use of drugs. We would have immense problems to present and defend the doctrines of the Trinity, the sanctuary, and tithing. But because we derive principles from the biblical text, we can build doctrinal positions. As the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, we have never read the Bible simplistically; we do not explain, as examples, such metaphors as "pluck out your eye" (Matt 5:29; 18:9), "cut off your hand" (Matt 5:30; 18:8), "move the mountain"

(Matt 17:20), and the story of the rich man and Lazarus" (Luke 16:19–31) in a literalistic way.

Creation is the fundamental and overarching principle of biblical teaching. The doctrine of Creation is an article of faith on which the Seventh-day Adventist Church stands or falls. Creation is also crucial for our theology because our essential doctrinal points can be directly or indirectly traced to their Creation roots. Each of our 28 Fundamental Beliefs is somehow tied to Creation. Even where SDA teachings on doctrine and lifestyle issues are not unambiguously affirmed by explicit biblical references, these beliefs find their ultimate foundation in the doctrine of Creation. Let us look at a few examples:

**1. Why do Seventh-day Adventists not drink alcohol?** There is no text in the Bible which would explicitly prohibit the drinking of alcohol: "Do not drink alcohol." On the contrary, there is a legislation to use the (second) tithe for buying wine (*yayin*) and fermented drink (*shekar*)—see Deut 14:26: "buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish." However, there are texts against alcoholism and advocating all to drink in moderation. In addition, there are many examples of drinking alcohol in the Bible, but key stories are negative (see, for example, Noah's and Nabal's drunkenness). A few texts present the ideal: Lev 10:8, 9; Prov 20:1; 23:20, 21, 29–35; 31:4–7; Rechabites in Jer 35:6. These few texts point to the real intention of God's revelation. This is why it is important to know what the biblical trajectory is in this regard. According to my understanding, it is abstinence, even though there is no proof text for it. Because we are continually in the service of our Lord and have received a special call to live for Him and represent Him well, I think it is proper to abstain from the drinking of alcohol.<sup>23</sup> The safeguard lies in the hints of the biblical texts and not behind the

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texts or outside of them! This recognition is against William Webb's usage of the trajectory of the Bible, because to him this trajectory is rooted outside of the biblical text.<sup>24</sup> We need to go back to the ideal of God's Creation when nothing was spoiled but all was pure.

**2. Why are many SDAs vegetarians?** No biblical statement says: "Be a vegetarian!" You have clear divine regulations for eating clean meat (Lev 11 and Deut 14). We theologially reason from Lev 11 back to the ideal of Creation. The main rationale behind the clean and unclean food legislation is respect for the Creator.<sup>25</sup> Genesis 1 sets the tone. Behind the Pentateuchal dietary laws is the theological Creation-Fall-New Creation pattern. The main reason is theological: we go back to the *ideal before sin*—to the lifestyle in the Garden of Eden (Gen 1 and 2).

**3. Why are we against divorce?** We adhere to Jesus' principle: "In the beginning it was not so!" We go back to the Creation ideal. Jesus Christ's opponents argued on the basis of Deut 24:1, but He explained that divorce was allowed only because of the stubbornness of man's heart (*sklerokardia*; see Matt 19:1–9).<sup>26</sup> Another important hermeneutical principle is God's condescension to our level in time of need and sin (see, e.g., the killing of animals for food, according to Gen 9:3 and divorce, as shown in Deut 24:1–4).

**4. Why do we not practice polygamy?** We go back to the ideal of Creation, when the marriage relationship was defined as between one man and one women (Gen 2:24). Jesus' principle (when discussing divorce) was: "But it was not this way from the beginning" (Matt 19:8), and it should be applied here also.

**5. Why are we against slavery?** Many texts regulate the relationship between masters and slaves in the Old and New Testaments (see

Exod 21:2–11; Eph 6:5–9; Col 3:22; 1 Tim 6:1). But study Paul's letter to Philemon about how to have a new relationship with Onesimus, his fugitive slave, and how to treat him differently: "no longer as a slave but better than a slave, as a dear brother." . . . "Welcome him as you would welcome me" (Phlm 16, 17). This is the direction to follow—it is the biblical trajectory. We are against slavery on the basis of the equality of all people created in the image of God (*imago Dei*, Gen 1:27). We go back to the ideal of Creation.

### The Distinctive Adventist Hermeneutic: Creation–Fall–Re-Creation

We need to see the big picture of God's revelation, the unity of the Scriptures, and the ultimate intention of the biblical material as a whole (a canonical approach) in order to discern correctly the meaning of God's message. The biblical trajectory, built on the biblical metanarrative, from Creation, to de-Creation (the Fall, sin), and to re-Creation, presents Adventists the crucial pattern. We do not go beyond the biblical text—all is firmly rooted in it. Adventist hermeneutics are reflected also in our name: We are Seventh-day (Creation) Adventists (Re-Creation), so the whole plan of salvation or story of redemption is included. Adventist hermeneutics move from Creation to the Fall and from the Fall to the Plan of Salvation and to Re-Creation (from Gen 1 and 2 to Rev 21 and 22). "In the beginning it was not so." Our hermeneutic is built against the background of the Adventist understanding of the great controversy.<sup>27</sup>

This principled hermeneutic—tracing doctrinal roots back to Creation—is consistent, for example, with our Adventist stand against approving homosexuality as a lifestyle, because the biblical account of Creation provides the fundamental reasoning for a total opposition to the practice of homosexuality. Biblical

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teaching against homosexuality is rooted in the Creation legislation, is universal, not temporal, never has changed, and is valid for all times (see Gen 1:26–28; 2:24; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:26, 27). It is consistent with the biblical trajectory built on the pattern from Creation through the Fall to the Re-Creation.<sup>28</sup>

### Re-reading the Biblical Text and Discovering a New Emphasis:

Some Old and New Testament Hints for Ordination

#### *What are the texts which speak in favor of the ordination of women?*

We are not reading back into the biblical text something which is not there, nor are we imposing on the text an external pattern. The truth was always present in the text, but it was simply not acknowledged or was forgotten. What we are doing is merely recognizing the “hidden” truth—we are rediscovering and reapplying it. The intention of the text is in harmony with the overall metanarrative of the Bible and the character of God. We reflect on this revelation of God from the perspective of the first coming of Christ, from the revelation which shines from the Cross, the perspective of the plan of salvation, and the Creation-Fall-Re-Creation pattern. This is a consistent Adventist paradigm.

#### 1. Both Man and Woman, Equally Created in God’s Image

So God created mankind [*ha’adam*] in his own image; in the image of God he created them [object marker with suffix third person sg.]; male and female he created them [suff. third person pl.] (Gen 1:27 NIV).

Note carefully that both male and female are created in the *image of God*. They are *equal*, and what one is, the other is also—the image of God; and they together form it too. What is different

is only their sexuality and with it their particular role in it (such as parenting and motherhood/fatherhood). To be a woman is not to be subordinate to men or imperfect or wrong (or even evil).

#### 2. Adam and Eve Were Priests in the Garden of Eden

“The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it [*le’abdah uleshomrah*]. (Gen 2:15 NIV)

The Garden of Eden was a sanctuary, a place for worshipping their Creator, and Adam and Eve were priests in this garden! They should “work it and keep it” (ESV) and these are activities of priests (see Num 3:8–9; 18:3–7). In the Garden of Eden, the work assigned to man was actually to “serve” (*abad* = serve, work, till; worship) and “keep” (*shamar*) the garden (2:15), and it is more than coincidence that these are the very terms used to describe the work of the priests and Levites in the sanctuary (Num 3:7–8; 18:3–7). That the Garden of Eden was a sanctuary is not just understood by Adventists, but was discovered and is well established among scholars.<sup>29</sup>

#### 3. Partnership and Equality

Genesis 2:18—*’ezer kenegdo* (“help as opposite to him” or “as corresponding to him”). They are different but *equal*; they contribute to each other; they are *partners*.

#### 4. Belonging Together

Genesis 2:23, 24 is a poetic statement of surprise and appreciation on the part of Adam to receive the special gift from God: a beautiful wife. Adam uses a recognition formula; he recognizes that they belong together and form a unity. It is not a naming formula (the word *shem* does not occur in 2:23 as it is present in the text of 2:19 and 3:20. Adam names Eve only after sin (see Gen 3:20).



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### 5. Description of Complications After the Fall and God's Grace

To the woman, He said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire [longing for love, support, safety, affections, and care] will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (NIV). How are we to understand Gen 3:16? It does not prescribe a husband to subdue and rule over his wife (that Hebrew word is *mashal*; this term ultimately focuses on the servant leadership); a different Hebrew word is used here than in Gen 1:28 (the Hebrew words *kabash* and *radah* are employed).

God's punishing statement does not prescribe that humans be passive and not try to help. These complications come as the result and consequence of sin, so this divine judgment about the pain in giving birth and raising children should not hinder us from doing everything within our human power to ease the pain of the woman in delivery.

In the same way, the verse describes the difficulties in the husband-wife relationship, and it obliges us to overcome them by God's grace and through true conversion (see Eph 5:21-33; 1 Pet 3:1-7). This is impossible without God's help. So both husband and wife (the Lord is not talking about a general relationship between men and women) need to dedicate their lives to God and live in a personal relationship with God so there is harmony in the marriage, a mutual submission and love. Truly, a beautiful marriage may be possible only for converted people.

Ellen White powerfully explains:

Eve had been the first in transgression; and she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was now placed in subjection to her husband. Had the principles joined in

the law of God been cherished by the fallen race, *this sentence, though growing out of the results of sin, would have proved a blessing to them*; but man's abuse of the supremacy thus given him has too often rendered the lot of woman very bitter and made her life a burden.<sup>30</sup>

When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that in all things she should be his equal. The holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other; and yet each had an individuality in thinking and acting. But after Eve's sin, as she was first in the transgression, the Lord told her that Adam should rule over her. She was to be in subjection to her husband, and this was a part of the curse. In many cases the curse has made the lot of woman very grievous and her life a burden. The superiority which God has given man he has abused in many respects by exercising arbitrary power. *Infinite wisdom devised the plan of redemption, which places the race on a second probation by giving them another trial.*<sup>31</sup>

### 6. Both are Priests Even After Sin

The LORD God made garments [*kotnot*] of skin [*'or*] for Adam and his wife and clothed [*labash*] them" (Gen 3:21 NIV).

God clothed (*labash*) Adam and his wife with "coats" (*ketonet*, pl. *kotnot*). These are the very terms used to describe the clothing of Aaron and his sons (Lev 8:7, 13; Num 20:28; cf. Exod 28:4; 29:5; 40:14).

### 7. Believers, Both Men and Women, are the Kingdom of Priests.

"Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole

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earth is mine, you will be for me a *kingdom of priests and a holy nation*. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites” (Exod 19:5, 6 NIV).

Because of Israel’s unfaithfulness, an alternate plan was given: *only one family from one tribe of Israel* would be “a kingdom of priests.” However, Peter, in 1 Pet 2:9 is applying Exod 19:5, 6 to the priesthood of all believers in Christ.

### 8. Women in Leadership Positions in the Old Testament

See, for example, Miriam (Exod 15:20, 21); Deborah (Judg 4 and 5); Huldah (2 Kgs 22:13, 14; 2 Chr 34:22–28); Esther; and others (Exod 38:8; 1 Sam 2:22; 2 Sam 14:2–20; 20:14–22).

### 9. A Host of Women Preachers

“The Lord gives the word; the women who announce the news are a great host” (Ps 68:11 ESV, NASB).

### 10. Holy Spirit Given to All Believers at the Time of the End, Including Women

“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. *Your sons and daughters* will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, *both men and women*, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke” (Joel 2:28–30 NIV).

### 11. Practice in the New Testament Church

See, for instance, Phoebe, a deacon (Rom 16:1); Junia, a female apostle (Rom 16:7); women leaders of the church in Philippi (Phil 4:2, 3). Priscilla assumed an authoritative teaching role (Acts 18; see especially Rom 16:3). The “Elect Lady” (2 John) was probably a church leader in a congregation under her care.

### 12. Paul’s Call for Equality in Gal 3:26–29

“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves

with Christ. *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (NIV). This is not merely a statement on equal access to salvation by various groups (see Gal 2:11–15; Eph 2:14, 15). I once understood it only from this perspective, but deeper study shows more.

Paul also speaks about equality in general. He especially focuses on three relationships in which the Jews of his time perverted God’s original plan of Gen 1 by making one group subordinate to another: 1) Jew-Gentile Relationship; 2) Master-Slave Relationship; and 3) Male-Female Relationship.

In regard to the male-female relationship, by using a specific Greek pair vocabulary *arsēn-thēlys* [man-woman] instead of *anēr-gynē* [husband-wife]), Paul establishes a link with Gen 1:27 (LXX employs *arsēn-thēlys* language), and thus shows how the gospel calls us back to the divine ideal, which has no place for the general subordination of females to males.

### *Two additional arguments which go beyond the biblical evidence:*

### 13. Practical Reason in Favor of the Ordination of Women

The Spirit of God gives spiritual gifts freely, including to women (Joel 2). If God gives His spiritual gifts to women, who am I to stop it? If God calls women to ministry, we should be able to recognize, accept, and implement that calling. God’s work can only gain if godly consecrated women will work in leadership positions in His vineyard.

This has been demonstrated, for instance, by my mother-in-law, who was a Bible worker in Communist Czechoslovakia. She prepared people for baptism and preached with everyone listening carefully, even the children.

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She was a very wise mother in Israel who had great experiences and who witnessed miracles.

In China women are in practical ministry where they not only preach but also baptize and serve the Lord's Supper. At least sixteen women in China have been ordained to the gospel ministry by Seventh-day Adventists there. This ministerial ordination of women pastors is a reality that has arisen in China for very practical reasons, and these women are powerful instruments for sharing the gospel among the Chinese people.

### 14. Ellen White's Inspired Support for Women in Pastoral Ministry

"There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry. In many respects they would do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God."<sup>32</sup>

"It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God."<sup>33</sup>

The study by Denis Fortin has looked at these and other references by Ellen White in their context, and drawn important implications for the discussion of women's ordination.<sup>34</sup>

### Conclusion

Even though there is no direct biblical statement that we should ordain women to ministry, there is no theological hindrance to doing so. On the contrary, the biblical-theological analysis points in that ultimate direction, because the Spirit of God tears down all barriers between different groups of people in the church and gives His spiritual gifts freely to all, including women, in order to accomplish the mission God calls all of us to accomplish.

In this time of the closing of the world's history, God calls His remnant back to Creation (see Rev 14:7), to reestablish the ideals of God's original plan of equality between men and women. The

Advent movement should be an example of this true human relationship and genuine worship. The last-day people should be a model for the rest of the world and should assume a leadership role in this issue by fully demonstrating the true meaning of the theology of Creation.

Even though men and women are biologically different and have thus different physiological functions, the spiritual role for both genders is the same—to be the leaders in God's church today.

We need to go back to the Creation ideal in spite of the sin problem, because God's grace is more powerful than evil, and God's grace is a transforming grace, changing the old system into the new in the church, which should be a model of the world to come. From Creation to re-Creation! This is the biblical pattern built on our denominational name Seventh-day (Creation) Adventists (re-Creation).

### Appendix I: The Rio de Janeiro Document

#### METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY COMMITTEE

(GCC-A)—Report

Voted: To approve the Methods of Bible Study Committee (GCC-A) report, which reads as follows:

#### *Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods*

##### 1. Preamble

This statement is addressed to all members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the purpose of providing guidelines on how to study the Bible, both the trained biblical scholar and others.

Seventh-day Adventists recognize and

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appreciate the contributions of those biblical scholars throughout history who have developed useful and reliable methods of Bible study consistent with the claims and teachings of Scripture. Adventists are committed to the acceptance of biblical truth and are willing to follow it, using all methods of interpretation consistent with what Scripture says of itself. These are outlined in the presuppositions detailed below.

In recent decades the most prominent method in biblical studies has been known as the historical-critical method. Scholars who use this method, as classically formulated, operate on the basis of presuppositions which, prior to studying the biblical text, reject the reliability of accounts of miracles and other supernatural events narrated in the Bible. Even a modified use of this method that retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason is unacceptable to Adventists.

The historical-critical method minimizes the need for faith in God and obedience to His commandments. In addition, because such a method deemphasizes the divine element in the Bible as an inspired book (including its resultant unity) and depreciates or misunderstands apocalyptic prophecy and the eschatological portions of the Bible, we urge Adventist Bible students to avoid relying on the use of the presuppositions and the resultant deductions associated with the historical-critical method.

By contrast to the historical-critical method and presuppositions, we believe it to be helpful to set forth the principles of Bible study that are consistent with the teachings of the Scriptures themselves, that preserve their unity, and are based upon the premise that the Bible is the Word of God. Such an approach will lead us into a satisfying and rewarding experience with God.

2. *Presuppositions Arising From the Claims of Scripture*

### a. Origin

1) The Bible is the Word of God and is the primary and authoritative means by which He reveals Himself to human beings.

2) The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible writers with thoughts, ideas, and objective information; in turn they expressed these in their own words. Therefore the Scriptures are an indivisible union of human and divine elements, neither of which should be emphasized to the neglect of the other (2 Pet 1:21; cf. *The Great Controversy*, pp. v, vi).

3) All Scripture is inspired by God and came through the work of the Holy Spirit. However, it did not come in a continuous chain of unbroken revelations. As the Holy Spirit communicated truth to the Bible writer, each wrote as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the aspect of the truth which he was led to stress. For this reason the student of the Bible will gain a rounded comprehension on any subject by recognizing that the Bible is its own best interpreter and when studied as a whole it depicts a consistent, harmonious truth (2 Tim 3:16; Heb 1:1, 2; cf. *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 19, 20; *The Great Controversy*, pp. v, vi).

4) Although it was given to those who lived in an ancient Near Eastern/Mediterranean context, the Bible transcends its cultural backgrounds to serve as God's Word for all cultural, racial, and situational contexts in all ages.

### b. Authority

1) The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments are the clear, infallible revelation of God's will and His salvation. The Bible is the Word of God, and it alone is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested (2 Tim 3:15-17; Ps 119:105; Prov 30:5, 6; Isa 8:20; John 17:17; 2 Thess 3:14; Heb 4:12).

2) Scripture is an authentic, reliable record of history and God's acts in history. It provides the normative theological interpretation of those acts. The supernatural acts revealed in

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Scripture are historically true. For example, chapters 1–11 of Genesis are a factual account of historical events.

3) The Bible is not like other books. It is an indivisible blend of the divine and the human. Its record of many details of secular history is integral to its overall purpose to convey salvation history. While at times there may be parallel procedures employed by Bible students to determine historical data, the usual techniques of historical research, based as they are on human presuppositions and focused on the human element, are inadequate for interpreting the Scriptures, which are a blend of the divine and human. Only a method that fully recognizes the indivisible nature of Scripture can avoid a distortion of its message.

4) Human reason is subject to the Bible, not equal to or above it. Presuppositions regarding the Scriptures must be in harmony with the claims of the Scriptures and subject to correction by them (1 Cor 2:1–6). God intends that human reason be used to its fullest extent, but within the context and under the authority of His Word rather than independent of it.

5) The revelation of God in all nature, when properly understood, is in harmony with the Written Word, and it is to be interpreted in the light of Scripture.

### 3. *Principles for Approaching the Interpretation of Scripture*

a. The Spirit enables the believer to accept, understand, and apply the Bible to one's own life as he seeks divine power to render obedience to all scriptural requirements and to appropriate personally all Bible promises. Only those following the light already received can hope to receive further illumination of the Spirit (John 16:13, 14; 1 Cor 2:10–14).

b. Scripture cannot be correctly interpreted without the aid of the Holy Spirit, for it is the Spirit who enables the believer to understand and apply Scripture. Therefore, any study of

the Word should commence with a request for the Spirit's guidance and illumination.

c. Those who come to the study of the Word must do so with faith, in the humble spirit of a learner who seeks to hear what the Bible is saying. They must be willing to submit all presuppositions, opinions, and the conclusions of reason to the judgment and correction of the Word itself. With this attitude the Bible student may come directly to the Word, and with careful study may come to an understanding of the essentials of salvation apart from any human explanations, however helpful. The biblical message becomes meaningful to such a person.

d. The investigation of Scripture must be characterized by a sincere desire to discover and obey God's will and Word rather than to seek support or evidence for preconceived ideas.

### 4. *Methods of Bible Study*

a. Select a Bible version for study that is faithful to the meaning contained in languages in which the Bible originally was written, giving preference to translations done by a broad group of scholars and published by a general publisher above translations sponsored by a particular denomination or narrowly focused group.

Exercise care not to build major doctrinal points on one Bible translation or version. Trained biblical scholars will use the Greek and Hebrew texts, enabling them to examine variant readings of ancient Bible manuscripts, as well.

b. Choose a definite plan of study, avoiding haphazard and aimless approaches. Study plans such as the following are suggested.

1) Book-by-book analysis of the message.

2) Verse-by-verse method.

3) Study that seeks a biblical solution to a specific life problem, biblical satisfaction for a specific need, or a biblical answer to a specific question.

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4) Topical study (faith, love, Second Coming, and others.)

5) Word study.

6) Biographical study.

c. Seek to grasp the simple, most obvious meaning of the biblical passage being studied.

d. Seek to discover the underlying major themes of Scripture as found in individual texts, passages, and books. Two basic, related themes run throughout Scripture: (1) the person and work of Jesus Christ; and (2) the great controversy perspective involving the authority of God's Word, the Fall of man, the first and second advents of Christ; the exoneration of God and His law, and the restoration of the divine plan for the universe. These themes are to be drawn from the totality of Scripture and not imposed on it.

e. Recognize that the Bible is its own interpreter and that the meaning of words, texts, and passages is best determined by diligently comparing scripture with scripture.

f. Study the context of the passage under consideration by relating it to the sentences and paragraphs immediately preceding and following it. Try to relate the ideas of the passage to the line of thought of the entire biblical book.

g. As far as possible ascertain the historical circumstances in which the passage was written by the biblical writer under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

h. Determine the literary type the author is using. Some biblical material is composed of parables, proverbs, allegories, psalms, and apocalyptic prophecies. Since many biblical writers presented much of their material as poetry, it is helpful to use a version of the Bible that presents this material in poetic style, for passages employing imagery are not to be interpreted in the same manner as prose.

i. Recognize that a given biblical text may not conform in every detail to present-day

literary categories. Be cautious not to force these categories in interpreting the meaning of the biblical text. It is a human tendency to find what one is looking for, even when the author did not intend such.

j. Take note of grammar and sentence construction in order to discover the author's meaning. Study the key words of the passage by comparing their use in other parts of the Bible by means of a concordance and with the help of biblical lexicons and dictionaries.

k. In connection with the study of the biblical text, explore the historical and cultural factors. Archaeology, anthropology, and history may contribute to understanding the meaning of the text.

l. Seventh-day Adventists believe that God inspired Ellen White. Therefore, her expositions on any given biblical passage offer an inspired guide to the meaning of texts without exhausting their meaning or preempting the task of exegesis (for example, see *Evangelism*, p. 256; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 193, 595; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 665, 682, 707, 708; *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pp. 33-35).

m. After studying as outlined above, turn to various commentaries and secondary helps such as scholarly works to see how others have dealt with the passage. Then carefully evaluate the different viewpoints expressed from the standpoint of Scripture as a whole.

n. In interpreting prophecy, keep in mind that:

1) The Bible claims God's power to predict the future (Isa 46:10).

2) Prophecy has a moral purpose. It was not written merely to satisfy curiosity about the future. Some of the purposes of prophecy are to strengthen faith (John 14:29) and to promote holy living and readiness for the Advent (Matt 24:44; Rev 22:7, 10, 11).

3) The focus of much prophecy is on Christ (both His first and second advents), the

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church, and the end-time.

4) The norms for interpreting prophecy are found within the Bible itself: The Bible notes time prophecies and their historical fulfillments, the New Testament cites specific fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, and the Old Testament itself presents individuals and events as types of the Messiah.

5) In the New Testament application of Old Testament prophecies, some literal names become spiritual: e.g., Israel represents the church; Babylon, apostate religion; etc.

6) There are two general types of prophetic writings: nonapocalyptic prophecy, as found in Isaiah and Jeremiah, and apocalyptic prophecy, as found in Daniel and the Revelation. These differing types have different characteristics:

a) Nonapocalyptic prophecy addresses God's people; apocalyptic is more universal in scope.

b) Nonapocalyptic prophecy often is conditional in nature, setting forth to God's people the alternatives of blessing for obedience and curses for disobedience; apocalyptic emphasizes the sovereignty of God and His control over history.

c) Nonapocalyptic prophecy often leaps from the local crisis to the end-time day of the Lord; apocalyptic prophecy presents the course of history from the time of the prophet to the end of the world.

d) Time prophecies in nonapocalyptic prophecy generally are long, e.g., 400 years of Israel's servitude (Gen 15:13) and 70 years of Babylonian captivity (Jer 25:12). Time prophecies in apocalyptic prophecy generally are phrased in short terms, e.g., 10 days (Rev 2:10) or 42 months (Rev 13:5). Apocalyptic time periods stand symbolically for longer periods of actual time.

7) Apocalyptic prophecy is highly symbolic and should be interpreted accordingly. In

interpreting symbols, the following methods may be used:

a) Look for interpretations (explicit or implicit) within the passage itself (e.g., Dan 8:20, 21; Rev 1:20).

b) Look for interpretations elsewhere in the book or in other writings by the same author.

c) Using a concordance, study the use of symbols in other parts of Scripture.

d) A study of ancient Near Eastern documents may throw light on the meaning of symbols, although scriptural use may alter those meanings.

8) The literary structure of a book often is an aid to interpreting it. The parallel nature of Daniel's prophecies in an example.

o. Parallel accounts in Scripture sometimes present differences in detail and emphasis (for example, compare Matt 21:33-44; Mark 12:1-11; and Luke 20:9-18, or 2 Kgs 18-20 with 2 Chr 32). When studying such passages, first examine them carefully to be sure that the parallels actually are referring to the same historical event. For example, many of Jesus' parables may have been given on different occasions to different audiences and with different wording.

In cases where there appear to be differences in parallel accounts, one should recognize that the total message of the Bible is the synthesis of all its parts. Each book or writer communicates that which the Spirit has led him to write. Each makes his own special contribution to the richness, diversity, and variety of Scripture (*The Great Controversy*, pp. v, vi). The reader must allow each Bible writer to emerge and be heard, while at the same time recognizing the basic unity of the divine self-disclosure.

When parallel passages seem to indicate discrepancy or contradiction, look for the underlying harmony. Keep in mind that dissimilarities may be due to minor errors of copyists (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 16), or may be the result

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of differing emphases and choice of materials of various authors who wrote under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit for different audiences under different circumstances (Ibid, pp. 21, 22; *The Great Controversy*, p. vi).

It may prove impossible to reconcile minor dissimilarities in detail which may be irrelevant to the main and clear message of the passage. In some cases judgment may have to be suspended until more information and better evidence are available to resolve a seeming discrepancy.

*p.* The Scriptures were written for the practical purpose of revealing the will of God to the human family. However, in order for one not to misconstrue certain kinds of statements, it is important to recognize that they were addressed to peoples of Eastern cultures and expressed in their thought patterns.

Expressions such as “The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh” (Exod 9:12) or “an evil spirit from God” (1 Sam 16:15), the imprecatory psalms, and the “three days and three nights” of Jonah as compared with Christ’s death (Matt 12:40) commonly are misunderstood because they are interpreted today from a different viewpoint.

A background knowledge of Near Eastern culture is indispensable for understanding such expressions. For example, Hebrew culture attributed responsibility to an individual for acts he did not commit but that he allowed to happen. Therefore the inspired writers of the Scriptures commonly credit God with doing actively that which in Western thought we would say He permits or does not prevent from happening, e.g., the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart.

Another aspect of Scripture that troubles the modern mind is the divine command to Israel to engage in war and execute entire nations. Israel originally was organized as a theocracy, a civil government through which God ruled

directly. Such a theocratic state was unique. It no longer exists and cannot be regarded as a direct model for Christian practice.

The Scriptures record experiences and statements of persons whom God accepted but were not in harmony with the spiritual principles of the Bible as a whole—for example, incidents relating to the use of alcohol, to polygamy, divorce, and slavery. Although condemnation of such deeply ingrained social customs is not explicit, God did not necessarily endorse or approve all that He permitted and bore with in the lives of the patriarchs and in Israel.

Jesus made this clear in His statement with regard to divorce (Matt 19:4–6, 8).

The spirit of the Scriptures is one of restoration. God works patiently to elevate fallen humanity from the depths of sin to the divine ideal. Consequently, we must not accept as models the actions of sinful men as recorded in the Bible.

The Scriptures represent the unfolding of God’s revelation to man. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, for example, enlarges and expands on certain Old Testament concepts. Christ Himself is the ultimate revelation of God’s character to humanity (Heb 1:1–3).

While there is an overarching unity in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and while all Scripture is equally inspired, God chose to reveal Himself to and through human individuals and to meet them where they were in terms of spiritual and intellectual endowments. God Himself does not change, but He progressively unfolded His revelation to men as they were able to grasp it (John 16:12, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 945; *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 21). Every experience or statement of Scripture is a divinely inspired record, but not every statement or experience is necessarily normative for Christian behavior today. Both the spirit and the letter of Scripture must be understood (1 Cor 10:6–13,



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*The Desire of Ages*, p. 150; *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 10–12.)

q. As the final goal, make application of the text. Ask such questions as “What is the message and purpose God intends to convey through Scripture? What meaning does this text have for me? How does it apply to my situation and circumstances today?” In doing so, recognize that although many biblical passage had local significance, nonetheless they contain timeless principles applicable to every age and culture.

### 5. Conclusion

In the Introduction to *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White wrote:

“The Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that ‘the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ John 1:14” (p. vi).

As it is impossible for those who do not accept Christ’s divinity to understand the purpose of His incarnation, it is also impossible for those who see the Bible merely as a human book to understand its message, however careful and rigorous their methods.

Even Christian scholars who accept the divine-human nature of Scripture but whose methodological approaches cause them to dwell largely on its human aspects risk emptying the biblical message of its power by relegating it to the background while concentrating on the medium. They forget that medium and message are inseparable and that the medium without the message is an empty shell that cannot address the vital spiritual needs of humankind.

A committed Christian will use only those methods that are able to do full justice to the dual, inseparable nature of Scripture, enhance his ability to understand and apply its message, and strengthen faith.

This document may be found in the *Adventist Review* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, Jan. 22, 1987).

### Appendix II: Key Quotations From the Spirit of Prophecy (Ellen White’s Writings)

“Sharp, clear perceptions of truth will never be the reward of indolence. Investigation of every point that has been received as truth will richly repay the searcher; he will find precious gems. And in closely investigating every jot and tittle which we think is established truth, in comparing scripture with scripture, we may discover errors in our interpretation of Scripture. Christ would have the searcher of his word sink the shaft deeper into the mines of truth. If the search is properly conducted, jewels of inestimable value will be found. The word of God is the mine of the unsearchable riches of Christ” (*The Review and Herald*, July 12, 1898, par. 15).

“God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept we should demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support” (GC 595).

“In His word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible

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revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience. . . . Yet the fact that God has revealed His will to men through His word, has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Saviour, to open the word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings. And since it was the Spirit of God that inspired the Bible, it is impossible that the teaching of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the word. The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested” (GC vii).

“There is everything plainly revealed in God’s Word which concerns the salvation of men, and if we will take that Word and comprehend it to the very best of our ability, God will help us in its comprehension. Human minds without the special assistance of the Spirit of God will see many things in the Bible very difficult to be understood, because they lack a divine enlightenment. . . . Never attempt to search the Scriptures unless you are ready to listen, unless you are ready to be a learner, unless you are ready to listen to the Word of God as though His voice were speaking directly to you from the living oracles. Never let mortal man sit in judgment upon the Word of God or pass sentence as to how much of this is inspired and how much is not inspired, and that this is more inspired than some other portions. God warns him off that ground. God has not given him any such work to do. . . . Do not let any living man come to you and begin to

dissect God’s Word, telling what is revelation, what is inspiration, and what is not, without a rebuke. Tell all such they simply do not know. They simply are not able to comprehend the things of the mystery of God. What we want is to inspire faith. We want no one to say, “This I will reject, and this will I receive,” but we want to have implicit faith in the Bible as a whole and as it is” (7SDABC 919).

“Make the Bible its own expositor, bringing together all that is said concerning a given subject at different times and under varied circumstances. Do not break up your home class for callers or visitors. If they come in during the exercise, invite them to take part in it. Let it be seen that you consider it more important to obtain a knowledge of God’s Word than to secure the gains or pleasures of the world. If we would study the Bible diligently and prayerfully every day, we should every day see some beautiful truth in a new, clear, and forcible light” (GC 511).

“But the Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that ‘the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ John 1:14. Written in different ages, by men who differed widely in rank and occupation, and in mental and spiritual endowments, the books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more strikingly presented by one than by another.

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And as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony. As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought out in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind—a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life” (GC vi).

“Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall be continually liable to wrest the Scriptures or to misinterpret them. There is much reading of the Bible that is without profit and in many cases is a positive injury. When the word of God is opened without reverence and without prayer; when the thoughts and affections are not fixed upon God or in harmony with His will, the mind is clouded with doubt; and in the very study of the Bible, skepticism strengthens. The enemy takes control of the thoughts, and he suggests interpretations that are not correct. Whenever men are not seeking, in word and deed, to be in harmony with God, then, however learned they may be, they are liable to err in their understanding of Scripture, and it is not safe to trust to their explanations. When we are

truly seeking to do God’s will, the Holy Spirit takes the precepts of His word and makes them the principles of the life, writing them on the tablets of the soul. And it is only those who are following the light already given that can hope to receive the further illumination of the Spirit” (5T 704, 705).

“The student of the word should not make his opinions a center around which truth is to revolve. He should not search for the purpose of finding texts of Scripture that he can construe to prove his theories, for this is wresting the Scriptures to his own destruction. The Bible student must empty himself of every prejudice, lay his own ideas at the door of investigation, and with humble, subdued heart, with self hid in Christ, with earnest prayer, he should seek wisdom from God” (CT 463).

“I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible; yet when copies of it were few, learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition. But I saw that the Word of God, as a whole, is a perfect chain, one portion linking into and explaining another. True seekers for truth need not err; for not only is the Word of God plain and simple in declaring the way of life, but the Holy Spirit is given as a guide in understanding the way to life therein revealed” (EW 220, 221).

“An understanding of the customs of those who lived in Bible times, of the location and time of events, is practical knowledge; for it aids in making clear the

figures of the Bible and in bringing out the force of Christ's lessons" (CT 518).

"Every principle in the word of God has its place, every fact its bearing. And the complete structure, in design and execution, bears testimony to its Author. Such a structure no mind but that of the Infinite could conceive or fashion. In searching out the various parts and studying their relationship, the highest faculties of the human mind are called into intense activity. No one can engage in such study without developing mental power. And not alone in searching out truth and bringing it together does the mental value of Bible study consist. It consists also in the effort required to grasp the themes presented" (Ed 124).

"The Lord gave His word in just the way He wanted it to come. He gave it through different writers, each having his own individuality, though going over the same history. Their testimonies are brought together in one Book, and are like the testimonies in a social meeting. They do not represent things in just the same style. Each has an experience of his own, and this diversity broadens and deepens the knowledge that is brought out to meet the necessities of varied minds. The thoughts expressed have not a set uniformity, as if cast in an iron mold, making the very hearing monotonous. In such uniformity there would be a loss of grace and distinctive beauty. . . . The Creator of all ideas may impress different minds with the same thought, but each may express it in a different way, yet without contradiction. The fact that this difference exists should not perplex or confuse us" (1 SM 21, 22).

"In order to sustain erroneous doctrines or unchristian practices, some will seize upon passages of Scripture separated from the context, perhaps quoting half of a single verse as proving their point, when the remaining portion would show the meaning to be quite the opposite. . . . Whenever the study of the Scriptures is entered upon without a prayerful, humble, teachable spirit, the plainest and simplest as well as the most difficult passages will be wrested from their true meaning" (GC 521).

"The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation" (Ed 190).

"The significance of the Jewish economy is not yet fully comprehended. Truths vast and profound are shadowed forth in its rites and symbols. The gospel is the key that unlocks its mysteries. Through a knowledge of the plan of redemption, its truths are opened to the understanding" (COL 133).

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### Appendix III: Statement of Our Pioneers

#### *ADVENT REVIEW AND SABBATH HERALD*

(Vol. 71, No. 23, Battle Creek, Michigan, June 5, 1894), 360.

Uriah Smith, editor

Assistant editors: G. C. Tenney, and M. E. Kellogg

Editorial contributors: O. A. Olsen, A. T. Jones, Geo. I. Butler, S. N. Haskell, L. R. Conradi.

### WOMAN'S RELATION TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

The queries concerning woman's position in the church come by post and by word of mouth. Devout people, skeptics, believers, advocates of women's rights, advocates of men's rights, church people, non-church people, husbands of meek wives, husbands of garrulous women, wives of meek husbands, wives of lordly husbands, people that are neither husbands nor wives—all are interested in the solution of this question, What is woman's place in the church? And what would happen if she should get out of it into the man's place? People who slight judgment, mercy, and the weightier matters of the law, halt, hesitate, ahem, shake the head, and perhaps do worse, when they learn that some women do actually speak in church; because Paul said: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak;" and, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."

The difficulty with these texts is entirely chargeable to immature conclusions reached in regard to them. It is manifestly illogical and unfair to give to any passage of Scripture an unqualified radical meaning that is at variance

with the main tenor of the Bible, and directly in conflict with its plain teachings. The Bible may be reconciled in all its parts without going outside the lines of consistent interpretation. But great difficulty is likely to be experienced by those who interpret isolated passages in an independent light, according to the ideas they happen to entertain upon them. Those who were brought up to believe it to be a shame for women to speak in meeting, look no farther than these texts, and give them a sweeping application. Critics of the Bible, critics of womankind, as well as women who are looking for an excuse for idleness, seize these passages in the same manner. By their misuse of these texts many conscientious people are led into a misconception of what Paul meant to teach.

Considering the question from a broader standing, it will be seen at a glance that while it has ever been the work of the powers of darkness to degrade woman, the work of the Bible has been to elevate her. The Bible and its religion is the great civilizing agent in this world, where the natural tendency is downward to destruction. Under Christianity, multitudes of women have been raised from the degradation of slavery to their rightful place by the side of him for whom she was created a help meet for him (not *help-meet*), that is, a fit companion. It was the work of the gospel to remove distinctions among men in race, nationality, sex, or condition. Paul declares that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal 3:28. This text has a generic application; it is of universal force wherever the gospel reaches. In the light of such a statement, how can women be excluded from the privileges of the gospel?

But God has given to women an important part in connection with his work throughout its entire history. In the patriarchal age and in the later dispensation are many bright

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examples of piety and devotion among the wives and mothers of God's people. They wrought righteousness, exercised the omnipotent power of faith, braved dangers, and witnessed for the truth as effectually as those of the other sex, with evident tokens of God's approbation resting upon them. Two books of the Old Testament receive their titles from young heroines of faith and piety. God moved upon their hearts and upon the hearts of Sarah, Rebecca, Miriam, Rahab, Hannah, Jael, and a host of faithful women, as well as upon the hearts of rulers and prophets.

While it is true that Christ did not choose women to the apostleship, still it would be a difficult matter to show that he was partial in his regard toward the men who followed him. Miracles, discourses, promises, exhortations, recognition everywhere, are bestowed upon womankind by our Saviour. Every step in his life's history, from the annunciation to the ascension, is intimately interwoven with the experience of women, and the pathway is cheered and brightened by their help, faith, and sympathy. In his famous painting of Christ before Pilate, Munkaczy represents the Saviour as surrounded by a hostile crowd of ruffians, priests, and Pharisees. There is but one friendly, sympathetic face in the throng; a woman looks upon her Master with all the pity that faith and love can depict.

Reverting to the teachings of Paul, whose writings are in question, we discover very clearly that he was the friend, not the adversary, of women in the work of the Christian church. It is true he insists upon God's order being preserved. He objects to that anomalous condition of things in which a woman rules over a household, or where obstreperous women run the church. And who would not? Such things did exist then; they do now, sad to say. But it is not God's plan. In the church at Corinth we may understand, if we read

the letters to that church with care, that there were various disorders. In the context of the passage under consideration (1 Cor 14:34), we read: "When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation." Verse 26. And we gather that each one strove to deliver his message without regard to order or peace. While some were prophesying or exhorting, others were singing or praying, others were speaking in unknown tongues, others were arguing, and the meetings were disgraceful. Unruly women added their clatter to the general confusion; and along with the other disorders, Paul sought to rebuke this trouble. These women were out of place.

There are three Greek words from which "to speak" is translated, *ei-pon*, *le-go*, and *la-le-o*/ they may be used interchangeably, though to the latter is given by Donnegan the following definitions: "To talk; to speak; to prate; to prattle; to babble; to chatter; "etc.; and this is the word used in 1 Cor 14:34, where it is said women are not permitted to *speak* in the churches. None of the undignified terms are used in defining the other words, a fact which shows that the apostle was rebuking garrulity rather than prohibiting Christians from witnessing for the cause of Christ.

Not only do the circumstances and language lead us to conclude that these restrictions were designed to apply to special cases of impropriety, but other considerations compel us thus to interpret them. In 1 Corinthians 11, we read: "But every woman that *prayeth* or *prophesieth* with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head." Verse 5. Why make this statement, if women were not to be allowed to pray or speak in public? It is then stated that woman was ordained to be subject to man in point of authority, but "neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord." Verse 11. In

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various epistles Paul freely recognizes the aid rendered him by the women associated with him. For instance, in Phil 4:3: "Help those women *which labored with me* in the gospel." Not simply as housekeepers, for the original language indicates a close sympathy. Greenfield defines the word for "labor" "in this instance, "to exert one's power and energies in company with any one." According to the views of some people, he should have written: "Stop those women, for I don't allow a woman to labor in the gospel"—a very different thing from that which he did write. If anybody still remains in doubt about Paul's attitude, let him read Romans 16, especially noting verse 12: "Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord."

No doubt the wise apostle had good reason for writing as he did to the Corinth church, and for instructing Timothy just as he did as he was about to visit the churches. But it would be a gross libel on this valiant servant of Christ to impute to him the purpose to silence the testimony of the most devoted servants of the cross. A fundamental principle of the gospel is that "God is no respecter of persons," a principle which applies to men and to women. It does not comport with reason that the apostle had such women as these in mind when he penned the words in 1 Cor 14:34, and in 1 Tim 2:11, 12. Women who labor acceptably in the gospel are included among those of whom the Saviour says, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."

G. C. Tenney

### Endnotes:

1. See Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments*, 1883; repr., (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974), 17: "Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation."
2. Hermeneutics is like a cookbook, exegesis like a baking process, and exposition (preaching or teaching) like a serving of the freshly baked bread or a cake.
3. As summarized in the "Methods of Bible Study" document voted by the General Conference Committee Annual Council, "Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods," Rio de Janeiro, Oct. 12, 1986, published in the *Adventist Review*, Jan. 22, 1987 (available online at <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/bible-interpretation-hermeneutics/methods-bible-study>), attached as an appendix to this paper. This method has various names: the historical-grammatical method or historical-grammatical-literary-theological method. For basic treatments of biblical hermeneutics from an Adventist perspective, see also George W. Reid, ed., *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, Biblical Research Institute Studies, vol. 1; (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005); Richard M. Davidson, "Biblical Interpretation," in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Series, vol. 12 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 58–104; idem, "Interpreting Scripture: An Hermeneutical Decalogue," *JATS* 4.2 (1993): 95–114; and Gordon M. Hyde, ed., *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics* (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1974).

For a comprehensive study of biblical hermeneutics from a general Christian perspective, see Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. and exp. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, Press 2006); Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 3d rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1970); idem, *Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987); and Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994).

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4. For the presuppositions, procedures, and methodology of the historical-critical method, see David R. Law, *The Historical-Critical Method: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012); Eryl W. Davies, *Biblical Criticism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013). For the evaluation of this method in comparison to the historical-grammatical-theological method, see Richard M. Davidson, "The Authority of Scripture: A Personal Pilgrimage," *JATS* 1.1 (1990): 39–56.
5. See the article by Peter van Bemmelen on "Revelation and Inspiration," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 22–57.
6. See Nancy Vyhmeister, "Junia the Apostle," *Ministry* (July 2013): 6–9.
7. For further study, see Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 113–139.
8. For the historical background of the cult of Artemis (Diana), proto-gnosticism, and other cultural movements in Ephesus in the time of Paul, see especially Sharon Hodgins Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus: A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9–15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century* (New York: University of America Press, 1991). For further information on this and other issues related to 1 Tim 2, see Carl Cosaert, "Paul, Women, and the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy 2:8–15" (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee [TOSC], July 2013). Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
9. See, e.g., Richard M. Davidson, "Back to the Beginning: Genesis 1–3 and the Theological Center of Scripture," in *Christ, Salvation, and the Eschaton*, ed. Daniel Heinz, Jifí Moskala, and Peter M. van Bemmelen (Berrien Springs, MI: Old Testament Publications, 2009), 5–29.
10. For discussion of this and other relevant New Testament passages, see Teresa Reeve, "Ordination and Women Pastors: The Witness of the New Testament" (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, July 22–24, 2013).
11. For work being a blessing, see for example, Ellen G. White, *Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2001), 142; and White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 60.
12. In the Greek language the term *anēr* can mean either "man" or "husband," and the word *gynē* signifies "woman" or "wife." Always the literary context determines the meaning of these expressions. The same is true in Hebrew: the term *ish* can mean either "man" or "husband," and the word *ishshah* has as well two meanings "woman" or "wife," and also the context decides their precise meaning. Can a biblical author play with these words and switch their meaning in the near context?
13. "The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers" (White, *Gospel Workers* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005], 315).  
"Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. The proclamation of the third angel's message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath truth. This truth, with others included in the message, is to be proclaimed; but the great center of attraction, Christ Jesus, must not be left out. It is at the cross of Christ that mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. The sinner must be led to look to Calvary; with the simple faith of a little child he must trust in the merits of the Saviour, accepting His righteousness, believing in His mercy" (White, *GW* 156, 157).
14. Jifí Moskala, "A Fresh Look at Two Genesis Creation Accounts: Contradictions?" *AUSS* 49.1 (2011), 49, 50.
15. White, *Steps to Christ* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2011), 108, 109.
16. This false philosophical concept contradicts the biblical Hebrew teaching on the unity and harmony of human nature and the complexity of all relationships. The dichotomy between "existence" and "function" is a "strange fire" in our Adventist circles (transported from the evangelical hierarchicalists or subordinationists). We cannot split a person into an ontological dimension on the one side and a functional dimension on the other side. The biblical



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teaching on the nature of humanity is that a human person is a unit. We are “made” with different functions, and these functions characterize us as persons and reveal who we are. A person can have different functions, but these functions go always closely together with our very existence, with who we are! As we cannot split body and spirit, so we cannot dissect ontology and functions. Our functions and relationships define what kind of human beings we are. As Seventh-day Adventists, we firmly stand on the platform of biblical monism.

Genesis 1 and 2 form two complementary Creation accounts and do not contradict each other. See my article, “A Fresh Look at Two Genesis Creation Accounts: Contradictions?” *AUSS* 49.1 (2011): 45–65. The Hebrew language uses for Adam and Eve the same term ‘adam (“humanity”) to designate them as human persons—see Gen 1:27. They are physically different but form a harmonious unit. They are perfectly united and are both spiritual leaders. There is no room in Genesis 2 for the headship of Adam over Eve before sin!

Moreover, one cannot take examples from the “work” realm of our sinful world where the “leader” (director, president, dean, boss, ministerial secretary, etc.) can be considered as the “first among equals,” and transfer this dynamic into the relationship between husband and wife in the sinless life of the Garden of Eden. This is a logical error.

Consider also the following explanation of the Spirit of Prophecy. Ellen White explicitly states that “harmony” between Adam and Eve was lost only after the Fall, and Eve’s submission to Adam was the result of sin. White does not hint at all that there was a “functional spiritual male leadership” and submission of Eve to her husband before sin: “Eve was told of the sorrow and pain that must henceforth be her portion. And the Lord said, ‘Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.’ In the Creation God had made her the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with His great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other. Eve had been the first in transgression; and she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was

now placed in subjection to her husband” (White, PP 58; emphasis is mine). Ellen White never once differentiates between the “ontological equality” of Adam and Eve and “functional submission” of Eve to the “leadership or spiritual headship” of Adam before the Fall! She is not using this kind of vocabulary.

This misleading and false dichotomy was introduced into the evangelical discussion in the mid-1970s by George W. Knight III (not to be confused with SDA historian George R. Knight, Ed.D.) (“The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Male and Female with Special Attention to the Teaching/Ruling Functions in the Church,” *JETS* 18.2 [1975]: 83–84; idem, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women: New Testament Teaching* [Chicago: Moody, 1985], 7–9), was popularized in the book edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), and unfortunately has been adopted by many Adventists who oppose the ordination of women pastors and elders.

17. Pedrito Maynard-Reid, “Does James Teach Righteousness by Works?” in *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, ed. Gerhard Pfandl (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010), 416, 417.
18. For details, see Jiří Moskala, *The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals in Leviticus 11: Their Nature, Theology, and Rationale (An Intertextual Study)*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series 4 (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 2000), 377; cf. references cited in Richard M. Davidson and Paul S. Ratsara, “Dealing with Doctrinal Issues in the Church: Part 1,” *Ministry* (February 2013): 6, 7, 9.

It is also very interesting to observe that the Scripture reading in the Synagogue on the Day of Atonement (in the afternoon) is taken from Lev 17 and 18; Amos 9, and the Book of Jonah. These three portions of the Hebrew Bible have Gentiles in mind. The first two readings (Leviticus and Amos) are definitely reflected in Acts 15, and the church’s openness to non-Jews demonstrates familiarity and alignment with the main thought of the Book of Jonah—the desire and compassion of God to save everyone.

19. Abraham became the father of all believers, including Gentiles, because before he was circumcised, “he believed the LORD, and he counted

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- it to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6 ESV). Thus, the Jewish-Christian church corrected the traditional interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant (only those who were physically circumcised were part of this covenant, see Gen 17; Exod 4:24–26), and by providing a new interpretation, all believing Gentiles were included into the church. Paul, especially, helped the young Christian church to see the matter from this new perspective and to discover the intended meaning which was always present in the biblical text (Gen 12:2, 3; Rom 4:1–17).
20. White, *Review and Herald*, Jun. 12, 1913; emphasis is mine. Consider also the following: "A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend" (White, RH [Feb. 25, 1902], par. 8).
  21. Ekkehardt Müller, "Hermeneutical Guidelines for Dealing with Theological Questions." *BRI Newsletter* 40 (October 2012): 5, 6.
  22. Müller, "The Ordination Debate: How to Approach the Theological Issues," *Ministry* (June 2013): 14, 15.
  23. Jifi Moskala, "Eating and Drinking," *Shabbat Shalom* (Spring–Summer 1999): 16.
  24. See William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals, Exploring the Hermeneutic of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).
  25. Moskala, *The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals in Leviticus 11*, 344–348.
  26. The same is true with the biblical tithe. We pay it because we recognize that God is the Creator: we go back to Creation. The similar reasoning we use for our Adventist lifestyle of simplicity: back to Creation.
  27. See Ellen G. White's five-volume *Conflict of the Ages series*, illustrating the great controversy between Christ and Satan: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Prophets and Kings*, *The Desire of Ages*, *Acts of the Apostles*, and *The Great Controversy*.
  28. See, e.g., Richard M. Davidson, "Homosexuality in the Old Testament," in *Homosexuality, Marriage, and the Church: Biblical, Counseling, and Religious Liberty Issues*, ed. Roy E. Gane, Nicholas P. Miller, and H. Peter Swanson (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2012), 5–52.
  29. See Richard M. Davidson, "Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium," *JATS* 11.1 & 2 (2000): 108–111; for a longer list of thirty lines of biblical evidence, see idem, *Song for the Sanctuary: SDA Textbook* (Silver Spring, MD: SDA Biblical Research Institute, forthcoming), chap. 6. For other scholars who have laid the exegetical foundation for these insights, see Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991), 68–103; G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 66–80; Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (South Hampton, MA: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1989), 31–32, 54–56; Eric Bolger, "The Compositional Role of the Eden Narrative in the Pentateuch" (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1993); William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning* (Homebush, New South Wales: Lancer, 1985), 35–76; Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 12–13; Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press, 1985), 142–145; S. Dean McBride Jr., "Divine Protocol: Genesis 1:1–2:3 as Prologue to the Pentateuch," in *God Who Creates*, ed. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2000), 11–15; Donald W. Parry, "Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret, 1994), 126–151; Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature*, CBET 25 (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2000), 111–138; and Gordon J. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," in *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 9 (1986): 19–25; repr. in *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11*, ed. Richard S. Hess and David T. Tsumara (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399–404.

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30. White, PP 58, 59; emphasis is mine.
31. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vol. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948) 3:484; emphasis is mine.
32. White, *Evangelism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 472.
33. White, 6T 322 (1900).
34. Denis Fortin, "Ellen White, Women in Ministry, and the Ordination of Women" (paper presented at TOSC, July 2013). Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.

# ON THE UNIQUE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH

A Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University

## Preamble

WE, THE FACULTY of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, affirm that Christ is the only Head of the Church (Eph 1:22; 5:23; Col 1:18). Therefore, while there exists legitimate leadership in the Church, no other human being may rightfully claim a headship role in the Church. As Head of the Church, Christ provides the ultimate manifestation of God's love (Eph 5:23, 25), demonstrating and vindicating God's moral government of love (Rom 3:4, 25, 26 5:8), and thus defeating the counterfeit government of the usurping "ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 16:11; cf. DA 758; 2T 211).

## God's Moral Government of Love

Christ's headship in the Church is inextricably bound up with the love of God and is itself the ultimate explication of God's love for the world (John 3:16; 15:13; Rom 5:8). As the sole "head of the church," Christ "loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:23, 25).<sup>1</sup> Christ's demonstration of divine love as Head of the Church directly reflects God's moral government of love, within which the law is a transcript of God's character and, conversely, love is itself the fulfillment of God's law (Matt 22:37-39; Rom 13:8; cf. TMK 366).

Since love requires moral freedom, God does not exercise His headship power or authority to coerce or determine the moral will of His created beings. God permitted rebellion, at the highest cost to Himself, because He desires willing obedience that is motivated by love rather than fear. Such voluntary obedience could not be obtained by the exercise of power or authority, but can only be freely given. In this way, God's government is based on freely bestowed mutual love wherein God does not deterministically impose His will, but does hold intelligent creatures morally accountable to His perfect law of love.

Accordingly, rather than exercising His infinite power to unilaterally prevent or overturn the rebellion by removing the freedom necessary for a genuine love relationship, God has allowed the enemy's counterfeit government to manifest itself, while actively demonstrating the nature of His moral government of love in direct and striking contrast. Whereas the enemy grasps for power and domination, Christ, who possesses all power, does not dominate, determine, or coerce but "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant [*doulos*] . . . He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phil 2:7-9 NKJV). In this way, Christ, the unique Head of the Church, "demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). Consequently, God's government of unselfish love is clearly and supremely manifested.

## The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan

The Great Controversy originated with Satan's direct attack against the nature and role of Christ in heaven, seeking to displace Christ and exalt himself to be like God (Isa 14:12-14; Ezek 28:12-19; cf. Rev 12:7-9).

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In the history of the Great Controversy, the usurping "ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; cf. 2 Cor 4:4), although defeated at the cross, continues his quest to exalt himself by dominating others. He attempts to replace God's government of love with an alternative form of government that grasps for a domineering, self-seeking authority. He seeks to replace Christ as the Head (2 Thess 2:3, 4), injuring both Christ, the sole Head of the true Church, and Christ's corporate body, His Church.

From the second century onward, post-Apostolic Christianity gradually implemented a system of church government that reflected Rome's conception of authority as the power to arbitrarily command and coerce obedience and replaced the headship of Christ with the headship of mere humans. This counterfeit system of church governance was (1) hierarchical, based on a chain of command with a monarchical bishop at the "head" of the Church, with complete and final control over its affairs; (2) sacramental, meaning that the spiritual life of believers, including their very salvation, depended on ordained clergymen; (3) elitist (i.e., sacerdotal), meaning that the rite of ordination (laying on of hands) infused the clergy with special powers; and (4) headship-oriented, meaning that those who received the rite of ordination were thereby married to their Church and thus took on "headship" roles in the Church in place of Christ the Head ("*in persona Christi Capitis*"; cf. *Vicarius Filii Dei*, "in the place of the Son of God").

This system of government has been implemented in various forms, amounting to the usurpation of Christ's headship in the Church by mere humans. Indeed, this very system is that of the sea beast of Revelation 13-14 that was granted power and authority by the dragon (13:2, 4), counterfeits the resurrection of

Christ (13:3), accepts the world's worship along with the dragon (13:4, 8), blasphemes against God and His sanctuary, and exercises worldwide authority to persecute God's people (13:5-7). This antichrist power which usurps the role of Christ on earth in keeping with the ancient attempt by Satan to replace Christ in heaven, seeks to destroy the everlasting gospel and ultimately commands obedience and enforces false worship. This culminates in severe persecution of those who refuse to worship the beast and his image, the remnant who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus, those who place no confidence in mere humans with regard to their salvation (Rev 13:6-8; 14:6-12).

The antichrist system of church government sets the stage for the climactic events of the final conflict in Revelation by, among other things: (1) asserting authority to appoint humans to Christ-replacing headship positions in the Church on earth (globally and locally), (2) thereby claiming to uniquely possess authority to interpret and teach Scripture and thus have the final word on all matters of doctrine and ecclesial practice while (3) wielding the spiritual power and authority to command and coerce obedience using both spiritual and civil tools.

This system of government stands in direct contrast to Christ's headship and His teaching on the nature of the authority of Church leaders. Christ reflected God's moral government of love by exemplifying service leadership (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45), including a kind of authority that does not seek to subject the wills of others or enforce obedience. Rather, it leads by the example of service and unselfish love, which draws (rather than compels) others to willing service in love (Gal 5:13). All authority "in heaven and on earth" was given to Christ (Matt 28:18), but Christ does not remove graciously endowed free will and force

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His created human beings into obedience, but “loved [us] and gave Himself up for us” (Eph 5:2). The closest the Church comes to acts of enforcement is when it engages in discipline as a corporate body based on very clear teachings of Scripture. Such discipline is not the responsibility of any one person, or even a small group, but must be an action of at least the local congregation. Even then, such discipline does not result in coercion, but in restricting the individual from privileges of membership for a time in order to allow them to come to repentance and restoration (Matt 18:12–17; 1 Cor 5:5).

Church members (including but not limited to Church leaders) are called to follow Christ’s example of unselfish love (Eph 5:1). They are to have the mind of Christ, which includes the willingness to humble oneself and take on the role of a slave (*doulos*; Phil 2:5–8), or servant (*diakonos*) of Christ (Matt 20:26), even as He humbled Himself to the point of death. Whereas the leaders in the Roman Empire of Christ’s time “lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them” (Matt 20:25), it is not to be so with God’s people but “whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant [*diakonos*], and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave [*doulos*]” (Matt 20:26, 27).

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Thus, the one who would be great is the one who is the slave [*doulos*] of all (Mark 10:44), and the “greatest among you shall be your servant [*diakonos*]” (Matt 23:11; cf. 9–12). The Bible outlines essential roles of leadership and authority in the Church. However, all leadership within the Church must be servant leadership. First Peter 5:1–3, 5–7 adroitly balances the affirmation of leadership within the Church with the humility that such leadership entails: “Therefore, I

exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ . . . shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. . . . You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time” (Cf. AA 359, 360; DA 817). Accordingly, Church leaders should be humble servants. At the same time, they should be respected and deeply appreciated for their diligent labor (1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17; cf. Heb 13:7) even as they also show proper respect to others by demonstrating the mutual love and regard for others that is to take place among all Christians (1 Pet 2:17).<sup>2</sup>

The authority of those leading the Church is conveyed to them by the Church. This authority is delegated by Christ to His Church and implemented through its representative system. Thus appointed leaders become stewards of a power that should be exercised on behalf of Christ and for the benefit of those they lead. The functionality of authority does not negate equality among the members given to the Church by Christ. As the Spirit leads the body of Christ, not just the few in leadership, those leading out should seek to allow their decisions to be guided, insofar as possible, by the wisdom and insight of the group. As a Church, we thus give decision-making authority not to any single president or chairperson, but to committees, where those that lead the group are seeking the wisdom and, where possible, consensus of the group.

God’s remnant, then, will treasure a system

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of Church government, authority, and leadership that reflects (as much as is humanly possible) the ideal of God's government of love, within which moral freedom is cherished and leaders are the humble servants of all, even as Christ gave Himself up for all. This very kind of humble servant leadership, grounded in love, was perfectly modeled by Christ who, as unique "head of the church . . . loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph 5:23, 25), supremely exemplifying God's character and moral government of love.

### The Unique and Non-Transferable Headship of Christ

Scripture affirms that the Son is eternally equal with the Father and the Spirit (Col 2:9; Heb 1:3; Matt 28:19; John 1:1; 5:18; 8:58; 14:9; Phil 2:6; Rom 9:5; Col 1:15-17; DA 469, 530; GC 495; 7SDABC 437-40; TM 252; TA 209; RH [Apr. 5, 1906]). Scripture also affirms the temporary voluntary functional subordination of Christ the Son in order to accomplish the salvation of humanity (John 5:19; 8:28, 54; 14:10, 28; 17:5; Phil 2:7-11; Col 1:18-20; Eph 1:23; Heb 1:8; 1 Cor 15:20-28; Isa 9:6, 7; Dan 7:13, 14; Rev 11:15; PP 34; RH [Oct. 29, 1895]; RH [Jun. 15, 1905]; FLB 76). The interpersonal relationships within the Trinity provide the ultimate model of love and self-sacrifice for us. As such, they do not furnish a model for a top-down governmental structure for human leadership within the Church.

According to Scripture, Christ is the only Head of the Church and the human members of Christ's Church collectively (male and female) make up the body of Christ (Eph 1:22, 23; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19; cf. 1 Cor 11:3; Col 2:10). Likewise, Ellen White counsels: "Christ, not the minister, is the head of the church" (ST Jan. 27, 1890), and "Christ is the only Head of the church" (21MR 274; cf. DA 817, GC 51). Neither Scripture nor the writings of

Ellen White apply the language of headship in the Church to anyone other than Christ. Further, neither Scripture nor the writings of Ellen White endorse any transfer of the role of head in the home to roles within the Church body.

Since Christ is the only Head of the Church, no other can be head of the Church. That is, headship in the Church is unique to Christ and is non-transferable. All those who would follow Christ's method of ministry cannot do so by taking on His role of headship in the Church but by serving others in accordance with the "mind of Christ" (cf. Phil 2:5) and God's moral government of love. Deviation from the unique headship of Christ in the Church follows the enemy's practice of domination and counterfeit government, which directly contradicts and opposes God's moral government of love.

Accordingly, the role of "head" in the home (Eph 5:23) is not transferable to the realm of the Church. Indeed, the idea that the role of "head" in the home would or should transfer to other realms is a fallacious *non sequitur* (that is, the transfer from one realm to another does not follow logically). For example, one's role in the home obviously does not translate into a similar or analogous role in one's workplace. Beyond the logical problems inherent in the move from head of the home to headship in the Church, two demonstrably biblical rationales exclude such a transfer. First, as already noted, Christ is the *only* Head of the Church. Any attempt at proliferation of "heads" in the Church is thus unacceptable, for it is a step toward usurping the unique headship role of Christ, who is the only mediator between God and humans. It is unscriptural to speak of any kind of headship in the Church apart from that of Christ.

No inspired writer teaches the headship of man over woman at the Creation. Rather,

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Gen 1 teaches us that male and female participate equally in the image of God, with no hint of pre-Fall subordination of one to the other (Gen 1:27). Genesis 2 reinforces Genesis 1 in this regard. Eve's creation from Adam's side shows that she is "to stand by his side as an equal" (Gen 2:21, 22; PP 46). Although various interpretations of Gen. 3:16 have recognized some kind of post-Fall disruption of this pre-Fall egalitarian ideal, the Bible consistently calls us back to God's original plan for full equality without hierarchy (Song 7:10; Isa 65:17, 25; cf. Gen 1:29, 30). Paul's writings, though often misunderstood (2 Pet 3:16), maintain this Eden model (Eph 5:21-23), affirming with the rest of Scripture the Gospel ideal of the ultimate restoration of the Eden model (cf. Matt 19:8; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 3:28). Ellen White also underlines this redemptive paradigm: "Woman should fill the position which God originally designed for her, as her husband's equal" (AH 231). "The Lord desires His ministering servants to occupy a place worthy of the highest consideration. In the mind of God, the ministry of men and women existed before the world was created" (18MR 380). "Infinite wisdom devised the plan of redemption, which places the race on a second probation by giving them another trial" (3T 484; cf. PP 58, 59, and 1T 307, 308).

Second, every member of the Church is part of the body of Christ, who is the One Head. Since each member of the Church (male or female) is a part of the body of Christ, a member cannot at the same time exercise headship in the Church. In the same way, since Christ is the unique Husband of the Church (Christ's metaphorical bride), the members of the Church cannot themselves be husbands of the Church but collectively, men and women together are the bride of Christ. That the Church as family of God is analogous to human families only serves to suggest that humans should

manifest the love of God in their family relationships even as Christ does in relationship to His bride.

Within the body of Christ, the only Head of the Church, every member of the Church body receives spiritual gifts: the Spirit gives to "each one [*hekastos*] individually just as He wills" (1 Cor 12:11). The Holy Spirit is given to all believers at the time of the end: "And afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28-30, NIV). Within this very context, Scripture emphatically excludes the notion of elitism within the Church body of Christ, proclaiming that "we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many" (1 Cor 12:13, 14; cf. Gal 3:28). Thus, no member of the body is "any the less a *part* of the body" regardless of one's role (1 Cor 12:15, 16) and, indeed, those that are deemed "less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor" (1 Cor 12:23).

In all this, every gift and ministry is nothing without love, for "the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13; cf. all of chapter 13; cf. Rom 12:3-10; Eph 4:11-16). Here again, the unselfish love that is central to God's moral government should be reflected in humble service to one another within Christ's body and bride, the Church.

This is reflected in Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief No. 14, "Unity in the Body of Christ," which reads in part: "The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and



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poor, 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.”

There is no third category between the Head and body of Christ, or between the corresponding bridegroom (Christ) and bride (the Church). The minister is not to be separate from the body of Christ, but is likewise a member of Christ's body and thus plays a non-elitist role in service to and alongside the other members that corresponds to the individual's Spirit-bestowed gifts and accords with the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet 2:5-9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; cf. Exod 19:5, 6). Because it is the Spirit who gives gifts to each one (male and female) as He wills (1 Cor 12:11; cf. 12, 18, 19, 27-31; Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:18; Rom 12:4-8; Eph 4:11, 12; 1 Pet 4:10), the Church confers no spiritual powers or gifts on anyone but merely recognizes the gifts that God has granted and facilitates corresponding opportunities for ministry within the body of Christ. Leadership ministries within the Church are facilitated by the Church body as a recognition of the particular Spirit-given gifts and characteristics of servant leadership that reflect God's moral government of unselfish love (cf. Phil 2:5-8). In this way, both individually and collectively, the Church is to complete its mission of proclaiming the Three Angels' Messages and revealing God's character of love, the last revelation of God's mercy to the world (COL 415).

In sum, any form of headship claimed by a mere human, whether male or female, usurps the sole headship of Christ over the Church. Christian service, including Church leadership, is to reflect but never usurp Christ's leadership. Thus, while Christ's *manner of leadership* is to be reflected by believers, Christ's *particular role of leadership* is unique and not

to be encroached upon by any mere human. Christ alone is the Head of the Church body, of which all Christians are members and submitted to Him.

No human leader, then, may rightfully assume a headship role within the Church; the highest level to which any leaders can “ascend” corresponds directly to the depths to which they are willing to descend in loving and humble service, giving themselves for Christ's body even as Christ gave himself for his body and bride, his beloved Church, the object of “His supreme regard” (2SAT 215).

### Affirmations and Denials

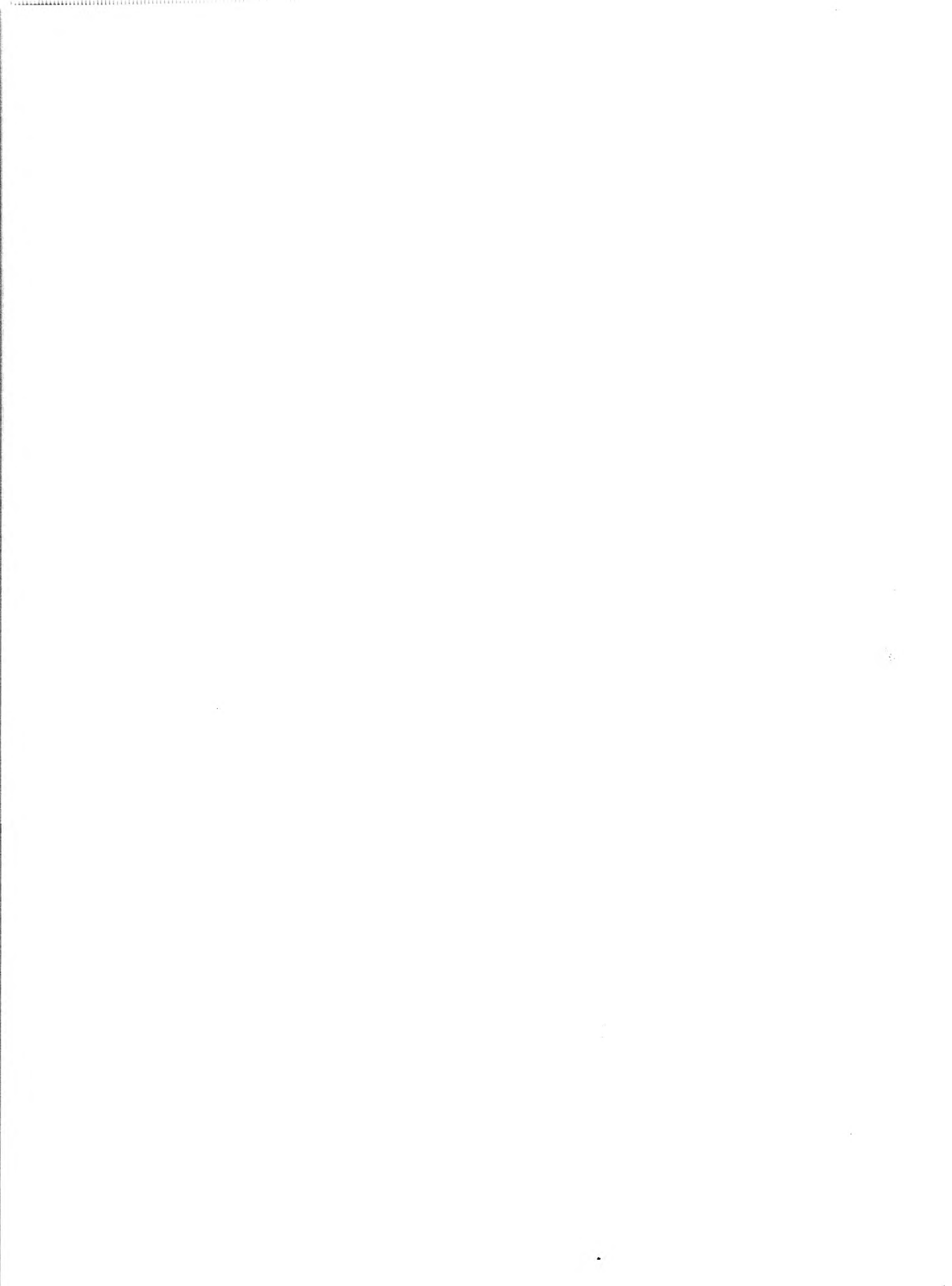
1. We affirm that there is only one Head of the Church, Christ, and this headship in the Church is non-transferable and inimitable. Thus, Christ's particular role of leadership is unique.
2. We deny that any human can rightly assume a headship role within the Church.
3. We affirm that leadership in the Church should be modeled after Christ's servant leadership and grounded in love, with the recognition that Christ's manner of leadership is to be reflected by Christian leaders.
4. We deny any Church government that results in sacramental, elitist, and headship-oriented leadership, which are counterfeits of Christ's moral government of love and usurp His unique role and authority as Head of the Church (His body) and husband of the Church (His wife).
5. We affirm that Church leaders possess stewardship responsibilities of the affairs of the Church, carrying out the decisions of the Church made in committee and business sessions.

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6. We deny that any mere human is invested with final decision--making authority in regards to Church teaching, ritual, or doctrine.
7. We affirm the priesthood of all believers along with the high priesthood of Christ and that no other mediator is needed between God and humans.
8. We deny any elevation of Church leaders as mediators between God and humans or as head of or in the Church.

### Endnotes:

1. Unless indicated otherwise, the biblical text is quoted from the *New American Standard Bible* (1995).
2. It is worth noting that some statements that refer to leadership roles within the Church use language that many English versions translate as "rule." For example, 1 Tim 5:17 states: "The elders who rule [*proestōtes* from the root *proistemi*] well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching" (cf. the similar use of this root in Rom 12:8; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:4, 5, 12). The root *proistemi*, here translated "rule," literally refers to those who "stand before," beneficially leading and ministering to the community, and should not be confused with some kind of monarchical rulership or sovereignty. In the LXX it refers to the household "ministry" of a servant of the prince (2 Sam 13:17; cf. 1 Tim 3:4, 5, 12) and the noun form of this root, *prostatis*, refers to Phoebe's ministry as *diakonos* (Rom 16:1, 2).



## THREE

# WHY WOMEN WERE BARRED FROM ORDINATION IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

THE TWELFTH-CENTURY theologian, Peter Lombard, is best known for his sentence collection, made up of quotations authorities on the topic of his systematic arguments. As collector and exegete, he empowered his arguments with proof texts and examples from both canonical Scripture and from the church fathers.<sup>2</sup> His resulting work, the four books of *The Sentences*,<sup>3</sup> became the basis for the curriculum of theological studies in the emerging European universities for centuries afterward.<sup>4</sup> Peter Lombard's *Sentences* were the foundation and model for Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica*. They were also the basic curriculum at Oxford where John Wyclif wrote his initial Christological work

as a commentary on book 3 of *The Sentences*.<sup>5</sup> Even Martin Luther did his advanced student lectures on *The Sentences* as a major part of his education in Erfurt.<sup>6</sup> Lombard's *Sentences* were made the basis of the curriculum not because he was always considered to be right when taking sides in the arguments within scholastic theology, but because of his coherent, systematic presentation of the issues as well as the breadth of his quotations from the early fathers.<sup>7</sup>

Lombard was at times considered more useful than right. This is why John Calvin, who usually used Lombard as a negative example, quoted him so many times in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.<sup>8</sup> Yet Lombard was treated, by many generations of scholars that followed him, as the repository of the theological tradition of the Christian church. This included his descriptions of sacramental theology. The first three books of *The Sentences* cover the Trinity, Creation, and the Incarnation. It is the fourth book, on the sacraments, including ordination, that most concerns us here.

The main tenets of Peter Lombard's sacramental theology are detailed in his fourth book of *The Sentences*, which is made up of fifty Distinctions, or issues, that needed clarification. Here, after an initial Distinction differentiating sign from sacrament, Lombard organizes the seven sacraments of the sacramental system of salvation developed in Christian tradition into the five which pertain to all Christians and the two that pertain to only some Christians. He introduces and discusses the first five sacraments, pertaining to all Christians, in the sequence in which Christians of his day received them: Baptism (Distinctions 2–6), Confirmation (Distinction 7), the Eucharist (Distinctions 8–13), Penance (Distinctions 14–22), and Extreme Unction (Distinction 23). The last two sacraments,

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Ecclesiastical Orders (Distinctions 24 and 25) and Marriage (Distinctions 26–42), are taken up last because they do not involve all Christians. The remaining distinctions (43–50) concern eschatological issues, or things pertaining to the last judgment and the post-judgment realities.

In the first Distinction, as well as in the treatment of several of the sacraments, Lombard presents his definition of the nature and function of a sacrament. He perceives that each sacrament moves Christians along their journey from the realm of sin (*regio dissimilitudinis*, the region of dissimilarity with God and self),<sup>9</sup> back toward the likeness of God. This progress in grace is possible because, for Lombard, grace is both contained and conveyed in the sacraments.<sup>10</sup> But Lombard starts by understanding the sign (*sacramentum tantum*, only the sacrament) and the sacrament (*res sacramentum*, the thing of the sacrament); or more precisely, with the medium (accident) and the thing (*res*) of the sacrament. In other words, he denotes that the medium, which is the physical manipulation and the speaking with the mouth, are the mere motions of the sacrament. The real thing, the spiritual change that cannot be physically seen, is the spiritual aspect of the rite: what he terms the *res*, or thing, of the sacrament.

In distinction 24, Lombard turns his attention to the ecclesiastical orders and sacred ordination. Seven orders are recognized (ch 3). They are described in increasing hierarchy or “ecclesiastical degrees”: doorkeeper, lector, exorcist, acolyte, subdeacon, deacon, and priest (ch 5–11). The top two orders, deacons and priests, are in a different category than the lower ones, because they handle the things associated with the altar. The priest consecrates and performs the sacraments, while the deacon dispenses and assists. So Chapter 12 summarizes that “two alone are called sacred,” and suggests that

this is because the primitive church had only two orders, and the apostles only ordained these two. Chapter 13 pushes on to define the sacred character of the highest orders as having “some mark, that is, something sacred, by which spiritual power and office are granted to the one ordained. And so the spiritual character, when a promotion of power is made, is called an order or degree.” He then clarifies that they “are called sacraments, because a sacred thing [*res*] is conferred in receiving them, that is, grace, which the actions and words carried out at ordination signify.” So the actual motions of ordaining a deacon or priest/elder are understood to signify the sacred; but the *res*, the sacred thing, is conferred because the ordination is a sacrament, which changes the character of the one ordained into a being of higher spiritual power.

The bishop is considered as within the order of priests, specifically at the top of the order, as high priest (ch 11). Furthermore, the bishops are divided into four levels (ch 17) with the pontiff at the very height of the hierarchy (ch 16, 17), as the “highest priest.” It is interesting to note that these highest levels of bishops are not modeled after the OT priesthood and sanctuary the way the deacons, priests, and bishops are modeled after the Levites, priests, and high priest. Rather, they are modeled after the Roman priests of Jupiter, called *flamens*. Lombard quotes Isidore (ch 17:3) who notes that the distinction among the higher bishops “appears to have been introduced by the pagans, who called some of the priests simply flamens, others archflamens, and yet others protoflamens.” The Christian hierarchical priesthood models after these pagan hierarchies.

Distinction 25 addresses the issue of a sacrament conferred by a heretic. Cyprian, Jerome, Leo I, Gregory I, and Innocent I all are quoted as suggesting that such a sacrament

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would be invalid because of the moral character of the one ordaining (ch 1–6). However, it is Augustine's argument that holds sway, saying that the sacrament, even if conferred by a heretic, must be valid because of the *ordo*, which bestows upon the ordained an indelible spiritual character which cannot be marred by his moral character. (ch 7–10). The ordination (*ordo*) contains the spiritual thing (*res*).

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the sacramental system was fully completed in Roman Catholicism. Peter Lombard was a significant contributor in this process. At the Fourth Lateran Council in Rome in 1215 the term "transubstantiation" was first voted into canon law as part of the creed in an Ecumenical Council.<sup>11</sup> Transubstantiation describes the ontological change of the elements of bread and wine that physically look and feel unchanged. It is a spiritual change that cannot be perceived by physical perceptions. With transubstantiation completing the full ontological sacramental conceptualization of the false system of salvation, the understanding of the ontological change of priests in the sacrament of ordination into a spiritual class distinct from, and spiritually superior to, the laity was also complete. Ordination, conceived as a sacrament, as a part of the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic sacramental system and part of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, became a solid part of the Catholic Christian tradition at this time.

How did this sacramental system of salvation—led by a mystagogically changed priesthood, so foreign to the biblical understanding of salvation or the NT conceptualization of the leadership of the Christian church—come to be? A vast difference and distance exists between the teachings of the Bible and this sacramental, hierarchical system. This false system of salvation is essentially what the Protestant Reformation was protesting against. What

started the trajectories that ended at this point? How do these trajectories differ from the trajectories of the Bible concerning women and Christian leadership?

This chapter seeks to highlight the biblical trajectories relating to women and Christian leadership, which contrasted with the ancient cultural understandings of women and leadership, comparing them with the trajectories of the early Christian tradition. It then attempts to answer the complex question of the causes for the shaping of the trajectories in the Christian tradition.

### Biblical Trajectory Toward Women in Leadership

#### *OT Status of Women Higher Than in Surrounding Cultures*

Though portraying many patriarchal elements, the Old Testament contains correctives to the blatant attitudes against women in the surrounding cultures. A quick comparison of some of Moses' statements and rulings with those of the Code of Hammurabi illustrates the distance between the two on their understandings of the status of women in their societies. In the Mosaic law, for example, women are allowed to own or inherit property and, except for slaves, cannot be sold.<sup>12</sup> Even the all-male particular priesthood of the OT Sanctuary may have been all-male intentionally, as a polemic against the sexual cultic priestesses of the surrounding cultures.<sup>13</sup>

More indicative of trajectories toward an egalitarian relationship between men and women, specifically regarding leadership, is the occasional practice in the OT of showing women active in leadership. From Miriam's prophetic and worship-leading roles among women (Exod 15:20, 21) to Deborah's leadership as judge and military commander (Judg 4 and 5; especially 4:4, 5, 14, and 5:7),

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the OT has numerous examples of women taking leading roles.<sup>14</sup> The ideal woman of Prov 31 is concerned with her household but shows also how she functions with confidence in the public sphere in buying and selling land and goods (Prov 31: 16, 18, 24).

### *NT Status of Women Also Higher Than in the Greco-Roman Culture*

Whereas Jesus did not include any women among the twelve disciples, women were integral to His ministry and were, in fact, the financial backing for His ministry (Luke 8:1-3). Mary, Joanna, and Susanna are specifically named in conjunction with the twelve, as being with Jesus as He traveled in Galilee. These women stayed with Him throughout His ministry and were even attendant on His death, garnering two mentions by Luke in contrast to the absence of the twelve at the crucifixion and burial (Luke 24:49, 55, 56). To these women, Jesus first revealed Himself after the resurrection (Matt 28:9, 10; Mark 16:9-11). Through these women Jesus sent the truth of His resurrection to the unbelieving eleven (Luke 24:9-11; John 20:18). These women were also listed in Acts as among the 120 joined in constant prayer (Acts 1:14) and who were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4) in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21).

Paul also refers to women among the leaders and workers for the church. Nine women are named in Romans 16,<sup>15</sup> including Phoebe,<sup>16</sup> Priscilla, and Junia<sup>17</sup>—being three who seem to have particular leadership roles. In Philippians, Euodia and Syntyche are implored to be in agreement at the same time they are praised as “fellow workers” who have contended by Paul's side in the cause of the gospel (Phil 4:2, 3).

Another place in the NT where women's leadership in the Christian church is evident is in the Johannine epistles. The “chosen lady”

addressed in John's second letter (2 John 1:13) may well have been the leader of a house church in the province of Asia (now western Turkey). As in the OT, diverse authors represent women in many different leadership roles in the NT.

### *NT Church Leadership*

In the NT, church leadership is recognized by the church body in the form of gifts given by the Holy Spirit to fulfill necessary functions in the church. The gifts are given to all of the body of Christ, with no class or gender qualifications (1 Cor 12:7). By the command of Jesus, those accepting authority functions among Christians are not to “lord it over” others, but to serve (Matt 20:25, 26). Paul concurs with this, referring to himself and other Christian leaders, of both genders, using serving and fellowship terminology (1 Cor 3:5; Phil 1:1, 4:3; Rom 16). In this conceptualization of leadership, the NT presents a very different trajectory of the development of leadership than prevailed in the surrounding, Greco-Roman culture. Holy Spirit-gifted leadership is not according to class or gender, nor is it of a quality to dominate or be in authority “over” others. In the Greco-Roman world, governmental leadership was both of these. Only the males of the Senatorial class could govern provinces or be in the Roman Senate, and the quality of the authority was hierarchical, “over” the other citizens and people of the provinces.

In the Christian leadership visualized in the NT, Christ is the only head of the church, the only High Priest and the only particular Priest. All other priestly roles are shared by all believers. No indication is found in the NT that the Christian ministry, the leadership of the Christian church, was to be modeled after the OT particular priesthood. Rather, this was decisively dissolved by God at the death of Christ when He tore the curtain in the temple from top to bottom (Matt 27:51).

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### Women in the Early Church Era

Women were clearly recorded in the NT as being in leadership positions in the church. Yet by the end of the fourth century, women in leadership were rare and relegated to lower positions in the emerging hierarchical, priestly structure. This raises the question of what caused this shift away from women in leadership.

At least two major social pressures in the second and third centuries influenced Christians away from women in leadership in the church: 1. World View: direct pressure against women taking leadership roles in society; 2. Sacerdotalism and Priesthood: the conceptualization of the Christian ministry as a hierarchical priesthood continuing the OT particular priesthood.

#### *Direct Cultural Pressure Against Women in Leadership: House Churches to Public Structures—Women and Apologetics*

Direct cultural pressure against women in leadership in the Christian church began to be felt in the late first and early second centuries, when Christianity outgrew its house church structure and began to develop into public institutions with public buildings.<sup>18</sup> Also, because Christianity was a fast-growing religion, over time it came under greater public scrutiny. As such, a major motivator in this shift was apologetic in nature. Christians did not want to bring public embarrassment onto the church. The second- and third-century Christian apologists wrote a genre of defense literature aimed at presenting Christianity in a positive light to their neighbors, the public—the very public that was the object of their evangelistic thrust.

Several important changes came to Christianity in response to public accusations—changes which became integral parts of Christian tradition. In regard to these early shifts away

from biblical teaching and practice C. Mervyn Maxwell often remarked, “The speed with which the early church tobogganed into apostasy can take your breath away.” Three of these changes in particular very quickly caused fundamental deviations from the teachings of the Bible.

### Three Deviations From NT Teachings and Practice

The first example of a deviation from the NT that became a part of Christian tradition concerns the Sabbath. Nowhere in the NT is there any suggestion on the part of Jesus or Paul that the Sabbath should be replaced by Sunday. Yet by about A.D. 150 we have at least two Christian writers, in two different metropolitan churches, illustrating such a change. The *Epistle of Barnabas*, chapter 15, argues against the weekly Sabbath and in favor of keeping the eighth day—the day after Sabbath—in honor of the resurrection of Jesus. Justin Martyr, in his *First Apology*, chapter 67, describes for the Emperor of Rome what he represents as a typical Christian worship service, on the first day of the week. Justin also argues against weekly Sabbath-keeping in his *Dialogue with Trypho* (12, 18, 21–24). The argument arises as to how representative Justin and the *Epistle of Barnabas* were of early Christian practice, even in their home cities of Rome and Alexandria. Also, there is clear evidence that for centuries afterward, many Christians kept both Sabbath and Sunday.<sup>19</sup> Yet Sunday, not the seventh-day Sabbath, became the standard Christian day of worship throughout the world, though with exceptions, and is currently well-known to be Christian tradition. It is telling to see how far evangelical Protestants go to find a NT teaching in favor of first-day worship and against seventh-day worship as they try to defend this Christian tradition against the Bible.<sup>20</sup>



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So why is the change from Sabbath to Sunday in Christian tradition an example of societal and cultural pressure? Because, the Christian relationship to the Jews was changed by the shift in public sentiment after the three Jewish rebellions which occurred in A.D. 70, 118, and 135. Roman law had protected the Jewish religion as an ancient and respected religion before these three rebellions. After the Bar Kokhba rebellion around 135, however, imperial law and public sentiment changed. Hadrian made laws against the Jews ever inhabiting Jerusalem again, and public sentiment recognized connection to the Jews as tantamount to treason against Rome and ingratitude for the advantages proffered. The Sabbath, along with circumcision and avoidance of pork, was a well-known defining characteristic of Judaism. The Sabbath functioned as a border issue between Jews and the surrounding cultures. Leaving behind the Sabbath was a defensive act of separation from Judaism and was not based on fear of imprisonment or death. It would not seem logical that Christians willing to die for their faith in Christ, such as Justin Martyr, would shrink from the Sabbath out of fear of death. This Christian separation from the Sabbath of the Jews seems based more on fear of bringing public shame to Christianity (and themselves).

The second example of a deviation from the teachings and principles of the NT that became a part of Christian tradition consists of hell and the immortality of the soul. The Bible teaches that humans are continually dependent on God for life, and that humans have a unified anthropology: we do not *have* souls, rather, we *are* living souls. However, even before the end of the first century after the birth of Christ, we find that Clement of Rome, in chapter 5 of his letter to the Corinthians known as *First Clement*, already represents Peter and Paul as living in heaven. This

suggests an early Christian accommodation to a Platonic view of worthy humans gaining an immediate ascent of the soul to the divine realm upon death. Possibly even more telling is the development of the concept of hell within Christianity. Tatian, writing his *Oration to the Greeks*, around A.D. 170, insisted on two things that seem incompatible: that the human soul is not immortal (13.1), and that after the resurrection of the wicked, these would remain forever in a constant state of punishment which he calls a deathless death (14.5). Theophilus of Antioch and Irenaeus, two of his contemporaries, have similar views of human dependence on God for life, yet they seem to view eternal punishment in an ever-burning fire as a necessity so as to not be seen as soft on sin.<sup>21</sup> In his three books *To Autolycus*, Theophilus argues that the Greek poets and philosophers got their ideas about judgment from the Hebrew prophets (2:37) and extols the extreme retributive punishment of the wicked described by Sybil as true, useful, just, and profitable to all (2:36). In view of Christianity's doctrine of forgiveness, a presentation of a robust judgment on sin in the afterlife could allay a public perception of Christians as immoral and, therefore, as bad citizens.

Similar to the Sabbath, hell and immortality of the soul became the overwhelming tradition of Christianity. It takes care and attention to detail to demonstrate the true teaching of the Bible against this Christian tradition, shared by nearly all Christians, especially those who are biblically conservative. Again, it was not fear of punishment that caused Christians to accept hell and the immortality of the soul but fear of casting aspersions on Christianity as being immoral and soft on sin.

A third deviation from New Testament teaching and practice that can be used to demonstrate the second and third-century shift away from the New Testament and

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toward Christian tradition, is the practice of women in Christian leadership. The New Testament shows many women in leadership roles. From Mary taking the message of the risen Lord from the tomb to the gathered disciples, and the woman at the well taking the message of the Messiah to her townspeople, to Priscilla, Lydia, Junia, Phoebe, Euodia, and Syntyche, thanked and corrected by Paul as ministers, apostles, and deacons—all these are examples of women Christian teachers and leaders reported in the New Testament. Yet almost every one of them has been meticulously played down in importance throughout history by Christians who sought to defend the traditions of the church. So the early deviations of the Christian church away from the teachings and practice of the Bible concerning Sabbath, hell, and women in leadership laid the foundations of non-biblical traditions that need correction.

### *Greco-Roman View of Women as Subject by Nature*

The first of the two identified social pressures that led toward the Christian tradition of women not being allowed leading roles in the church was that the Greco-Roman culture viewed women as of a different class and kind than men, and subject by nature to being ruled. This caused a direct societal pressure against women in leadership which caused women in the Christian institutional structures to be viewed negatively by the Greco-Roman super-culture. This direct pressure against women in leadership roles throughout society is part of the world view of the patriarchal Greco-Roman culture. It is assumed to be the right thing, with multigenerational underpinnings. For the Roman of Paul's day, it just seemed a part of nature that men, rather than women, should be in charge.

One source which demonstrates a rationale

for this patriarchal view of leadership from the philosophical and academic sphere is Aristotle's hierarchy of being. The bottom of the hierarchy is pure material: rocks and minerals. Next up is plant life followed by the "lower" animals which swim, creep, and crawl. Above them are the more upright animals such as quadrupeds. Above these are the animals that can walk on two feet in an actual upright position. Humans top the animals with the *daemons* above them in the semi-divine realm. At the pinnacle of the hierarchy of being comes the unmoved Mover, the First Cause, the transcendent One, or God. Aristotle, along with many of the philosophers of his age, was a monotheist, and his prime Mover topped the hierarchy. Within this hierarchy another division of levels is spelled out, based on the male and female genders, with the males being above the females within the hierarchy. This is considered a natural law based on the observation of male dominance in most of the higher animals. Also, the class system of humans fits into the hierarchy: slaves at the bottom, the masses next, and both topped by the ruling classes. This complex hierarchy of *humans within the overall hierarchy of being* is best illustrated by a passage in Aristotle's book *Politics*, 1.5.3-8 (1260a)<sup>22</sup> where he discusses proper household management by the male ruler of the slaves, women, and children.

Aristotle asks whether a slave has value beyond that of a tool. After concluding that the slave does, as a human, have moral virtues, Aristotle then asks a similar question of a woman or child. Again he concludes that, as humans, they too have moral virtues. The next logical question that follows, given Aristotle's conceptualization of class and gender, is whether virtue is the same for the "natural ruler and the subject"? Then Aristotle asks the penetrating question. "If it is proper for both to partake in nobility of character,

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how could it be proper for the one to rule and the other to be ruled unconditionally?" In our world, many would answer this question with a strong, "No, it is not proper!" But for Aristotle, and those who for over 2,000 years followed his conclusions from nature, the answer was a qualified "yes, it is proper," on account of differences in the makeup of their souls. Aristotle goes on to argue that there is a difference in kind between the souls of those who naturally rule, that is, ruling class males, and of those who are naturally subjugated, namely, slaves, women, and children. "For the free rules the slave, the male the female, and the man the child." This is natural, Aristotle says, because the souls of the rulers have "the virtues of the rational," while the souls of the subjugated have virtues of "the irrational." A further explanation details that "the slave has not the deliberative part at all, the female has it, but without full authority, while the child has it, but in an undeveloped form."

So Aristotle's hierarchy of being includes the details of the hierarchy between classes of humans which he defines as differences in kind, and ends up with a few rulers and many subjugated peoples. Like the slave is subjugated to the ruling class, the female is subjugated to the male because her soul lacks in rational and deliberative parts and is, therefore, naturally of a kind to be ruled.

This goes along very well with the differences between the male and female humans in the writings of Aristotle's teacher, Plato, who stressed the intellectual nature of the male and the sensual nature of the female. Whereas it is obvious that there are differences between males and females, it is a difficult jump to accept this Platonic philosophical view of the differences as being hierarchical. In his dialogue on the *Republic*, 431c, Plato pens Socrates as saying:

Furthermore, pleasures, pains, and appetites that are numerous and multifarious are things one would especially find in children, women, household slaves, and in the so-called free members of the masses—that is, the inferior people.

In the next statement of Socrates, the contrast of the few in the ruling class is given as those who are led by "rational calculation." This suggests that the ruling class, made up of a few high-born males, were more intellectual by nature than the slaves and women. One could summarize the Platonic view of male and female as the male being by nature intellectual (oriented toward the intelligible world and the divine), while the female is by nature sensual (oriented toward the sense-perceptible, or earthly, and emotional). He then adds the value judgment of the earthly being inferior to the heavenly, so the female is inferior to the male.

So, women, according to Plato and Aristotle, are of a different kind and class, and are subjugated to men by nature.

How does thought and belief from the fourth century before Christ affect the trajectory in the early church as they develop their church leadership and interpret the writings of the NT? It affects it very much, because the science and philosophy of the first centuries of the Christian era was almost entirely based on Middle Platonic philosophy. Early in the first century B.C., Antiochus of Ascalon<sup>23</sup> broke with his teacher in the Platonic Academy, Philo of Larissa, with what he called a return from the Skeptical Academy to the Old Academy. Antiochus included the teachings of Aristotle and the Stoic, Zeno of Citium, with Plato's teaching in the Academy, or Platonic school of philosophy. This became the dominant school of philosophy and the dominant thought of the Greco-Roman culture until the third

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century A.D., when Plotinus<sup>24</sup> moved the Academy in a new direction, still highly influenced by Plato and Aristotle, which was called Neoplatonism. So the dominant thought during the earliest centuries of the Christian church has come to be called Middle Platonism,<sup>25</sup> and includes ideas and doctrines from Platonic, Peripatetic (from Aristotle), and Stoic (from Zeno) systems of thought. The Early Church theologians followed this Platonic school as well, as can be seen in Augustine's grand book *The City of God*, book 8, where he rails against all philosophy as false knowledge and at the end makes an exception for the Platonic school, praising it for its truth. So the hierarchy of being, with its class and gender hierarchies within humanity, was part of the dominant world view in the infancy and childhood of Christianity. However, Jesus placed the ideal for Christian leadership in stark contrast to the surrounding cultural hierarchical leadership practices: "It should not be so among you" (Matt 20:25-28). Paul also did not simply copy the thought of the day as evidenced by the many women in leadership that he referenced in his writings (especially Rom 16).

This hierarchy of being was treated as a moral compass, that which provides orientation for all moral activity and decisions. It became the philosophical underpinning within the political realm as well.

When faced with securing the structures of society as part of the *Pax Romana*, Caesar Augustus considered male dominance in the home and society, through the *pater familias* system, to be the basis of his defense against chaos and anarchy. The Peace of Rome depended upon the traditional structures of society to ensure stability. The stability was vital in the Roman system because about 5 percent of the population was ruling the other 95

percent for the benefit of the 5 percent. Any instability would threaten the whole system, because the 5 percent were continually vulnerable. However, the system worked, because the world view of the whole population stood on the social and religious structures built, at least partially, on the idea of male dominance in the hierarchy of being. Thus, the New Testament idea of women taking part in leadership was generally considered subversive to the stability of society.

An illustration of Christian women in leadership being viewed as subversive by a Roman governing official can be found in the correspondence between the Emperor Trajan and Pliny the Younger, then governing the province of Bythnia and Pontus on the southern shore of the Black Sea. Pliny described a passive approach to dealing with accused Christians that did not seek Christians out in order to punish them, but only dealt with Christians if someone accused them in his court. Trajan responded by agreeing that this was a good policy for Rome. The letters contain an interesting contact point between Christians as a minority group and a super-culture concerned with maintaining control. In pointing out the subversive elements of the Christians, Pliny includes such things as unauthorized meetings taking place at times outside of normal public hours. He also considers Christians to be immoral and superstitious on the basis of having women leaders, which he referred to as *ministrae*, a term Pliny used in the male form to refer to ministers of state a number of times in his official correspondence. In this circumstance he had two Christian women *ministrae* tortured, and when they would not give up their faith and offer the sacrifice, he had them killed.<sup>26</sup>

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### *Christian Tradition Follows the Greco-Roman View of Women as Subject by Nature*

A century later, in 203, when the Roman Emperor Septimius Severus was taking a more active policy against Christians by seeking them out, we find an illustration of the Christian acceptance of the Greco-Roman view of women as of a different class and kind in the Christian reaction to the death of female martyrs described in the martyr story of *Perpetua and Felicitas*. These two women were said to have died valiantly with their faith intact and were duly praised by the Christian author of the story. Significantly, Perpetua was described in this circumstance in male terms, specifically as having “manly valor.”<sup>27</sup> Assumedly, this was because her valor virtue went beyond a woman’s normal valor virtue, as given by nature to women, who are naturally ruled, which Aristotle described as a “partial share,” of the virtue. This is an example of Christians sliding away from the biblical trajectory of correcting the cultural misconceptions concerning women. Instead, Christians mirrored the Greco-Roman view of women.

There are many other examples of Christians adopting the Middle Platonic/Greco-Roman worldview on women as of a different class and different kind. This trajectory away from the biblical view of man and woman created in the image of God is heralded poignantly by Tertullian. He used 1 Tim 2 to generalize the unworthiness of women as well as to disqualify them from Christian ministry. In the first section in *On the Apparel of Women*, Tertullian released a venomous statement about women based on his reading of 1 Tim 2: “And do you not know that each of you are an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil’s gateway: you are the

unsealer of that tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God’s image, man.” Though he does not actually say it, Tertullian here suggests that females are not in the image of God and are, therefore, of a different class and kind than males.

John Chrysostom takes the negative rhetoric against women even farther. Although he insists in his *Discourse 4 On Genesis* that women share “the equality of honor” with men, in *Discourse 2 On Genesis*, he revealed that he believed that the image of God “is not meant in regard to essence, but in regard to authority” and “this only the man has, the woman has it no longer. For he is subjected to no one, while she is subjected to him.”<sup>28</sup> Chrysostom uses Paul (1 Cor 11:7–11) to say that women are not in the image of God but are instead subjected to men, of a different class and kind.

Augustine, in his *Literal Commentary on Genesis* (11.42) argues similarly, with even clearer Platonic language. Referring to the deception of the serpent, Augustine declares that the “man endowed with a spiritual mind” would not have believed the deception, but the one deceived was the “woman who is of small intelligence and who perhaps still lives more in accordance with the promptings of the inferior flesh than by superior reason.” Augustine then asks, “Is this why the apostle Paul does not attribute the image of God to her?”<sup>29</sup> Again, Augustine uses his reading of Paul to cast upon women the lower class—and even lower spiritual class—understanding of Platonism and the Greco-Roman worldview. The tradition of the church was building a barrier to a right reading of scripture in regard to women.

Even when the things said about a woman are extremely positive, the same differences of class and kind are evident. Gregory of Nyssa,

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when describing a conversation with a friend about the final hours of his beloved sister Macrina, for whom his respect is transparent, gave her the following compliment: "It was a woman who was the subject of our discourse, if indeed you can say 'a woman,' for I do not know if it is appropriate to call her by a name taken from nature when she surpassed that nature."<sup>30</sup>

The trajectory of the OT and NT, showing women in more positive roles than the surrounding cultures allowed, was truncated and turned aside by the early church, which followed instead the trajectories of the Greco-Roman world. The direct cultural pressure against Christian women in leadership during the second and third centuries led to the church fathers developing a tradition that bowed to the surrounding culture. Again, this deviation from the teachings and practices of the NT followed the pattern of giving up the Sabbath and accepting the immortality of the soul.

### *Sacerdotalism and Priesthood: Adoption of the OT Particular Priesthood Excludes Women*

The second form of social and cultural pressure against women in Christian leadership came from a pagan understanding of the Lord's Supper and salvation. This was most notable in the rise of the notion that the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, was a sacrifice repeatedly offered to God rather than a remembering of the once-offered sacrifice of Christ (Heb 10:12) on our behalf. With the continued *cultus* of a sacrifice arose the need for a priesthood. The OT model of the particular priesthood was adopted and placed over the NT conception of Christian ministry. Also, the hierarchical nature of the Roman Empire came to be reflected in church governance as well.

During the first half of the second century, the Christian Eucharist came to be perceived as a sacrifice offered to God. Ignatius of Antioch, in his *Epistle to the Ephesians* 5, used sacrificial language metaphorically to denote the church as the place of the sacrifice. Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 41, 117) and the *Didache* (14) made the overt connection of the Christian Eucharist with the universal sacrifice prophesied in Mal 1:11. The Eucharist provided the fixed *cultus* for priestly activity, so familiar to the pagan background of the new Christians. Judaism and most of the pagan religions from which the new believers came believed in sacrifices offered to God by a specific priesthood. This familiarity could have been part of the influence leading to the perception of the Eucharist as a sacrifice.

Cyprian of Carthage and his experiences surrounding the Decian persecution in 249–251 clarified for Catholics the relationship between salvation and the church. In the aftermath of the persecution, a confused congregation that had looked to the martyrs and those in prison as confessors for spiritual direction and even forgiveness, now had to deal with their bishop, Cyprian, who had fled the city during the persecution. When he returned, he had to reestablish order in the church when his own moral authority was in question. He called a synod of bishops, of which he was the leader, as the metropolitan bishop of the province of North Africa, and through them asserted his official authority to reestablish the unity of the church. In his treatise entitled *On the Unity of the Church*, he and the bishops of the synod summarized three principles of Catholic Church order:

1. You cannot have God as your Father unless you have the church as your Mother.

This attested to his belief, that was gaining universal appeal, that salvation is only available through the church. Through baptism

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and the Eucharist the church offered salvation to its members.

2. The church is defined by and identified with the bishop.

This emphasized the concept of a class distinction between the laity and the clergy. It also emphasized the single head at the top of the spiritual hierarchy.

3. Only the Bishop can forgive sins.

This placed the spiritual authority of salvation firmly into the hands of the bishops. It denied that either the confessors or the presbyters on their own authority could offer God's grace. This concept is built on Tertullian's understanding of the *ordinatio*, which set the bishop up as the high priest.<sup>31</sup>

In the fourth and fifth centuries, the development of the mystagogical understanding of church buildings, altars, the Eucharist, and priests by Ambrose of Milan, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, and others set the stage for the ever-heightening understanding of sacerdotalism of all things connected with salvation. An example of this can be found in Gregory's sermon *On the Baptism of Christ*:

For this holy altar, too, by which I stand, is stone, ordinary in its nature, nowise different from the other slabs of stone that build our houses and adorn our pavements; but seeing that it was consecrated to the service of God, and received the benediction, it is a holy table, an altar undefiled, no longer touched by the hands of all, but of the priests alone, and that with reverence. The bread again is at first common bread, but when the sacramental action consecrates it, it is called, and becomes, the Body of Christ. So with the sacramental oil; so with the wine: though before the benediction they are of little value, each of them, after the sanctification bestowed by the Spirit, has its several operation [*sic*]. The same power of the word, again, also makes

the priest venerable and honourable, separated, by the new blessing bestowed upon him, from his community with the mass of men. While but yesterday he was one of the mass, one of the people, he is suddenly rendered a guide, a president, a teacher of righteousness, an instructor in hidden mysteries; and this he does without being at all changed in body or form; but, while continuing to be in all appearance the man he was before, being, by some unseen power and grace, transformed in respect of his unseen soul to the higher condition.<sup>32</sup>

This higher condition was seen as off limits to women, both on account of the difference in class and kind between women and men, as well as on the basis of the OT Levitical priesthood being exclusively male. It would have been seen as a sacrilege as bad as that of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, recorded in Numbers 16, to view a woman as a priest under these cultural influences. One might ask, however, whether making the Christian ministry, which within an Adventist context is often referred to as the Gospel ministry, into a priesthood, when such a designation is never called for in scripture, falls into the same category of sacrilege. Usurping priestly functions, such as Gideon did when he set up his ephod at Ophrah (Judg 8:27) never turns out well. Whereas Christian ministers are included in the priesthood of all believers, the NT understanding of the particular priesthood does not involve the Gospel ministry, but rather Christ alone is High Priest and Head of the church.

### Exceptions to the Exclusion of Women in Christian Leadership and the Force of Tradition

Though most of the Christian church followed the majority in no longer allowing for women in leadership, especially in ordained offices, there were some exceptions. Deaconesses

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were ordained for a thousand years before the practice was largely shut down in the twelfth century. Once the practice was no longer generally accepted, the tendency was to deny that it ever had been done. A major difficulty in this denial lay in the clear recording in *Canon 15* of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 that women who were to be ordained as deaconesses should be 40 years old. This difficulty was subverted by Rufinus of Bologna in his *Summa Decretorum* 28.1.23, by the assertion that all the ordinations of women were not to the altar, but to some other ministry in the church.<sup>33</sup> In this way, it was made to seem that there had never been any “real ordinations” of women.

Other exceptions to the exclusion of women from Christian leadership include wives of bishops, presbyters, and deacons who were ordained with their husbands and served with them. These would be ordained under the same term as their husband, except for the feminine ending: *Episcopae*, *Presbyterae*, and *deaconesses*.<sup>34</sup> Abbesses, as leaders of women’s monasteries, were also ordained, with the level of deaconesses.

The best late-antique text extant which shows evidence of a minority view of Christians attempting to maintain a biblical view of women in ministry against the tide of tradition is from the Council of Laodicea around the year 364. There is confusion about almost everything concerning this council and this canon. First, there is ambiguity concerning when or whether the council met, or if the canons are just a collection from different councils. Then, the Greek term used for “ordain” is not the established (by this time) term for ordain, *cheirotomia* (meaning “vote” or “raise the hand”), but the more biblical term for designation to an office, *kathistasthai* (meaning “to be appointed”). Also, the term for “elder” used here is not *presbyter* or *presbyterae*, but *presbytides*—a more ambiguous term that may mean

“old woman” or an “official female elder;”<sup>35</sup> though it would seem strange for an old woman “to be appointed” to be an old woman. At any rate, whatever was happening was causing enough furor to try to shut it down with canons from some council. Note that this same set of canons, those associated with a council at Laodicea, rejects the keeping of Sabbath and denotes which books are in the biblical canon. So the list of canons is not without import.

### Protestant Reformation Continues Much of Christian Tradition in Christian Ministry

In the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, there was a strong rejection of the sacramental system as the way of salvation. The reformers denied that receiving the sacrament of the transubstantiated bread was the objective receiving of salvation through the church and that excommunication from the church was the objective loss of salvation. In doing this they moved the understanding of salvation away from the trajectory built up from Justin Martyr, through Cyprian and Augustine, on through Peter Lombard to the Fourth Lateran Council in the thirteenth century. They moved the concept of salvation away from Roman Catholic sacramentalism and toward a biblical understanding.

Seventh-day Adventists applaud and emulate this much-needed reform. However, not all the reformers reformed as far toward the Bible and away from the sacramental system of salvation as might be hoped. Take the elements of the Lord’s Supper, for example.<sup>36</sup> Zwingli, and later the Anabaptists, tended to visualize the elements of the Eucharist non-sacramentally. They insisted on a purely symbolic relationship between Christ and the bread and the wine. For Zwingli, the presence of Christ at the Lord’s Supper was in the hearts of the believers, the emblems of the body and



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blood are signs. They were important signs, but only signs. By contrast, Luther, though he shared the critique of the Catholic transubstantiation with Zwingli, argued that there was real presence in the elements of the Eucharist. Luther coined the term consubstantiation, which showed a high degree of sacramental retention. Calvin is described by Schaff as having a view of the Eucharist halfway between those of Luther and Zwingli, a *via media*, or "middle way."<sup>37</sup> Anglicans, seeking their own *via media* between Calvinism and Catholicism, ended up somewhere between Calvin and Luther on a continuum of increasing sacramental conceptualization:

Zwingli \_\_\_\_\_ Calvin \_\_\_\_\_ Anglicans \_\_\_\_\_ Luther \_\_\_\_\_ Catholics  
 pure symbol      via media or middle way      consubstantiation      transubstantiation

Seventh-day Adventists have never been uniform on the conceptualization of the Lord's Supper. Some have viewed it like Zwingli and some like Calvin, with most spread out somewhere between these two.

The reformers moved away from the trajectory of the Catholic tradition on the relative sacramentality of the Eucharist. They had a similar shift away from the sacramentally ordained Catholic priesthood that, through the bishops, orchestrated the sacramental system of salvation through the church. However, here too, there was often not enough reform toward a NT conception of the Christian ministry.

The Lutherans kept a sacramental priesthood, including confession, though the idea of repentance was reformed. The Reformed churches, following Calvin, tended to drop the priesthood altogether in favor of ministers or pastors, but retained some sacerdotal understanding of ordination as involving a special grace given only to ministers. The

Anglicans, also being heavily influenced by Calvinism, retained the priesthood, as did the Lutherans, but had a less-heightened view of the sacramental nature, placing them, again, between the Lutheran and the Reformed traditions. The Anabaptist groups tended to reject all the *res*, or "spiritual thing"-ness of the sacraments and conceived of the Gospel ministry as not separated from the laity by class, but merely by function. In this way they had an anti-sacramental view similar to Zwingli's on the elements of the Eucharist. In most Protestant churches, then, the reform of the sacramental and hierarchical nature of the Gospel ministry did not break enough with the Catholic tradition to completely adopt a biblical view. So a line can be added to the above chart to show which nomenclature each of these main Christian traditions have chosen to represent their leadership.

Zwingli \_\_\_\_\_ Calvin \_\_\_\_\_ Anglicans \_\_\_\_\_ Luther \_\_\_\_\_ Catholics  
 pure symbol      via media or middle way      consubstantiation      transubstantiation  
 Minister      Minister      Priest      Priest      Priest

Once again, Seventh-day Adventists are within the part of the continuum from Zwingli and the Anabaptists to Calvin, with some moving toward the more sacerdotal end. There has never been complete agreement on the relative sacramentalism in regard to the Adventist understanding of the Gospel ministry. Since the 1850s there have been in Adventism those who have visualized some *res*, or spiritual change in ordination, and those who viewed ordination as purely a sign, with no *res*, no class elevation of the clergy. The conceptualization of the Gospel ministry and ordination was not a focus of the young denomination, and the early Adventists left the nature of ordination undefined and

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simply held to a functional view of the Gospel ministry without a lot of details.<sup>38</sup> Adventist practice has therefore varied greatly from place to place. In some countries that are strongly Catholic or Orthodox the Adventists have tended to see more sacramentalism, while other places have tended to see less. But even Adventists in Protestant areas are not exempt. The fundamentalist Evangelicals have tended to make the traditional Christian view of women as subject to men by nature a tenet of their current thought. Many have joined the Catholics in arguing against women in the Christian clergy. So even Adventists in Protestant settings have felt pressure to move toward a heightened sacramentalism.

### Conclusion

It is an unfortunate deviation from the principles of the Bible that the Early Christian tradition adopted the Greco-Roman cultural view of women. This was compounded by the rise of the sacramental system documented in the Sentences of Peter Lombard, which developed the false priesthood of the Middle Ages as a celibate, male-only institution. The society coming out of the Middle Ages assumed the nature of women defined by Aristotle and Plato as of a different class and kind than men, and as lacking in the intellectual and spiritual virtues. In this way, the traditional reading of Paul concerning women, following Tertullian, John Chrysostom, and Augustine, meant that most Christians at the beginning of the Reformation believed that the Bible taught what Plato and Aristotle taught about women. This caused the Christian churches arising from the Protestant Reformation to not give serious consideration to women in leadership. The Adventist movement, arising from the Millerite experience, made it a high value to reform back to the principles of the Bible rather than accept beliefs from Christian Tradition.

These early Adventists rejected the traditional view of hell and the Platonic understanding of soul in favor of carefully understanding the Bible teachings on the unity of the human being. The Sabbath, too, was reclaimed from the pages of Scripture from its loss in Christian tradition. They also reclaimed the correctness of women preaching, teaching, and holding leadership positions in the church against those traditionalists that insisted that the writings of Paul forbade these activities from women.<sup>39</sup>

A vexing question is now commanding Seventh-day Adventists' attention: Can there be co-existence between those who do not share exact conclusions on women in ministry? Is unity possible without uniformity on this issue? Adventist history and Adventist practical theology both suggest that the answer is "yes." First, from history: Adventists have thrived in the last forty years in a world wide fellowship of great diversity. The denomination has done well in terms of church growth, including evangelism and missions, as the church approaches 20 million members. Adventists have grown strong in the area of education, both in discipleship training and educating for lifelong service in dozens of colleges and universities. Adventist institutions and administration are effective and well respected. Whereas there are struggles and challenges, the church is larger and stronger today than four decades ago, all while having great diversity in thought and action on women as local elders. This historical strength, in spite of strong disagreements on women elders, is due in large part to Adventist practical theology. Seventh-day Adventists have a functional rather than an ontological understanding of the Christian ministry. There is no dependence on ontologically elevated ministers to mediate forgiveness. The ministers lead, educate, and inspire, but

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they do not have authority over salvation. As such, there can be very different nuances of ministry practice without endangering any member's relationship with God. There have been churches with women elders, and other churches without women elders side by side for decades without much ill effect. More than forty years of practice show that this issue need not divide the church. The same allowance can be made for ordained women pastors wherever they can practically function as ministers within the local society. Yes, Seventh-day Adventists can have unity even if there is not uniformity on this issue.

### Endnotes:

1. An earlier version of this study was published as John W. Reeve, "Trajectories of Women's Ordination in History," *JAAS* 15.2 (2012): 197-220. Used by permission. The paper was originally presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), July 2013.
2. Marcia L. Colish, "Peter Lombard," in *The Medieval Theologians*, ed. G. R. Evans (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 169.
3. Peter Lombard, *Sentences*.
4. Marcia L. Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual tradition: 400-1400* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1997), 282.
5. Gillian R. Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 211.
6. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521*, tran. James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 93.
7. Colish, "Peter Lombard," 182; *Medieval Foundations*, 286.
8. Calvin quoted the writers of the early church through Lombard at least 45 times, and at least 43 times he quoted Lombard's own words. Anthony N. S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 59 and 65.
9. See Augustine, *Confessions*, 7.10.
10. Colish, "Peter Lombard," 178.
11. Fourth Lateran Council, Canon 1: There is one Universal Church of the faithful, outside of which there is absolutely no salvation. In which there is the same priest and sacrifice, Jesus Christ, whose body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine; the bread being changed (*transsubstantiatio*) by divine power into the body, and the wine into the blood, so that to realize the mystery of unity we may receive of Him what He has received of us. And this sacrament no one can effect except the priest who has been duly ordained in accordance with the keys of the Church, which Jesus Christ Himself gave to the Apostles and their successors. Quoted from "The Canons of the Fourth Lateran Council, 1215" in *Medieval Sourcebook: Twelfth Ecumenical Council: Lateran IV 1215*. Fordham University website, July 2013, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/lateran4.asp>.
12. See, for example, laws 177 and 178 of Hammurabi. W. W. Davies, *The Codes of Hammurabi and Moses* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1905), 80, 81.
13. John H. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 155.
14. Jo Ann Davidson, "Women in Scripture: A Survey and Evaluation" in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 157-186. A revised version of this study is included in this volume as chapter 7.
15. "The overall impression one gets from Romans 16 is that not only were a wide variety of women involved in the work of the church, but also that they were doing a wide variety of things including missionary work, carrying letters, serving in charitable tasks as deaconesses, providing aid or shelter for traveling apostles, etc. . . . we see here a picture of a vibrant, multi-faceted church using the gifts and graces of both men and women to spread the gospel." Ben Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, SNTSMS 59 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 116.
16. Darius Jankiewicz, "Phoebe: Was She an Early Church Leader?" *Ministry* (April 2013): 10-13. A revised version of this study is included in this volume as chapter 10.
17. Nancy Vyhmeister, "Junia the Apostle" *Ministry*

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(July 2013): 6–9. A revised version of this study is included in this volume as chapter 11.

18. Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006).
19. Kenneth A. Strand, "The Sabbath and Sunday in the Second Through the Fifth Centuries" in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1982), 323–332; "Some Notes on the Sabbath Fast in Early Christianity," *AUSS* 3.2 (1965): 172.
20. Ranko Stefanovic, "'The Lord's Day' of Revelation 1:10 in the Current Debate," *AUSS* 49.2 (2011): 261–284.
21. John W. Reeve, "The Theological Anthropology of Theophilus of Antioch: Immortality and Resurrection in the Context of Judgment" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2009), 236.
22. A translation of Aristotle's exact words are:

First of all then as to slaves the difficulty might be raised, does a slave possess any other excellence, besides his merits as a tool and a servant, more valuable than these, for instance temperance, courage, justice and any of the other moral virtues, or has he no excellence beside his bodily service? For either way there is a difficulty; if slaves do possess moral virtue, wherein will they differ from freemen? Or if they do not, this is strange, as they are human beings and participate in reason.

And nearly the same is the question also raised about the woman and the child: have they too virtues, and ought a woman be temperate, brave and just, and can a child be intemperate or temperate, or not? This point therefore requires general consideration in relation to natural ruler and subject: is virtue the same for ruler and ruled, or different? If it is proper for both to partake in nobility of character, how could it be proper for the one to rule and the other to be ruled unconditionally? We cannot say that the difference is to be one of degree, for ruling and being ruled differ in kind, and the difference of degree is not a difference in kind at all. Whereas if on the contrary it is proper for the one to have moral nobility but not for the other, this is surprising. For if the ruler is not temperate and just, how will he rule well? And if the ruled, how will he obey well? If intemperate and cowardly he will not perform any of the duties of his position.

It is evident therefore that both must possess virtue, but that there are differences in their virtue (as also there are differences between

those who are by nature rulers and ruled). And of this we straightway find an indication in connexion with the soul; for the soul by nature contains a part that rules and a part that is ruled, to which we assign different virtues, that is, the virtues of the rational and the irrational. It is clear then that the case is the same also with the other instances of ruler and ruled.

Hence there are by nature various classes of rulers and ruled. For the free rules the slave, the male the female, and the man the child in a different way. And all possess the various parts of the soul, but possess them in different ways; for the slave has not got the deliberative part at all, and the female has it, but without full authority, while the child has it, but in an undeveloped form. Hence the ruler must possess intellectual virtue in completeness (for any work, taken absolutely, belongs to the master-craftsman, and rational principle is a master-craftsman); while each of the other parties must have that share of this virtue which is appropriate to them.

We must suppose therefore that the same necessarily holds good of the moral virtues: all must partake of them, but not in the same way, but in such measure as is proper to each in relation to his own function. Hence it is manifest that all the persons mentioned have a moral virtue of their own, and that the temperance of a woman and that of a man are not the same, their courage and justice, as Socrates thought, but the one is the courage of command, and the other is that of subordination, and the case is similar with the other virtues.

And this is also clear when we examine the matter more in detail, for it is misleading to give a general definition of virtue, as some do, who say that virtue is being in good condition as regards the soul or acting uprightly or the like; those who enumerate the virtues of different persons separately, as Gorgias does, are much more correct than those who define virtue in that way. Hence we must hold that all of these persons have their appropriate virtues, as the poet said of woman: 'Silence gives grace to woman'—though that is not the case likewise with a man. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.5.3–8 (Rackham, LCL).

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24. See "Plotinus" in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* at [plato.stanford.edu](http://plato.stanford.edu), revised Sep 15, 2012.
25. See "Middle Platonism" in the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* at [www.iep.utm.edu](http://www.iep.utm.edu), accessed Mar 12, 2015.

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37. *Ibid.*
38. Denis Kaiser, "Setting Apart for the Ministry: Theory and Practice in Seventh-day Adventism (1850–1920)," *AUSS* 51.2 (2013): 177–218.
39. See Ginger Hanks Harwood and Beverley Beem, "Not a Hand Bound; Not a Voice Hushed: Ordination and Foundational Adventist Understandings of Women in Ministry," *AUSS* 52.2 (2014): 235–273; Denis Fortin, "Ellen White, Women in Ministry, and the Ordination of Women," chapter 5 in this current volume.

## FOUR

# AUTHORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN LEADER

**Darius Jankiewicz**

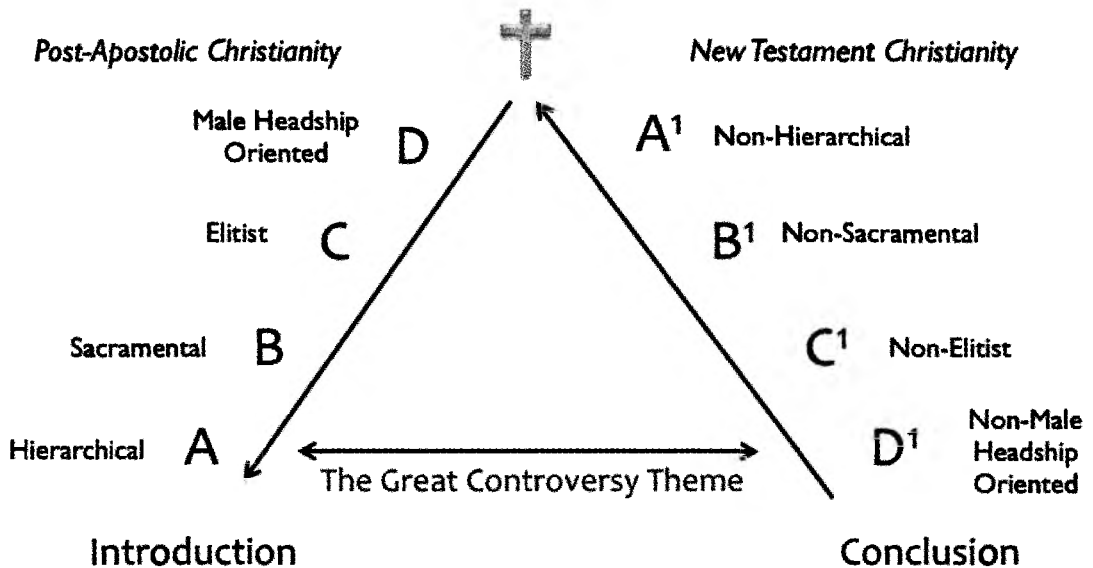
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## Introduction

<sup>1</sup>IN ORDER TO THRIVE, every human society must establish its own organizational and authoritative structures. Eventually, if someone desires to know something about a particular nation, family, or association, they are most likely to enquire about the nature and use of its authority. Human groupings may thus be described as “dictatorial,” “authoritarian,” “democratic,” “egalitarian,” “republican,” “laissez-faire,” and so on. Each of these designations reflects the way in which authority is used within a particular community.

While different from a nation, family, or association, the church is also a human society that must have organizational/authoritative structures in order to disseminate its message and thus fulfill the Great Commission given to it by Christ.<sup>2</sup> Because of this, it is legitimate to enquire about the nature and use of authority within the community of believers.<sup>3</sup> Such enquiry is of vital importance, as much

### The Structure of This Chapter



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depends on the way authority is understood and exercised within the church. Even such foundational Christian teachings as the nature of God and salvation are influenced by the way authority is defined.

Any discussion on the nature of Christian authority, however, tends to be muddled by our cultural context, as the way we view authority is shaped by the way in which authority is exercised within the society of which we are a part. For many people, the term *authority* carries few positive connotations. A simple class exercise proves the point. When I teach on the subject of ecclesiology, I sometimes flash the word *authority* on the screen and ask students to tell me what immediately comes to their minds. Invariably, I hear words such as “dominance,” “power,” “control,” “abuse,” “rule,” or “final decision making.” Then we check the dictionary definition of “authority” and, indeed, we find that the most prominent way in which authority is defined follows the same line of thinking, i.e., “the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience” or “the power to determine, adjudicate, or otherwise settle issues of disputes; jurisdiction, the right to control, command, or determine.” Authority defined as such demands submission, which is defined in the dictionary as “the action or fact of accepting or yielding to a superior force or to the will or authority of another person.” In my personal experience, I have yet to meet a person who likes to submit in such a manner. On the contrary, it almost seems as though we arrive in this world with an inborn tendency to resist this type of authority—just ask parents whose children have entered the teenage years or think about our inner reaction when we are flagged by an officer for speeding.

Very rarely do my students consider “authority” a positive thing in the life of a society. Yet, authoritative structures are essential, as

they provide society with continuity, stability, safety, and boundaries. Without some form of authority, no human society would or could exist; this includes the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The combination of our sinful nature and the abuse of authority causes us to develop negative attitudes toward authority. Unfortunately, all too often abuse, disguised by the addition of the adjective “spiritual,” happens in the church, the community Christ established to be different from any other human society on Earth.

In recent years, the issue of authority has received a fair amount of attention in Adventist circles. As we have experienced the delay of the Second Coming of Christ, we have become increasingly concerned with issues related to gospel order, organization, ranking, and policy, all the while attempting to be faithful to Scripture. The nature of authority and its use has surfaced most prominently within the context of the discussion on women’s ordination. The most sensitive question raised in these debates is whether women can or should hold authoritative positions within the church structure. Should women be allowed to preach/teach or lead in the church? Would not ordination place them in headship positions over their male counterparts?

Responses to these questions vary. Some believe that women can never be placed in any position—be it pastor, theology professor, university or hospital president—that would situate them in authority over men. Others would allow women to fill leadership roles within the greater Adventist organization but not in the church. According to these, women must not be allowed to teach or preach in the church when men who are able to do so are present. Still others go so far as to allow women to preach in the church, providing that they stand under the authority of an ordained

male senior pastor. All of these positions have one common denominator: *the position of "spiritual headship" in the church must be limited to men alone.* Ordination is believed to raise a particularly gifted man to a position of spiritual headship in the church, and since the Bible speaks of male headship alone, the position of pastor (or senior pastor) is closed to women; no woman, it is believed, can have authority over any man.

Observing the debate for a number of years and listening carefully to both sides, I ask myself several questions: Are we certain that we truly understand what we mean when we use the word *authority*? Am I possibly making the false assumption that when I utter the word *authority*, you know exactly what I mean and vice versa? What informs the concept of authority that resides in our minds? Is it our culture (both secular and religious), or is it careful attention to the words of Jesus?

Like many good things in life, the concept of authority has its counterfeits. The purpose of this chapter is to explore two opposing views of authority. This is necessary to tease out the essential elements of the New Testament view of authority and thus help us avoid the ecclesiological pitfalls—of which many of us may not be aware—that modern Christianity inherited from post-Apostolic Christianity and which are deeply ingrained in both Catholic and Protestant traditions. For this reason I will first explore the characteristics of a counterfeit kind of "authority" as it evolved in Christianity from the second century onward and which continues to be the foundation of both modern Roman Catholicism and Protestant fundamentalism;<sup>4</sup> second, I will explore the concept of authority flowing from the teachings of Jesus; and finally, I will provide a response to the counterfeit view of authority.

### The Post-Apostolic Church and a Counterfeit View of Authority

Faced with the death of its pioneers, the delay of the Second Coming, schism, the rise of heretical teaching, as well as persecution, the early post-Apostolic Christchurch searched for ways to maintain its unity and defend itself against various heretical teachings.<sup>5</sup> Such a goal could be accomplished through providing the church with strong leadership.

Going beyond the Gospels and the writings of Paul, writers such as Ignatius (d. ca. A.D. 110–130), Irenaeus (d. ca. A.D. 202), Tertullian (c. A.D. 160–225), Cyprian (d. ca. A.D. 258), and Augustine (A.D. 354–430) gradually endowed Christian ministry with special authority, which was available only through the rite of ordination. The Christian ministry that emerged from this era was far removed from what we find in the pages of the New Testament; the authority of the ministry was (and continues to be) marked by the following characteristics:

**First, it was hierarchical.** Conceived in terms of order, ranking, or chain of command, the church became divided into two classes of individuals—clergy and laity—separated from each other by the rite of ordination. At the head of the church was a monarchical (*mon-*one, *arche*-rule) bishop, surrounded and assisted by a group of elders as well as deacons, who were at the bottom of the hierarchical ladder.<sup>6</sup> The bishop—or the senior pastor—was placed at the center of religious activity and was endowed with complete control over the affairs of the local church.<sup>7</sup> His duties included preaching, teaching, administration of the community, and money management. Without his presence, no Christian rite, such as baptism or the Lord's Supper, could be conducted. Believing this system to be established by God, Christians were expected to submit to the decisions of their bishop-pastor.<sup>8</sup> The



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bishop-pastor's position and prestige in the church was significantly strengthened by the doctrine of Apostolic Succession developed by Irenaeus, who taught that the twelve apostles passed on their leadership and teaching authority to the bishops.

This system of early church governance was largely modeled on the way the Roman Empire was governed.<sup>9</sup> While church governance was originally established for the sake of order and unity in the church, it eventually became an end in itself, to be protected and perpetuated at any cost. Such concentration of church power in the hands of the ordained elite led, of course, to the eventual establishment of the papacy. There is no need to elaborate here on the prophetic significance of this development.<sup>10</sup>

**Second, it was sacramental.** The spiritual life of the believers, and thus their salvation, in some way depended on their pastor. During this time the Christian minister began to be referred to as a priest. The writers of this period came to the conclusion that the Old Testament priesthood was a type of Christian ministry.<sup>11</sup> An ordained Christian pastor, thus, became a mediator between God and other believers. This mediation was enabled through the rite of ordination, when the pastor received a special seal—*dominicus character* or lordly character—which enabled him to re-enact Christ's sacrifice each time he celebrated the Lord's Supper.<sup>12</sup> In such a system, the existence of the church itself depended upon the existence of the ordained ministry.<sup>13</sup> As with the previous point, the prophetic significance of this development cannot be overestimated and will be elaborated on below.

**Third, it was elitist.** Divided into two classes of individuals—those ordained and those un-ordained. It was gradually accepted that, through the rite of ordination, the minister

became separated from the rest of the community. The laying-on-of-hands endowed the pastor with special authority from God and enabled him to provide spiritual and mediatorial leadership to the believers.<sup>14</sup> This teaching, first introduced by Tertullian, stated that there are two groups of people in the church—the ordained and the un-ordained—otherwise referred to as clergy and laity.<sup>15</sup> Only those who were ordained could provide spiritual leadership in the church. In line with this thinking, the church could not be conceived as egalitarian. It was not a community of equals in terms of leadership roles. This is clearly reflected in the documents of the First Vatican Council (1869–1870). *The Constitution on the Church* thus states:

The Church of Christ is not a community of equals in which all the faithful have the same rights. It is a society of un-equals, not only because among the faithful some are clerics and some are laymen, but particularly because there is in the Church the power from God whereby to some it is given to sanctify, teach, and govern, and to others not.<sup>16</sup>

Through the act of ordination, therefore, an elite group of leaders was created in the church and only members of this elite could take the office of pastor in the church. As we shall see below, this view is contrary to the teachings of the New Testament.

**Fourth, it was oriented toward male headship in the church.** Only men could fulfill headship roles in the church. Ever since its beginnings, the Christian church has taught, and continues to teach, that Jesus Christ is the Head of the church. However, faced with the reality of the physical absence of Christ on earth, the post-Apostolic church felt it needed someone who could take His place, represent Him to believers and the world, and represent believers

to God. Viewing themselves as separated for special ministry *via* the rite of ordination, early Christian ministers assumed the position of headship in the church *in place of Christ*. This is the actual meaning of the widely used Latin phrase *in persona Christi Capitis* (in the person of Christ the Head).<sup>17</sup> Another phrase, *Vicarius Filii Dei* (in place of the Son of God), expresses the same belief.

The acceptance of ministerial headship through the rite of ordination was accompanied by a developing theology of male headship in the church. The reasoning was very simple: in the New Testament, the relationship between Christ and the church is represented in nuptial terms. Christ is represented as a bridegroom, a male, who marries His bride, the church, a female. If the pastor serves his church *in persona Christi Capitis*, i.e., taking the role of headship in place of Christ, *he also must be a man*. It follows that the ordination rite is not a simple blessing but a conferral of headship powers and duties and, as such, it is a type of a marriage ceremony—the church becomes the pastor's spouse.<sup>18</sup> In short, through the rite of ordination, the pastor assumes a headship position in the church.<sup>19</sup> All of this means that women cannot be ordained as ministers in the church because they must remain in hierarchical submission to male pastors. This ancient theology is clearly expressed in John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (*On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*) issued in 1988, in which the late pope takes the biblical teaching of male headship in the home and applies it to the church.<sup>20</sup> As we shall see below, there are significant problems with applying male headship terminology to relationships within the church.

### Jesus on the Authority of the Christian Leader

Does the evolution of Christian ministry into papal hierarchy, as noted above, mean that the church should be deprived of leadership and organization? Or that authoritative structure should not exist within the community of faith? By no means! In order to exist and fulfill its mission, the church must have organization and leadership. Rather than modeling its organization upon secular structures of authority, as early post-Apostolic Christianity did, the church should first of all look to Jesus to search for ways in which authority in the church should be exercised. It is Christ who founded the church and He knows best what Christian authority is and how it should be exercised. Thus, His followers must take His teachings on authority seriously. *Other New Testament teachings related to the issue of authority, including difficult Pauline passages (e.g., 1 Tim 2:12) must thus be read through the prism of Jesus' understanding of the term rather than vice versa*. So what did Jesus have to say about authority?

In preparation for writing this chapter, I decided once again to re-read and think through the Gospel passages where Jesus speaks about authority.<sup>21</sup> His views are astounding. For most of us, immersed in hierarchically-oriented cultures, Jesus' message continues to be counterintuitive and difficult to comprehend, much less to accept. For this reason, we tend to gloss over the passages dealing with authority without much thought. Yet these passages, if understood and applied, have the potential to revolutionize our personal and communal lives.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus' disciples had shown a tendency to be preoccupied with status and ranking in the kingdom of God. This is understandable, as their attitudes reflected the prevalent cultural and religious

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conceptions of authority. The Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus presented such a breathtakingly different understanding of Christian authority that it took the death of Jesus for the disciples to understand His teachings. Jesus' teachings on the authority of the Christian leader are most crisply articulated in a conversation that found its way into the three synoptic Gospels.<sup>22</sup>

The story is well known. Two of Jesus' disciples, John and James, approached Him with a request to be seated on His right and left in His Kingdom. It appears that they assumed that the Kingdom of Jesus would operate like other earthly institutions—their underlying desire was to have authority *over* others. Mark tells us that when the remaining ten disciples heard about it, they became very angry, not because they had a different idea of "authority," but because they themselves desired such power also. In response to this, Jesus gathered them together, and in simplest terms explained the operational rules of the Kingdom of God. His words are so striking that they must be quoted here:

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them (*katakuriēusin*), and their high officials exercise authority over them (*katexousiazousin*). Not so with you! Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant (*diakonos*), and whoever wants to be first must be slave (*doulos*) of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:42–45 NIV)

In this concise passage, Jesus presents two models of authority. The first is the Roman idea of authority. In this model, the elite stand hierarchically over others. They have the power to make decisions and expect submission from those below them. Jesus clearly

rejected this model of authority when He stated, "Not so with you!" Instead, He presented the disciples with a breathtakingly new model of authority, a thorough rejection, or reversal, of the hierarchical model with which they were familiar.

The concept of authority in Jesus' Kingdom was to be governed by two words: servant (*diakonos*) and slave (*doulos*). From our modern perspective, these two words, often translated as "minister," have lost much of their force. For a person familiar with ancient society and its institutions, however, Jesus' words must have been appalling. So much so that the disciples were unable to understand Jesus' words, and to the last moments of His life, during the Last Supper, they argued about "who is the greatest" (Luke 22:24). This is because, in the first-century milieu, servants (*diakonoi*) and slaves (*douloi*) represented the lowest class of human beings—beings who had few rights and whose job was to listen and fulfill the wishes of those they served. Among slaves "there [was] no place for one's own will or initiative."<sup>23</sup> The ancient Greeks believed: "Ruling and not serving is proper to a man."<sup>24</sup> Thus, whatever the metaphors of servant and slave were meant to convey, it certainly was not exercising authority, spiritual or otherwise, over others (*katexousiazousin*) or having status in the community.

Why did Jesus use these two metaphors if He could have compared His disciples with other leadership groups in society? I believe that Jesus was keenly aware that His Kingdom would be doomed if the disciples incorporated into it the authority structures prevalent within contemporary society. For His mission to succeed, all "pecking order" in the church had to be abolished. Murray Harris grasped this well: "Jesus was teaching that greatness in the community of his followers is marked by humble, self-effacing servanthood

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or slavery, modeled on his own selfless devotion to the highest good of others.”<sup>25</sup> All this shows that Jesus certainly did not desire to abolish all authority in the church, He simply radically redefined it and distanced it from the kind of “authority” that advocated submission to a higher authority. Instead, the church was to be a place where those who desired to follow Jesus’ example were willing to serve in the lowest positions. In Phil 2:5–7 Paul thus states: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God . . . made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a slave (*doulos*).” *In the church of Jesus, therefore, it is not ordination to an office, a title, or a position that makes a leader, but the quality of a person’s life and his or her willingness to be the least of all.* Following Christ’s lead, the despised terms *diakonos* and *doulos* later became the quasi-technical descriptions of apostolic and ministerial leadership in the church.<sup>26</sup> Taking all of this into consideration, it is not surprising that to the question, “Who is the greatest? (Mark 9:33-35; Luke 9:46-48), Jesus answered: “For he who is the least among you all—he is the greatest” and “if anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant (*diakonos*) of all.”

Two other terms, *exousia* and *dynamis*, are commonly translated as authority. *Exousia* appears to be related to Jesus’ teaching ministry and His ability to forgive sins (e.g., Matt 7:29; 9:6; Mark 1:22; Luke 4:32). The authority (*exousia*) that Jesus exercised, thus, brought words of life and healing to those who were willing to listen. *Dynamis* is usually associated with Jesus’ power to perform miracles and drive out demons (e.g., Luke 4:36; Luke 9:1). Nowhere in the Gospels do the terms *exousia* or *dynamis* appear to be associated with exercising any form of headship, or having authority, over others. Such thinking was simply not part of Jesus’ worldview. Jesus bestowed

*exousia* and *dynamis* upon the entire community of believers, and these two terms are often confused with a secular understanding of ministerial powers.

A unique usage of *exousia* is found in Matt 28:18: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” He does not hand over this authority to the disciples, for it cannot be done. This is the absolute authority of the Almighty, Omniscient, Creator-God. And how does the Almighty Creator God exercise His authority? Does He force His human subjects to be obedient? Does He take away their free will? In Ephesians 5:1, 2, Paul provides an answer to the question of how God exercises His authority: “Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” The absolute authority of Christ represents a supreme example of love, servanthood, and self-sacrifice.

Thus, the concept of authority within New Testament Christianity, founded upon the words and actions of Jesus, does not represent any form of headship in terms of authority over others to which submission is expected. Clearly, Jesus always allowed the exercise of free will. Instead of exercising authority *over* others, His kind of authority can be expressed in terms of *servicing* others. This he demonstrated most forcefully when He knelt to wash the disciples’ feet and when He died on the Cross, thus giving a supreme example of the true conception of Christian authority. Thus, the Christian rite of ordination, properly understood, is *ordination to slavery*; it is not going up in rank; it is not about status or having authority over others; *it is about being the least in the community of believers.* Only understood as such can the ministry in the church fulfill Christ’s vision for leadership.

The early, post-Apostolic Christian church

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soon forgot Jesus' words and introduced pagan concepts of authority into Christian practice. "Pecking order" was established where it did not belong, all in the name of protecting the church's unity and its teachings.<sup>27</sup> Modern Christianity, including Adventism, inherited these patterns of authority. It would serve us well to return to the words of Jesus and attempt to view ministry in the church through the prism of His teachings, rather than merely adding the adjective "spiritual" to foreign authoritative patterns. What, then, were the characteristics of the New Testament community of Jesus?

### The New Testament Church: A Community Like No Other

First, ministry in the New Testament church was non-hierarchical. The organization of the church was not conceived in terms of a chain of command. There seems to be no doubt that, during His earthly ministry, Jesus endowed some of His followers with the special task of sharing in His mission of proclaiming God's Kingdom. They were chosen to be His representatives and were to continue His mission and to reproduce in their own lives the central characteristics of Jesus Himself—namely, total commitment and service to God and to fellow human beings. Their witness, however, was not based on their position, rank, or status but on the mission they had received from Christ. Their special authority was based on the fact that they had been eyewitnesses to the presence of Jesus on earth. Thus, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, this authority entailed preserving and passing on a reliable and trustworthy account of Jesus' life and teachings in a reliable and trustworthy manner. "On this basis . . . rested the special and unique respect accorded to the apostles within the Church."<sup>28</sup> The written accounts of many of those eyewitnesses

were eventually collected into the canon of the New Testament, and thus their writings became normative for Christian believers, as expressed in the well-accepted Protestant axiom *sola scriptura*. The New Testament, however, does not provide any evidence that the special position of expertise held by the twelve apostles within the community of faith was transferred to other leaders in the church.

What we do see in the New Testament, however, is a community like no other—a community whose leaders eschewed any form of hierarchy that would place some above others. In fact, following Jesus' example, the New Testament leaders proclaimed what we can only describe as a *reverse hierarchy*. Following the lead of Jesus, its leaders routinely referred to themselves as *doulos* and *diakonos* of both God and the church.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, in 1 Cor 3:5, Paul writes: "What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants (*diakonoi*), through whom you came to believe." In 2 Cor 4:5, he emphatically declares: "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves (*doulous*)."<sup>30</sup> We thus constantly find Paul lifting Christ and others up, while speaking of himself in unflattering terms such as "chief of sinners" (1 Tim 1:15). Elsewhere, he writes: "and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle" (1 Cor 15:7-9). In 1 Cor 4:1 Paul refers to himself and his co-workers as under-rowers (*hupēretas*). An image of an ancient Greek or Roman war galley with three banks of oars comes to mind. Paul places himself in the lowest place on a trireme: *he is under other rowers*.

While Paul was commissioned to proclaim the Gospel, to teach, exhort, and rebuke, it appears therefore, that he purposefully desired to avoid positioning himself in a role

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above his fellow believers. Instead, and despite his special position as an apostle of Christ, we see him wooing people to follow Christ, not through the authority of his "office," but through the witness of his life.<sup>31</sup> "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1; 1 Cor 4:16; Phil 3:17, 4:9; 1 Thess 1:6; 2 Thess 3:7). With a clear conscience, therefore, Paul was able to write to the Corinthians that when his young disciple Timothy visits them, he would "remind [them] of his [Paul's] way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what [he taught] everywhere in every church" (1 Cor 4:17). *Thus, it was the way he lived his life, rather than his position, that resulted in Paul's having genuine authority in the church.*

Within the context of being *slaves* in the church, the New Testament writers were remarkably egalitarian. Everyone could be a slave of the Lord! In Rom 12:11, Paul encouraged all believers to "serve the Lord as His slaves" (*tō kyriō douleuontes*). In Gal 5:13 he urged believers "to serve one another as slaves (*doulete*) through love." Every believer, thus, was to serve as a *doulos* of Christ and of each other.

While all believers were called to be slaves of God and one another, this especially applied to leaders in the Christian community who, according to the teaching of Christ, were to consider themselves "the least of all" and thus examples to those under their care. Peter echoed Jesus when he wrote to the leaders in the church: "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care . . . not lording it over (*katakuriēontes*)<sup>32</sup> those entrusted to you but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:2-5). This was the primary reason why Paul, James, and Peter often introduced themselves to their congregations as slaves (*douloi*) of Christ (Rom 1:1; Jas 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1). All this suggests that New Testament leadership was not about having "authority" over others, about having the "last

word," or having an "office."<sup>33</sup> Instead, *it was all about having the attitude of Paul, Peter, and other leaders of the New Testament church, who led by the example of their devotion to their Lord and to each other. This was the bedrock of genuine Christian authority.*<sup>34</sup>

Viewing church leadership from the above perspective, the overseers (*episcopēs* in 1 Tim 3:1) or elders (*presbyterous* in Titus 1:9) were indeed to be special persons: they were to be servants (*doulous*) of the Lord and the community; they were to lead by example rather than by the authority of their position; they were to have a good name in the community; they were to have stable, monogamous marriages; they were to manage their households well; they were to be protectors of the community. One thing was quite certain, however: these slaves of the Lord did not have to be males.<sup>35</sup>

If ministry is to be understood as slavery to Christ and others, another passage must be highlighted. As stated above, Paul's favorite description of his own ministry and that of his co-workers (such as Timothy) was "slave of the Lord" (*doulos Christou*).<sup>36</sup> We find others, such as Peter and James, also referring to themselves as "slaves of the Lord."<sup>37</sup> The same wording, this time spoken by the Lord Himself, appears in Acts 2:18, where Peter quotes the prophet Joel: "Even on my slaves, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days." Most frequently, this passage is used to highlight the fact that the gift of prophecy was not limited to men. However, we also find in this verse the masculine *doulos* and the feminine *doulas*. In both cases, the pronoun *mou* (my) is added. Considering that, in other places in the New Testament, *doulos* is most often translated as "minister," this passage could legitimately be translated as speaking of both "male ministers" and "female ministers," who are God's own. Is Peter making the point

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that, in the New Testament church, both males and females could be *slaves* of the Lord equally? And that both, males and females, were to receive specific gifts of the Spirit that would enable them to fulfill their ministerial calling? Whatever interpretation we place on this particular passage, one thing is clear: the Holy Spirit is not concerned with the gender of the person upon whom He bestows His gifts. Should we be?

It is indeed tragic that soon after the disciples died, post-Apostolic Christianity abandoned the charismatic understanding of Christian ministry and, instead, incorporated a pagan understanding of authority.

**Second, ministry in the New Testament was not sacramental.** Neither salvation nor the life of the community depended on the presence of ordained clergy. While the early post-Apostolic church created a system in which ordained clergy were essential to the existence of the church, we do not find such a requirement in the New Testament. From the New Testament point of view, it was Christ alone who was the mediator between God and humanity. Leadership in the New Testament, thus, fulfilled a purely functional role, i.e., its existence contributed to church order and the laying-on-of-hands simply acknowledged the gift of leadership already present in a person.

A sacramental view of ministry, of course, was prophetically significant, as the mediatorial work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary was replaced by the work of an earthly priest. In other words, *the early post-Apostolic church sewed back together the earthly sanctuary's curtain, rent by the divine hand at the time of Jesus' death.* Consequently, every Catholic church on earth became a sanctuary with its own priest. This development clearly corresponded to the prophetic utterance of Daniel: "Yea, it magnified itself, even to the prince of the host; and it took away from him

the continual burnt-offering, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down" (Dan 8:11 ASV). It follows that any attempt to apply priestly language to the work of the ministry in the church takes away from the one unique priesthood of Christ and has direct, negative implications on the Adventist sanctuary message, which emphasizes that all have special access to the risen Christ without the need of spiritual mediators.

**Third, ministry in the New Testament was not elitist.** The laying-on-of-hands did not create a spiritual elite in the church. The New Testament understanding was that functions, or roles, in the church were to be filled according to spiritual gifting. Ordination, thus, can be defined simply as "the action of the church to publicly recognize those whom the Lord has called to and equipped for local and global church ministry."<sup>38</sup> Disagreements begin to appear when we ask the question: Who can serve in the church as ordained elders or pastors?

The church of God described in the pages of the New Testament was decidedly non-elitist. In His sayings, Jesus focused on the non-elite of the day and proclaimed them to be the children of God (Matt 5:3-8). In Matt 23:8-13, He said to His followers: "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. . . . The greatest among you will be your servant" (Matt 23:8-11). In modern terms we could paraphrase this saying as follows: "But you are not to be called 'pastor,' 'elder,' 'professor,' or 'doctor,' for you have only one Master, and you are all brothers." That in Christian history the lowly term "pastor" has become a symbol of status is truly unfortunate.<sup>39</sup>

Paul's favorite imagery for portraying the Christian community, i.e., the body of Christ, represented a markedly non-elitist ecclesiology (1 Cor 12:12-31; Rom 12:1-8; Eph 1:22).

Central to this imagery were unity of the church and the church's vital relationship with its Head, Jesus Christ. Paul's insistence that the church functioned like a human body served to remind believers that they were completely dependent upon Christ for their growth and life. While unity and the headship of Christ were Paul's main concern, his discussion of the church as the body of Christ was framed within the context of spiritual gifting. The recipients of spiritual gifts were all who were part of the body of Christ, and the unity of the body of Christ depended on the presence, recognition, and use of these spiritual gifts (Eph 4:1-13). Any exclusive claim to these gifts was precluded, because their distribution was dependent upon the Holy Spirit and not on the church (1 Cor 12:11).

Any form of elitism was settled by Paul's masterful discussion of the mutual interdependence of believers who exhibited various spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:12-31). Furthermore, in none of the four listings of spiritual gifts (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:8-10, 28-30; Eph 4:11) was Paul exclusive in any way. Notably, in Romans 12:8, the gifts of teaching and leadership were tucked in among other, seemingly insignificant gifts. It would be ludicrous to claim, on the basis of this passage, that the gift of encouragement was lower on the scale of giftedness, while the gift of leadership was higher and thus could only be endowed upon a certain class of believers in the church. Certainly this could not have been Paul's intention.

Paul's use of the body of Christ imagery helps us to understand the reality of the church and the way it should function. Within such a community, all solidarities of race, class, culture, and gender are replaced by an allegiance to Christ alone. The old way of relating is replaced by a new relatedness in Christ (Gal 3:28, 29). In this community, all people are equal members of the body of

Christ, because all have experienced the risen Christ and all are gifted with a variety of spiritual gifts of equal value (1 Cor 12), which are to be utilized for the benefit of believers and the world (Rom 12:1-8). Thus, we do not find a hierarchy where some people rank above others according to status; neither do we find a division between ordained clergy and laity. What we see is a new community, the body of Christ, a New Creation (2 Cor 5:17) where *all* relationships should hail back to the Garden of Eden. This is what the early post-Apostolic church forgot soon after the death of the apostles, introducing instead a notion of an un-equal society in which leadership in the church was restricted to ordained male clergy. *The Holy Spirit was thus quenched!*

*The reality is that if anything apart from commitment to Christ and His church, spiritual gifting, and maturity determines fitness for various functions in the church, then, whether we intend it or not, we create an elitist community. No pious designations attached to the "office" of pastor—such as "servant," "spiritual authority," "spiritual leadership," or "spiritual headship"—can change this reality.*

### **Fourth, the ministry in the New Testament Church was not male headship-oriented.**

There was no room for male headship in the body of Christ. While Scripture testifies that women were not restricted from leadership positions (Deborah, Phoebe, Junia, Lydia, Priscilla, Nympha), history witnesses to the fact that, from the second century onward, leadership and teaching positions in the church began to be restricted to men alone.<sup>40</sup> As outlined above, the main argument against women's ordination in the Catholic Church today is that the pastor must be a male, since he represents Christ, a male, to the community of believers. Male headship in the home is thus extended to relationships in the church.

Significant problems are created by



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extending the idea of male headship beyond the home circle. Most important, such a concept of headship clearly replaces Christ's spiritual headship of the church and endows selected individuals with Christ's own authority. The New Testament is clear, however, that the only Head of the church is Christ (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 1:22; 4:15; Col 1:18; 2:19).<sup>41</sup> When, in Eph 5:23, Paul states that "Christ is the Head of the church" and "man is the head of the wife," he does not say that man's headship in the home in some way extends to relationships in the church. Paul's meaning is clear: as a husband is the head of his wife, his bride, so Christ is the Head of the church, His Bride.<sup>42</sup> In both cases, the nuptial language is clearly restricted to specific relationships: that between a husband and wife and that between Christ and His church. It would be absurd to conclude that Paul meant to say that as Christ is the Bridegroom of the church, so men in the Christian congregation are bridegrooms of women in the church. Neither is it scriptural to say that the pastor "marries" the church and becomes its head upon his ordination, just as Christ married His Bride and became its Head.

From this it follows that *any idea of headship in the church, be it male or female, apart from that of Christ, usurps the headship of Christ*. Thus, while we may legitimately speak of male headship in the Christian home, it is unscriptural to speak of any kind of headship in the church apart from that of Christ. While, within the greater context of mutual submission (Eph 5:21), wives are indeed asked by Paul to submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22),<sup>43</sup> nowhere in the New Testament do we find an injunction that believers are to submit to the headship of the ordained ministry; *the church submits only to Christ!*

It follows that when a pastor/elder and a church decide to operate according to the male headship principle, *this pastor/elder and*

*his church are committing spiritual adultery, otherwise known as sacramentalism.*<sup>44</sup> For this reason, difficult Pauline passages, such as 1 Tim 2 and 3 and 1 Cor 11 and 14, can never be interpreted as teaching male headship in the church, but must be understood in light of Jesus' statements on authority. No amount of tinkering with the text "according to the ideas they happen to entertain upon them,"<sup>45</sup> and adding the word 'spiritual' to headship, can change this reality. As noted above, sacramentalism is primarily a hallmark of Catholic Christianity, but it also exists within those Christian denominations that choose to replace the pope (also referred to as "Holy Father;" from the Latin *papa*) with a male figure of a pastor/elder. Christian communities that embrace female headship in addition to male headship follow the same hierarchical pattern.

Can we, as Seventh-day Adventists, really afford to flirt with applying the male headship principle to the ordained pastor/elder? I believe that this principle is a seemingly innocuous Trojan horse that has the potential to destroy the very heart of Adventism. It is telling that Ellen White never once used 1 Tim 2 or 3 and 1 Cor 11 or 14 to support male headship in the church. The developments in early post-Apostolic Christianity, discussed in the first part of this paper, clearly show the dangers of extending the biblical notion of male headship in the home to male headship in the church and must be avoided at all costs among true followers of Christ.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, there can be no doubt that early Catholic Christianity incorporated various characteristics of the Old Testament priestly ministry into the theology and practice of Christian ministry. Christian ministry, thus, became hierarchical, sacramental, elitist, and

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oriented toward male headship. To a greater or lesser degree, most Christian communities, including Seventh-day Adventists, continue to perpetuate some of these characteristics in their communities.

All these characteristics, however, were fulfilled in Christ who, by virtue of being our Creator, stands over us and has no successors to His divine authority; who died sacramentally on the Cross and thus became the sole provider of salvation; who, through His ministry on earth, made all humans equal in the eyes of God in terms of authority and endowed them with the gifts of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Great Gospel Commission; and who, through His sacrificial death on the Cross, became the sole Head of the church, His Bride. *He shares His headship with no one!* Post-New Testament Christianity, unfortunately, denied *the sole headship of Christ in the church* and contributed to the integration of a counterfeit view of authority in church organization and, thus, to the birth of an apostate religion.

I began this chapter with a discussion of the nature of authority. Our God, who is a God of order, created a world in which human beings, the crown of His creation, were to live according to the authoritative patterns that governed the universe prior to the creation of the Earth. Then sin entered the world. The way God exercised His authority was challenged, and a counterfeit notion of authority was introduced. This is the notion of authority that the "prince of this world" taught the first couple; this is the notion of authority that forever darkened the human vision of God and His character. The precise reason why Christ, God incarnate, came to this Earth and founded a community like no other was to counteract the counterfeit notion of God's authority. He accomplished it by His life of divine slavery (*doubleia*) that ultimately led Him to the Cross. Unfortunately, human beings, weakened by

millennia of sin's existence on this Earth, returned Christianity to the old patterns of thinking soon after the death of the pioneers. Notwithstanding our devotion to Scripture, we, Seventh-day Adventists, inherited these patterns of thinking that are so tenaciously (and tragically) ingrained in the Christian faith.

A common human experience is to be attracted to those who exhibit genuine Christian authority and to be repelled by the attitudes of those who rely solely on the authority of their office. Ideally, genuine Christian authority and the authority of a representative function should be integrated. After all, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with people holding an office, even though it is not really a biblical concept. Neither is anything inherently wrong with the way our church is currently organized. However, while Jesus left us with no model of running the church, He was adamant that His church would not resemble secular structures, where authority was organized according to a "pecking order." Is it possible that our current discussions regarding women's ordination are complicated by our misunderstanding or misuse of true Christian authority?

I am a third-generation Adventist, grandson of a head elder, son of a pastor/administrator, and an ordained pastor myself. In all my years as a Seventh-day Adventist, rarely have I encountered the integration of true genuine Christian authority with the authority of an ordained pastor. Sadly, I often struggle with such integration myself. Some of the most authoritative persons in my life were not ordained ministers. The one I place above all others was an old Christian gentleman in Tasmania (where for a time I served as a pastor after receiving my Ph.D.) who had only four years of formal education and had only been ordained as a deacon. I recognized, accepted, and submitted to the

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true Christian authority he represented and learned more from him about slaving for Christ and others than from a lifetime of being an Adventist and all my theological education combined. Unfortunately, for too many of us, being an ordained pastor tends to be about having authority over others, status, ranking, and male headship, rather than being slaves for Christ and others. This, I believe, is the real reason why we are spending our time discussing the issue of ordination and who can be ordained.

Now, I understand that “slavery” has few positive connotations, as it implies no honor, no glory, no status, and no ranking. Nobody likes that; in fact, I am repulsed by the concept. Yet this is the word that Christ used to describe Himself and His work; this is the word that the apostles used to describe themselves and their work as well as that of their co-workers, both men and women; this is what Christ is calling us—Adventist pastors, deacons, elders, presidents of divisions, conferences, and unions—to be; not to have authority over *people* but rather over the *task* of fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ. Gospel order in the church does not require hierarchical headship, spiritual or otherwise. For true Christian ministry is not about status, rank, gender, equality, rights, or having “spiritual authority” over others—it is about being slaves of Christ and His people; not to rule over others but to be examples and, through the witness of our lives, to woo others to follow Christ. No human laying-on-of-hands can provide this kind of authority; only the work of the Holy Spirit in a person’s heart can! While all Christians are to be ministers, those who are set apart for special ministry, both men and women, are called to be chief examples of slavery to Christ and others. I am convinced that when we embrace this understanding of authority and ministry, Christ’s vision for His

community will be fulfilled, revival and reformation will follow, and the problem of women’s ordination will disappear.

So I want to leave this short investigation of the nature of Christian authority with a question: Are we going to follow culture, both secular and religious, which has taught us a hierarchical and elitist understanding of authority? Or are we going to follow Christ, who said, “Not so with you!”?

### Endnotes:

1. At the very outset of this chapter, I would like to state that I fully accept Ellen White’s inspiration and prophetic ministry in the Adventist Church. It was through reading the *Desire of Ages* that I fell in love with Jesus; through reading of the *Great Controversy* that I became acquainted with God’s purpose for humanity; and no other book has taught me more about salvation through Jesus Christ than *Steps to Christ*. In preparing this chapter, however, I purposely avoided using Ellen White’s writings to support my conclusions. My insights, thus, are based on my understanding of Scripture’s message alone. This, I believe, is in agreement with Ellen White’s counsel that her writings should not be used to settle doctrinal debates when the Lord had not given her specific light on the matter. To my knowledge, Ellen White does not speak to the issue of women’s ordination. William Fagal reached a similar conclusion when he wrote that “her statements neither support ordination for women nor explicitly forbid it. None of her writings deal directly with this issue.” *Ministry* (December, 1988): 11.
2. For an excellent treatise on the church and its divinely instituted origin, mission, and organizational structures, see Raoul Dederen, “Church,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 538–581.
3. Dederen, 559–561.
4. For the sake of brevity, the following description will be limited only to the concept of authority that evolved within early post-Apostolic Christianity. In many ways, Fundamentalist Protestantism, especially those branches that

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- come under the umbrella of Calvinism, tends to reflect the pre-Reformation understanding of authority. The question of the Fundamentalist Protestant understanding of authority, however, will be addressed in another study.
5. Ralph Martin Novak, *Christianity and the Roman Empire* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 45.
  6. In the writings of the early church writer Ignatius (d. ca. A.D. 110) we encounter a strongly hierarchical ministry for the first time. Ignatius, *Magnesians* 6.4 in *Early Christian Writings*, ed., Maxwell Staniforth (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 88. Kenneth Osborne, *Priesthood, A History of Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 52.
  7. Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 100.
  8. Ignatius thus writes: "For your part, the becoming thing for you . . . [is] to show him [the bishop] every possible respect, having regards to the power God has conferred on him. . . . So for the honour of Him who loved us, propriety requires an obedience from you that is more than mere lip service." Ignatius *Magnesians* 3 in Staniforth, 87, 88.
  9. Thus Novak writes: "Because essentially all of the cultures of the Graeco-Roman world were hierarchical and patriarchal, a gradual increase over time of the bishop's authority might have been reasonably expected as the natural result of the local Christian communities adopting modes and structures of authority that paralleled the predominant cultural values." Novak, 45; Will Durant adds that "when Christianity conquered Rome the ecclesiastical structure of the pagan church . . . passed like maternal blood into the new religion, and captive Rome captured her conqueror." *Caesar and Christ: The Story of Civilization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944), 671, 672; cf. Edwin Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1918), 185, 213; Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 134.
  10. For a detailed history of how the humble position of the pastor evolved into episcopal and papal offices, see Klaus Schatz, *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1996).
  11. Frederick J. Cwiekowski, "Priesthood," *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989), 1049.
  12. Paul Josef Cordes, *Why Priests?: Answers Guided by the Teaching of Benedict XVI* (New York: Scepter, 2010), 28–30.
  13. Thus, in the fourth century Jerome stated: "There can be no Christian community without its ministers." Jerome *Dialogus contra Luciferanos* 21, in *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 6:331. It is not surprising, therefore, that Cyprian would famously exclaim *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside of the church there is no salvation). Cyprian *Epistle* 72.21 (ANF 5:384).
  14. This happened mainly through the work of Augustine, although already in the second century Tertullian wrote of an essential (or ontological) difference between the clergy and laity. Cf., Benedict J. Groeschel, *A Priest Forever* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1998), 185; Bernhard Lohse, *A Short History of Christian Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 139.
  15. In his *Exhortation to Chastity*, he thus wrote: "It is the authority of the Church that instituted the distinction between clergy and laity [Lat.: *ordinem et plebem*] and the honor shown the ranks of the clergy made holy for God." Tertullian *Exhortation to Chastity* 7.3. Translation by Robert B. Eno, in *Teaching Authority in the Early Church* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), 54–55; cf., ANF 4:54. The exact Latin phrase reads: *Differentiam inter ordinem et plebem constituit ecclesiae auctoritas et honor per ordinis consessum sanctificatus*. John Henry Hopkins, *The Church of Rome in Her Primitive Purity, Compared with the Church of Rome at Present Day* (London: J. G. and F. Rivington, 1839), 89. Note the parallels between the order of senators and plebs of the Roman Empire and this usage found in Tertullian. P. M. Gy, "Notes on the Early Terminology of Christian Priesthood," in *The Sacrament of Holy Orders* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1957), 99.
  16. "Constitution on the Church," in J. Neuner and H. Roos, *The Teaching of the Catholic Church* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1967), 219, 220. Similar sentiments are expressed by Pius X in his 1906 encyclical *Vehementer Nos* 8. There the pope states: "The Church is essentially an unequal society, that is, a society comprising

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two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and the multitude of the faithful. So distinct are these categories that with the pastoral body only rests the necessary right and authority for promoting the end of the society and directing all its members towards that end; the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock, to follow the Pastors." [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_x/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-x\\_enc\\_11021906\\_vehementer-nos\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_11021906_vehementer-nos_en.html).

17. Reading the section dealing with the office of a priest in the official *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is particularly illuminating on this point. In it the authors clearly and concisely explain the need for human headship in the church. The particular portion dealing with a pastor's headship in the church is entitled "In the person of Christ the Head." *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Barnhart, MO: Liguori Publications, 2004), 387, 388.
18. *Ceremonial of Bishops: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and Published by Authority of Pope John Paul II* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1989), 33. See also Paul VI, *Inter Insigniores* (Declaration on the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood) issued in 1976 in *From "Inter Insigniores" to "Ordinatio Sacerdotalis"* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1996), 43–49. The imagery of marriage is clearly visible in the ceremony of Catholic episcopal ordination. The ordained bishop vows his fidelity to the church and receives the episcopal ring, which symbolizes his authority over the church. The bishop, thus, becomes the "husband" of the church. The symbolism of marriage is further accentuated by the use of the "marriage ring" and "the kiss of peace" within the ordination rite. One of the prayers used during ordination reads: "Receive this ring, the seal of your fidelity; adorned with undefiled faith, preserve unblemished the bride of God, the holy Church." Susan K. Wood, *Sacramental Orders* (Collegeville, MN: The Order of St. Benedict, Inc., 2000), 53–55. In the *Ceremonial of Bishops*, a church manual for episcopal ordination, we also find this statement: "The ring is the symbol of the bishop's fidelity to and nuptial bond with the Church, his spouse, and he is to wear it always," 33. Megan McLaughlin further writes: "The bishop's marriage to his church [is] more than just a metaphor. . . . At least by the beginning of the tenth century, and probably before, it had acquired a mystical significance as well, which was derived from the ancient and influential allegory of Christ's marriage to the church." Megan McLaughlin, "The Bishop as Bridegroom: Marital Imagery and Clerical Celibacy in the Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries," in *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, ed., Michael Frassetto (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 210. Conversely, when a Catholic woman takes her vows to become a nun, she becomes a Bride of Christ. Completed with marriage vows and a ring, her final investiture represents a marriage ceremony. E. Ann Matter, "Mystical Marriage," in *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present*, ed., Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri (Rome: Eulama Literary Agency, 1999), 35.
19. Timothy M. Dolan, *Priests for the Third Millennium* (Huntington, MN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2000), 70, 71; Sarah Butler, *The Catholic Priesthood and Women: A Guide to the Teaching of the Church* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2006), 90. Megan McLaughlin, "The Bishop as Bridegroom: Marital Imagery and Clerical Celibacy in the Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries," in *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, ed. Michael Frassetto (New York: Garland, 1998), 210, 211.
20. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (Boston: St. Paul Books and Media, 1988). See especially the section entitled "The Church—The Bride of Christ," 79–94.
21. Matt 18:1–4, 20:20–28, 23:8–11; Mark 9:33–36, 10:35–45; Luke 9:46–48, 22:24–27; John 13:1–17.
22. Matt 20:20–28; Mark 10:35–45; Luke 22:24–27.
23. Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "δουλος," *TDNT* (1964), 2: 270, 261.
24. Hermann W. Beyer, "διακονεω," *TDNT* (1964), 2: 82.
25. Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 102.
26. See, for example, 2 Cor 4:5, where Paul writes: "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants (*doulous*) for Jesus sake." See also 1 Cor 9:19. In Col 1:7 and 4:7, Paul uses the terms *doulos* and *diakonos* interchangeably. Cf., John L. McKenzie,

- Authority in the Church* (New York: Shed and Ward, 1966), 23.
27. McKenzie, 23–25. For a history of these events, see my paper, “The Problem of Ordination,” presented at the Theology Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), January 2013. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
  28. Campenhausen, 79.
  29. While in ancient literature, both biblical and extra-biblical, these two terms normally have negative connotations, when used by Paul and applied to the followers of Christ, they acquire a new meaning signifying total commitment to Christ and to one another. Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 140–143.
  30. Other examples include Phil 1:1, Col 1:7, 23, 25; Titus 1:1. Harris, in his book, notes an interesting phenomenon that most translations avoid translating the word *doulos* with reference to ministerial leadership, invariably translating the word as “minister” or “servant.” He cites a general distaste for the concept of slavery and a possibility of misunderstandings as the main reasons behind this phenomenon. Harris, 183–185. Yet this was the very word Paul and his co-workers adopted as representing their leadership work in the church.
  31. It must be emphasized that the word *office* with reference to the leadership role in the church is not found in the Greek New Testament.
  32. Jesus uses exactly the same Greek word, *katakourieuousin*, in Mark 10:42.
  33. Sometimes 1 Tim 2:12 and 5:17 are used to justify the continuance of a hierarchical understanding of authority in the church. In the former, Paul forbids women to exercise authority over a man. The word used for “authority” here is a *hapax legomenon*, i.e., only used once in the Greek New Testament. A careful word study shows that in extra-biblical Greek literature of the first century, this was not a neutral word to express the concept of authority but was associated with an oppressive kind of hierarchical authority that left little room for the exercise of free will. On the basis of our study above, it becomes clear that no one in the church, *neither women nor men, should ever indulge in exercising this kind of power*, as it clearly represents a counterfeit view of authority. For an insightful discussion on the

first-century meaning of *authentēin*, see Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 200, 201; cf., Carroll D. Osburn, “AYΘENTEΩ (1 Timothy 2:12),” *ResQ* 25.1 (1982): 1–12. The authors of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, write on the issue of “usurping authority” in 1 Tim 2:12: “The Scriptures exhort Christians to do everything decently and in order (1 Cor 14:20). In the days of Paul, custom required that women be very much in the background. Therefore, if women believers had spoken out in public or otherwise made themselves prominent, these scriptural injunctions would have been violated and the cause of God would thus have suffered reproach.” (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 295, 296. See also an excellent article, written on 1 Cor 14:34, 35 and 1 Tim 2:12, that was heartily endorsed by Uriah Smith: G. C. Tenney, “Woman’s Relation to the Cause of Christ,” *The Review and Herald* (May 24, 1892): 328, 329. A statement in that article deserves to be quoted here: “It is manifestly illogical and unfair to give to any passage of Scripture an unqualified radical meaning that is at variance with the main tenor of the Bible, and directly in conflict with its plain teachings. The Bible may be reconciled in all its parts without going outside the lines of consistent interpretation. But great difficulty is likely to be experienced by those who interpret isolated passages in an independent light according to the ideas they happen to entertain upon them.” Tenney, 328.

In 1 Timothy 5:17 Paul states: “Let the elders who rule well be counted of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.” The word *rule* is at the center of contention. However, the Greek *proestōtes*, often translated as “rule,” simply means “those who are standing before you.” It is a verb form of the noun *prostates*, which in ancient Greek was applied to those who were charged with protecting the community and helping it operate smoothly rather than ruling over it. For more details on the etymology of this word, see my article, “Phoebe, Was She an Early Church Leader?” *Ministry* (April, 2013): 11–13.

34. All this does not mean that there may not be an emergency situation in the life of the church during which there could arise a need for someone to temporarily take a direct, hierarchical, leadership role. In such situations, anyone

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- possessing appropriate leadership gifting could take charge until order is restored. Events like this, however, are rare, and ordained pastors are not always the best-qualified persons to deal with emergency situations. Once resolution is reached, however, the life of the church should return to a communal way of dealing with problems. On the importance of the community in Paul's writings and a communal way of resolving conflict, see the excellent study by James M. Howard, *Paul, the Community and Progressive Sanctification: An Exploration in Community-Based Transformation Within Pauline Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).
35. This conclusion is strengthened by several considerations. First, in 1 Tim 3:1, Paul says, "if anyone" (*ei tis*) desires to be an overseer. *Tis* is a gender-neutral, indefinite pronoun. It simply means "anyone." In the NT, this is an inclusive term referring to both men and women. For example, in John 6:50 we find this passage: "But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone (*tis*) can eat and not die." It would be very strange to say that only men can eat bread and not die. Indeed, some translations, such as the KJV, translate *tis* as "a man" but we instantly think of humanity. This means that the NT often uses representative masculine language to speak of both men and women. E.g., Romans 12:1: "I urge you, brothers (*adelphoi*—masculine in Greek) . . . to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice." Would this mean that Rom 12:1–2 is written only for men? Obviously, this is not a correct interpretation. Second, "husband of one wife" could well refer to monogamy and sexual purity. If taken as it is written, we would not be able to have unmarried men or widowers as pastors. Yet Paul himself wrote that celibate persons can serve God better (1 Cor 7:32–35). Also, pastors would have to have children (that would exclude childless pastors). The real intent of the phrase seems to point to a person who is committed (faithful) to his one spouse. Thus, the "one-woman man" phrase functions as an exclusion of polygamy and sexual promiscuity rather than indicating that a bishop must be a man. Finally, the phrase "husband of one wife" appears again in 1 Tim 3:12 with reference to deacons. The masculine word *diakonos* is used. If Paul did indeed speak in gender terms, it would mean that only men could be deacons. However, in Rom 16:1, Paul refers to Phoebe as a deacon of the church in Cenchrea. Most versions translate this word as "servant." The word is actually *diakonos*, the same masculine word used to describe a deacon as a husband of one wife in 1 Tim 3:12. This clearly shows that when Paul used the phrase *one-woman man*, he did not try to convey that only men could be bishops or deacons. If so, Rom 16:1 would not make any sense. I am fairly certain that the gender of a bishop or deacon was not on Paul's mind. If gender was truly important to him, we would have a clear statement in 1 Timothy or elsewhere, such as "a bishop must be a man."
36. Examples abound. Here are some of them: Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1; Col 4:7; Acts 20:19. Gordon D. Fee calculated the number of times the word *doulos* and its various forms appears in the Pauline writings. The results are impressive: Fee estimates that, altogether, words that are related to the noun *doulos* appear 59 times in Paul: 30 times as *doulos*; 2 times as *syndoulos* (co-slave); 17 times as *douleuō* (to perform duties of a slave); 4 times as *douleia* (slavery); and 6 times as *douloō* (to enslave). While at times the word *slave* is used with reference to the actual institution of slavery (a negative usage of the term), a significant majority refer to the ministry of Paul and others. Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 62; cf., Harris, 20.
37. Jas 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1.
38. TOSC *Consensus Statement on a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Ordination*. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
39. The very reason why we are discussing women's ordination testifies to the fact that today the role of the pastor in the church has lost its original meaning.
40. For more information, see my paper, "The Problem of Ordination," presented at TOSC, January 2013. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
41. The Pauline image of the church as the body of Christ clearly conveys the idea that Christ is the only Head of the church of God.
42. Of course male headship in the family must also be defined in non-hierarchical and self-sacrificial, rather than jurisdictional, terms. As Christ gave Himself up (or self-sacrificed Himself) for His bride, so husbands must self-sacrifice themselves for their wives and children.

43. It must be noted, at this point, that the word *submit* in Eph 5:22 in the Greek simply states “and wife to husbands.” The mutual submission of Eph 5:21, therefore, provides a greater context for understanding Paul’s message to husbands and wives. If so, then the husband’s love is also a form of submission. Common human experience shows that by loving someone, we also submit to them.
44. This, of course, brings us back to the meaning of the twin expressions: *Vicarius Filii Dei* and *In persona Christi Capitis*. See footnote 17.
45. G. C. Tenney, “Woman’s Relation to the Cause of Christ,” *The Review and Herald* (May 24, 1892): 328.





## ELLEN WHITE, WOMEN IN MINISTRY, AND THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN<sup>1</sup>

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THAT ELLEN WHITE supported the involvement of women in various forms of ministry is well known and is not something that is debated among Seventh-day Adventists. Many publications, in particular, *Daughters of God* and some sections of *Evangelism*,<sup>2</sup> have helped Adventists be more conscious of her thoughts on this subject. And today women *are* involved in all forms of ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Questions arise, however, as to the level of affirmation and recognition the church should give to these women in ministry. Should it be the same recognition as given to men involved in the same forms of ministry?

Not many passages are available to turn to in Ellen White's writings to build a case for or against the ordination of women in the

Seventh-day Adventist Church—there is no precise “proof text” that says a woman can be ordained to become an ordained pastor of a church. But in the 1890s and early 1900s, she wrote a few remarkable and significant statements regarding ministry and ordination. While she strongly supported the traditional Christian roles of pastor, deacon, and elder, and church order, it is important to realize that she also recommended for ordination by the laying on of hands people serving in *nontraditional forms of church ministry*. Her understanding of ordination and the rite of laying on of hands was grounded upon her beliefs that the dual function of the earthly church is to spread the Gospel and to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ; therefore, forms of Christian ministry should be adaptable to current needs, while remaining grounded upon biblical principles, and should include all Christians in active service.

In the writings of Ellen White, the ordination of gospel ministers was then never intended to be an end in itself, as it has become in many parts of the world and in many Protestant denominations. Although ordination is a means of affirming and authorizing ministers for the work they do on behalf of the church, it is not a sacrament restricted to only a few people or to a few select ministries or offices. Rather, the rite of the laying on of hands represents the prayer of the church community for God's blessing on the work ministers do for Christ. The church must not see its task as merely building the kingdom of God on earth but must also prepare a people for the new heavenly kingdom to be ushered in at Christ's Second Advent. It was therefore White's belief that a ministry that could adapt itself to current needs, while remaining faithful to biblical principles, would be the best method to follow for a global church, leading her to counsel, “We need to branch out more in our methods of labor.”<sup>3</sup>

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What I would like to offer in this chapter is that a careful consideration of Ellen White's thought on the role of women in the church, taken in its nineteenth-century context, her understanding of the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, her counsels regarding ministry and its many functions taken in historical context, and her non-sacramental understanding of ordination and early Seventh-day Adventist practice of ordination, can support the case for allowing the ordination of women today. She supported the involvement of women in ministry, but what is less known are the historical and social contexts in which she made these comments and why. Read in context, what she advocated takes on a new perspective that helps us understand that she was ahead of her time in many ways but also in sync with other movements that advocated giving women a more prominent role in society and in the church. The perspective I draw from Ellen White's writings encourages us to move ahead and stretch out the boundaries of our understanding of ministry and ordination, to step out in faith and to respond to God's leading in the involvement of women in ministry because we have a mission to finish.

This approach also takes into consideration the question of hermeneutics, or how to read and interpret the writings of Ellen White. Some people claim that the only way to read her writings is by simply doing a "plain reading" of the passages without giving proper consideration to the context. This approach is not endorsed by Ellen White herself and is damaging to her writings. Many examples could be given of occasions when she faced this kind of hermeneutics in which people would take her words out of context, string many quotes together and end up making her say something she never intended to say. It is during such a situation regarding what she

had said about the age of school entrance for children that she stated, "God wants us all to have common sense, and He wants us to reason from common sense. Circumstances alter conditions. Circumstances change the relation of things."<sup>4</sup> On another situation she stated, "Many men take the testimonies the Lord has given . . . picking out a sentence here and there, taking it from its proper connection [context], and applying it according to their idea. Thus poor souls become bewildered, when could they read in order all that has been given, they would see the true application, and would not become confused. Much that purports to be a message from Ellen White, serves [only] the purpose of misrepresenting Sister White."<sup>5</sup> Thus, a proper study of Ellen White's writings on any subject will carefully look at the context of her statements, not take them out of context, as if quotes can stand alone and apply to words meanings they don't have. A "plain reading" of her writings cannot take words apart from their context.<sup>6</sup> This study will carefully seek to understand Ellen White's context—and the context and circumstances of her counsels regarding women in ministry and the meaning of ordination.

### 1. Ellen White's Support for Women in Ministry

#### *The Social Context*

During her prophetic ministry, Ellen White not only addressed issues of doctrines and behavior to help prepare God's people for Jesus' Second Coming, she also addressed issues of intrinsic evil in society. In her own ways she was an advocate of reforms, a social reformer, and at times she became insistent on these reforms. She readily espoused abolitionism and even advocated social disobedience at the onset of the Civil War and in response to the federal government's *Fugitive Slave Act* of

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1850.<sup>7</sup> She advocated temperance, the closing of saloons and taverns, and urged women to take a strong stand against the evils of alcohol in their homes and towns.<sup>8</sup> She advocated for health reform<sup>9</sup> and education reform.<sup>10</sup> Today, we benefit greatly from these reforms and we seldom think about the influence women like Ellen White had in making our society and church what it has become. To a large extent, we have forgotten the social conditions in which our ancestors lived.

Early Adventists understood Paul's prophetic words in Gal 3:28 that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ" as the seed of many reforms that led to the abolition of social evils like slavery, class distinctions based on birth rights, and gender exclusion in society and church. Early Adventists were thus abolitionists, social democrats, and republicans in government. Given this historical and social context, we can say that to a large extent Ellen White was ahead of her time in advocating some of these reforms. But on the other hand, she was in step with her time and advocated reforms that many other Christian groups also advocated.

Also in this context is the role of women in society. In general, women had little influence in American society in the nineteenth century. Women could not vote. In many places they could not own property, and their well-being often depended on a faithful husband or family relations. Few received an education beyond elementary school, and a very small number had a life-long professional career. Social evils were particularly hard on women. Physical and sexual abuse was rampant, particularly in homes where alcoholism was a factor. Lack of adequate healthcare and poor hygiene deprived women of a good life and frequently caused the death of the mother and/or child in childbirth.

On the other hand, Ellen White was fortunate and blessed to have been raised in a good Christian home, with a devoted, believing father who did not drink alcohol and a mother who cared deeply for her family's spiritual and physical needs and provided them with an education. She knew first-hand the blessings to the parents, children, and by extension to the community, that such a home brings. In her own home, she replicated what she saw her parents do when she was a little girl. Ellen White understood the important role a godly woman could have in the home, in the community, and in the church.

Knowing the context of Ellen White's statements regarding the roles of women in society and in the church helps us also to define a clearer portrait of Ellen White and her influence, and why she advocated these ideas. Today we have become familiar with many aspects of the roles of women in society and in the church, and we don't think about what life was like 150 years ago. We read Ellen White's statements about women in ministry, and we give an affirmative nod, not realizing that when she stated these ideas she was perceived as pushing the boundaries of normalcy and even the boundaries of decency and propriety. Many men were not encouraging her promotion of these ideas, and many turned to the Bible to find arguments against the involvement of women. If today we have women in ministry as teachers, evangelists, pastors, administrators, treasurers, and chaplains, it is in part because Ellen White advocated for these roles in the church. And as a church we have followed her lead for more than 150 years. Shall we go back on that history and undo this encouragement to women in ministry?

### *Women Speaking in Religious Meetings*

As I've mentioned, a century ago women were not as involved in social or religious

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public life as they are today. In fact, it was sometimes an inappropriate novelty to see a woman speak in an assembly. Let's remember that Ellen White's first attempts in 1845 and 1846 at communicating the content of her first visions to groups of former Millerites were met with worrisome displeasure from her family. A single woman was not supposed to travel in those years, and even less to speak in religious assemblies, unless she was accompanied by a family relation. It was felt unbecoming of her to do this, and her behavior caused her family to be concerned about her reputation.<sup>11</sup>

Later in her life, Ellen White became very involved in the temperance movement in the United States. She became known as a good speaker at temperance rallies and drew large crowds of curious people who, in part, wanted to hear a woman speak. By the end of the nineteenth century it was still a novelty to hear a woman speak in public.<sup>12</sup> Many people objected to seeing women speak at religious meetings on the basis of Paul's two admonitions in 1 Cor 14:34, 35 and 1 Tim 2:12.

Two interesting anecdotes from Ellen White's ministry illustrate a few aspects of this context of women speaking in public and how she personally surmounted the resistance to her public ministry. In October 1870, during a tour of churches in the Midwest, James and Ellen White stopped at a gathering in Tipton, Indiana. In letters to her sons, Willie and Edson, she recounted her meeting with two Methodist women who came to hear her.

Tuesday afternoon [October 11] we left the encampment at Tipton. At the depot we were accosted by two ladies, members of the Methodist church, who had come for the purpose of speaking with me. One had been brought up a Friend [Quaker], and still retained her "thee" and "thou." Both seemed to have had an experience in the things of

religion. They were much pleased with my discourse Sunday afternoon. They, with other Christian women in the place, believed that woman can exert a powerful influence by public labor in the cause of God; but a large class, including the ministers of the several denominations, held that she was entirely out of her place in the desk.

On learning that I was to speak at the campground, both parties determined to go and hear me, agreeing that if I proved myself able to expound the Scriptures to the edification of my hearers, the ministers should cease their opposition to woman's speaking, and, on the other hand, if my remarks failed to be edifying, the ladies would accept the ministers' views upon the point.

These two ladies came to the meeting feeling that much was at stake. Said they, "We prayed earnestly that God would give you freedom and the power of His grace; and our expectations were more than realized. God helped you to speak. Such an impression was made on this community as was never known before. You have told us truths of which many were ignorant. All will have matter for serious thought. Prejudice against woman's speaking is gone. If the people had known that you would speak to the public, any of the churches in the place would gladly have opened their doors to you." These Christian women then urged us to stay and speak again, but we told them it was impossible. They also invited us to come to the Methodist camp meeting next year, promising us a good hearing. They then bade me Godspeed, and we parted.<sup>13</sup>

Ten years later, in a letter to her husband

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James, Ellen White recounted some of the activities she and other colleagues had been involved in near Oakland, California. Among many things, she told James the following.

Elder Haskell talked in the afternoon and his labors were well received. I had in the evening, it was stated, the largest congregation that had ever assembled at Arbuckle. The house was full. Many came from five to ten and twelve miles. The Lord gave me special power in speaking. The congregation listened as if spell-bound. Not one left the house although I talked above one hour. Before I commenced talking, Elder Haskell had a bit [piece] of paper that was handed (him) in quoting [a] certain text prohibiting women speaking in public. He took up the matter in a brief manner and very clearly expressed the meaning of the apostle's words. I understand it was a Cambelite [sic] who wrote the objection and it had been well circulated [among the audience] before it reached the desk; but Elder Haskell made it all plain before the people.<sup>14</sup>

These anecdotes illustrate a few important concepts for our discussion of women in ministry. First, it was a novelty in both Indiana and California to see a woman speak on religious matters, and many people felt it was inappropriate. Yet Ellen White noted that the attendance at both meetings was good, and in California the house was full and no one left the meeting, even though she spoke for a long time. We should note as well that she did not see it as her task to argue with people who felt otherwise. She left the responsibility of defending her public ministry to others.

In both anecdotes, Ellen White refers to the opposition against having a woman speak and suggests that this opposition was at times biblically based. At the California meeting, she referred to a note being circulated in the

congregation from a "Cambelite," that is, a member from the Church of Christ of the restorationist Stone-Campbell movement, who quoted a certain text of scripture about women being prohibited from speaking in public. We are not told what that text was but we can guess that it was either 1 Cor 14:34, 35 or 1 Tim 2:12. Christians in the Stone-Campbell movement viewed these two texts as straightforward facts about women, without any need to interpret or understand Paul's context. They viewed Paul's admonition, "let your women be silent," as a fact to be obeyed at all times and in all places. Two basic rules of interpretation that guided their study of the Bible—doing only what is specifically commanded or practiced in the New Testament, and paying attention to concrete words, not abstract principles or ideas—prevented the founder of their movement, Alexander Campbell, from condemning slavery during the American Civil War (because the New Testament says nothing against slavery), but caused him to condemn women preachers (because the New Testament says women should be silent). In contrast, Adventists condemned slavery and encouraged women preachers.<sup>15</sup>

Ellen White mentioned to James that Stephen Haskell responded briefly to this "Cambelite" objection before she spoke and "very clearly expressed the meaning of the apostle's words." And it is obvious from the context that Ellen White concurred with this explanation.

What did Stephen Haskell say to this audience? What was his belief on this subject of women speaking in church or in public—of women doing ministry? What was his explanation with which Ellen White agreed? Through the 1860s and 1870s, a number of articles appeared in Adventist Church publications—the *Review and Herald* and *Signs of the Times*—on this topic of women

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speaking in religious meetings. Having a woman prophet who spoke regularly in church assemblies and in public meetings was bound to raise some questions in regard to these two key texts of the New Testament, particularly also given the context that the Adventist and Stone-Campbell movements were in constant interactions in the Midwest in the nineteenth century. Three articles on this subject were published in 1879, during the year before this anecdote took place in Ellen White's ministry.

In January 1879, J. N. Andrews published a short article on women speaking in church in the *Review and Herald*. In this article, Andrews seeks to explain the two main texts used to prohibit women from speaking in church. His purpose is to show that a careful study of these texts cannot support this conclusion. In reference to 1 Cor 14:34, 35, he explained that Paul's intent was to avoid confusion in the church and to urge women to stop chatting between themselves during the worship service. Hence, "what the apostle says to women in such a church as this, and in such a state of things, *is not to be taken as directions to all Christian women in other churches and in other times*, when and where such disorders do not exist." Concerning 1 Tim 2:12, Andrews understands "this text to give Paul's general rule with regard to women as public teachers. But there are some exceptions to this general rule to be drawn even from Paul's writings, and from other scriptures." In fact, the evidence Andrews goes on to give indicates that this general rule is rather the exception and that women are free to labor in ministry.<sup>16</sup>

A few months later that same year, Andrews again published a brief article on this subject, this time in *Signs of the Times*. In response to an article he had read in another paper, which stated that women were not allowed to speak in early Christian churches, he explained that

such a position did not concur with the testimony of the Old and New Testaments, and that Paul's remark in Gal 3:28 was responsible for the "diffusive benevolence of Christianity" to counter the degradation that women had been subjected to in non-Christian societies. "The number of women of whom honorable mention is made for their labors in the gospel is not small. Now, in view of these facts, how can any man in this age of Bibles say that the Bible does not notice women, or give them a place in the work of God? The Lord chooses his own workers, and he does not judge as man judges. Man looks at the appearance; God judges the heart, and he never makes mistakes."<sup>17</sup>

One other article published before Ellen White's anecdotal event in California is an article published by her husband in the *Review and Herald*. While explaining the text in 1 Cor 14, James White conceded that Paul may have referred to women participating in church business meetings but he took the firm position that this text did not refer to a prohibition for women to participate in worship services. Rather, "Paul . . . places men and women side by side in the position and work of teaching and praying in the church of Christ." White also gave numerous examples of women who ministered for God in the Old and New Testaments, to show that there is no such prohibition for women to labor for the gospel or to speak in church assemblies.<sup>18</sup>

The articles published in Adventist papers in this period took the position that what Paul referred to in 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2 had to do with particular situations in the local churches of his time. Paul's counsel regarding these situations was not applicable to all church congregations. Adventist pioneers did not understand Paul to be enunciating a general and universal ban on women speaking in religious meetings. A number of these articles also

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referred to many of Paul's female co-workers, to state the obvious conclusion that Paul was therefore not speaking against women in ministry. Furthermore, none of these articles used the argument that a woman prophet (i.e., Ellen White) has a special dispensation from God to speak in church—an argument that is repeatedly used today to circumvent the misunderstood prohibition and to argue that women without a prophetic call from God should not be engaged in public speaking in religious meetings.

Somehow, the history of our interpretation of these passages has been forgotten: One of our church founders was a woman, and she spoke extensively in congregations. If this was the position taken by our church leaders 130 years ago in an era when women did not have social equality, I believe they would certainly favor women in ministry today and would see no reason to not include women in pastoral and other forms of church ministry. It was in this context that Ellen White encouraged women to be involved in many aspects of ministry, because she genuinely believed that God calls women to ministry just as much as He calls men.

I also find it interesting that in her seventy years of ministry Ellen White never referred to or commented on 1 Cor 14:34, 35 or 1 Tim 2:12 to limit the ministry women can do in the church or society. Perhaps her silence speaks volumes as to the importance we should give to these two passages.

### 2. The Meaning and Extent of Ministry

Another area of discussion is the level of involvement of women in church work and ministry. Can a woman do all the same activities or functions a man can do? Are there prohibitions—including the concept of male headship<sup>19</sup> and Paul's admonitions in his epistles—that refer to the extent a woman

can work for God in connection with church ministry? That leads us to ponder what Ellen White meant by ministry, and a number of statements she penned while she lived in Australia in the 1890s are very instructive.

In 1898, Ellen White spoke quite forcibly about the need to remunerate fairly the spouses of pastors who do team ministry. Even if some men may not have felt comfortable with women doing ministry in partnership with their husbands and be remunerated for it, she argued, "this question is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled it." She went on to say that God is calling women to engage in ministry, and in some instances they will "do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God." Emphatically, she stated, "There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry."<sup>20</sup>

This statement immediately raises a question: What did Ellen White mean by "ministry"? Some argue that when she uses the word *ministry* in reference to men, it refers to the gospel ministry of an ordained minister, and when she uses the word in reference to women, it refers to other kinds of supportive ministry, such as personal evangelism, visiting homes of the poor, teaching the Bible in private homes, or canvassing. I personally don't think such a clear distinction is entirely justified, because the meaning of ministry changed in the first decades of the Adventist Church, and so did the practice of ordination and who received ordination.

In the early decades of Adventist work, only the itinerant preacher, or evangelist, was ordained, and he was referred to as an ordained minister or "gospel minister." Ministry in that time period was focused on the work of the evangelist. With time, however, other kinds of tasks or functions became part of what ministry consists of. The work of Bible workers, literature evangelists,



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educators, publishing house editors and workers, and other administrators began to be included in the work of ministry for the church. And men in these functions, who at first were not ordained, started to be ordained. These changes and developments need to be part of our understanding of the context in which Ellen White wrote her words of encouragement to women in ministry.<sup>21</sup> Her encouragements to women help us see this change in the Adventist understanding of ministry, from a narrow meaning to a broad inclusion of many functions, and she consistently encourages women to join in all aspects of ministry.

In 1879, Ellen White addressed a difficult situation at the South Lancaster church in Massachusetts. She felt the ministers working in that church or in the area had not been good leaders. One pastor had "a disposition to dictate and control matters." Knowing there were "humble, devoted women" in that congregation who had been sneered at by these ministers, she made this comment: "It is not always men who are best adapted to *the successful management of a church*. If faithful women have more deep piety and true devotion than men, *they could indeed by their prayers and their labors do more than men who are unconsecrated in heart and in life.*"<sup>22</sup> In this early statement the ministry of ordained ministers includes management of a church and, in her opinion, women can have that ministry and be just as effective at it as men. Obviously, this statement does not call for the ordination of women, but it is the beginning of a pattern in Ellen White's writings where we see her responding to some situations by inviting the leaders of the church to consider asking women do the work, or part of it, that ordained men do. This division of labor is, for Ellen White, conducive to facilitating the mission of the church and involving more people in its fulfillment.

Always close to Ellen White's heart was the work of literature evangelists—selling books filled with truth to those who were not acquainted with the three angels' messages. In 1880 she stated that literature evangelism was a good preparation for the work of ministers. "If there is one work more important than another, it is that of getting our publications before the public, thus leading them to search the Scriptures. Missionary work—introducing our publications into families, conversing, and praying with and for them—is a good work and one which will *educate men and women to do pastoral labor.*"<sup>23</sup> In this context, she refers to ministry as "pastoral labor" and both men and women can prepare for it through literature evangelism.

Another similar inclusive encouragement to prepare for ministry through literature evangelism comes twenty years later. "All who desire an opportunity for true ministry, and who will give themselves unreservedly to God, will find in the canvassing work opportunities to speak upon many things pertaining to the future, immortal life. The experience thus gained will be of the greatest value to those who are fitting themselves for the *ministry*. It is the accompaniment of *the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God.*"<sup>24</sup> This statement encourages both men and women to prepare themselves for ministry as pastors of churches.

One more statement from 1903:

The Lord calls upon those connected with our sanitariums, publishing houses, and schools to teach the youth to do evangelistic work. . . . Young men and young women who should be engaged in the *ministry*, in Bible work, and in the canvassing work should not be bound down to mechanical employment. . . . Some will be trained to enter the field as missionary nurses, some as canvassers, and *some as gospel ministers.*<sup>25</sup>

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In the last three statements, Ellen White particularly encourages young people to prepare themselves for ministry. Although she may have been aware that there would be limitations to what young women could do or be employed for by the church, she did not limit the options available to them. If somehow Ellen White believed that the concept of male headship restricts the ministry positions available for women, she had plenty of opportunities to clarify her thought. She never did. Instead, her encouragements to young women are consistently open-ended and inclusive, as in this next statement in 1887.

While discussing the need to provide good, solid education to Adventist youth in our schools, she exhorted ministers, Sabbath School teachers, and college teachers to do their best to “unite heart and soul and purpose in the work of saving our youth from ruin.” The standard of education should not be lowered because “when suitable men are wanted to fill various positions of trust, they are rare; when women are wanted with well-balanced minds, with not a cheap style of education, but with an education fitting them *for any position of trust, they are not easily found.*”<sup>26</sup>

A careful reflection of Ellen White’s writings reveals another pattern in her counsels regarding the involvement of women in ministry: Her counsels are also directed at women of all age groups over an entire lifespan. As we have just seen, some of her counsels are addressed to young women and invite them to prepare themselves for ministry through good education and practical experience, as in literature evangelism. Some counsels are addressed to mothers and earnestly entreat them to regard their homes as the greatest missionary field.<sup>27</sup> Other counsels are addressed to older men and women, inviting them even to consider doing missionary work in areas where the gospel has not been preached.<sup>28</sup>

And some counsels are directed at married women and spouses of ordained ministers.<sup>29</sup> While the home of a married couple can be blessed with children, sometimes the arrival of children may not be what is most desirable for that couple or for their ministry.<sup>30</sup> For some women, Ellen White went so far as to recommend that they postpone having children in order to allow them many years of useful gospel ministry, as she favored ministerial and missionary teams of husband and wife. We will see the example of one such couple following in the last section of this chapter.

In October 1899, Ellen White restated her conviction that women engaged in ministry should be paid adequately for their work. In this document it is not clear whether she is referring also to the spouses of ordained men, as she did in 1898, but her statement is nonetheless emphatic.

Women, as well as men, are needed in the work that must be done. Those women who give themselves to the service of the Lord, who labor for the salvation of others by doing house-to-house work, which is as taxing as, and more taxing than standing before a congregation, should receive payment for their labor. If a man is worthy of his hire, so also is a woman. . . . The tithe should go to those who *labor in word and doctrine*, be they men or women.<sup>31</sup>

In this statement Ellen White distinguishes between the work of the ordained minister who stands before a congregation and that of a woman who gives Bible studies in homes, but she also equalizes the value of both works by stating they are equally “taxing.” Note also that she uses the words of Paul in 1 Tim 5:17 to refer to the work of elders who “labor in word and doctrine” and uses them to refer to the ministry of women. Is this a clear hint on her part that the ministry of women

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is as important as that of men? In any case, although men and women do a different kind of ministry, they are equal in value, deserving of tithes support, and constitutive of the work of biblical elders.

### 3. The Mission of the Church and Ordination

This last statement leads us to discuss the rite of ordination in the Adventist Church and in the writings of Ellen White. If guided by the Holy Spirit, would it be possible for women to be ordained to perform these functions of ministry for which men are ordained and that Ellen White encourages women to do? Is there any indication that Ellen White favored their ordination to ministry? Did Ellen White state that ordinations should be limited to biblical precedents?

As already mentioned, in the 1890s and early 1900s, for the most part while laboring in Australia at a time when the needs for church workers were so large and opportunities for ministry so numerous, Ellen White wrote a few remarkable and significant statements regarding ministry and ordination. While she supported the traditional roles of pastor, elder, and deacon, it is important to realize that she also recommended for ordination by the laying on of hands people serving in other forms of church ministry, since by then the concept of ministry had broadened to include a variety of activities. These areas of ministry for which she recommended ordination include women involved in personal ministry and other forms of ministry that are commonly known today as chaplaincy, social work, counseling, and medicine.<sup>32</sup>

Her understanding of ordination and the rite of laying on of hands was grounded upon her beliefs that the dual purpose of the church is to spread the gospel and to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ;

therefore, forms of Christian ministry should be adaptable to the current needs, while remaining grounded on biblical principles, and include all Christians in active service. Understanding what Ellen White identified to be the purpose for the Church and the meaning of the rite of laying on of hands is important for our discussion.

#### *The Mission of the Church*

One of Ellen White's basic ideas regarding the church is that it is the representative of God on earth.<sup>33</sup> Within the context of the Great Controversy theme, she believed that Christians are the instruments God uses to witness to the universe that He is a God of love, mercy, and justice.<sup>34</sup> "God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will."<sup>35</sup> In this context, her comments about the church emphasize the pragmatic functions of the church, its role and purpose. Although ordained ministers, as servants of God and of the church, are no doubt to act as God's representatives on earth,<sup>36</sup> they are not the only ones. Every Christian has a role to play within the great controversy at the end of time and is a representative of Christ.<sup>37</sup> Indicative of her thoughts on this is the following passage written in 1904:

Brethren and sisters, how much work have you done for God during the past year? Do you think that it is those men only who have been ordained as gospel ministers that are to work for the uplifting of humanity?—No, no! Every one who names the name of Christ is expected by God to engage in this work. *The hands of ordination may not have been laid upon you, but you are none the less God's messengers.* If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, if you know his saving power, you can no more keep from

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telling this to some one else than you can keep the wind from blowing. You will have a word in season for him that is weary. You will guide the feet of the straying back to the fold. Your efforts to help others will be untiring, because God's Spirit is working in you.

While in the Old Testament only certain men ordained to the priesthood could minister within the earthly sanctuary,<sup>38</sup> Ellen White believed that no one is ever restricted from serving God, even though one is not an ordained minister. All Christians, regardless of their vocations, are servants of God and in a very broad sense all Christians have a ministry. Even though she never mentioned it as such, she nonetheless affirmed the Protestant concept of the priesthood of all believers. Two passages of Scripture are foremost in her understanding of this concept. The first is 1 Pet 2:9: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (RSV).<sup>39</sup> The second is John 15:16: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you." Many times she referred to or quoted parts of these passages in support of dedicated Christian service and to insist that all Christians are called, commissioned, or ordained by God to serve Him.<sup>40</sup>

This concept of the priesthood of all believers underlies her understanding of both Christian service and ordination. Throughout her ministry, Ellen White made repeated appeals to church members to engage in wholehearted Christian service. Accordingly, it is a fatal mistake to believe that only ordained ministers are workers for God and to rely solely on them to accomplish the mission

of the church.<sup>41</sup> "All who are ordained unto the life of Christ [i.e., baptized] are ordained [i.e., called] to work for the salvation of their fellow-men."<sup>42</sup> "Those who stand as leaders in the church of God are to realize that the Saviour's commission is given to all who believe in His name. God will send forth into His vineyard many who have not been dedicated to the ministry by the laying on of hands."<sup>43</sup> In a very real sense, every Christian is thus a minister for God.<sup>44</sup>

Consequently, Christ calls and spiritually ordains every Christian for ministry. Emphatically, Ellen White asked, "Have you tasted of the powers of the world to come? Have you been eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God? Then, although ministerial hands may not have been laid upon you in ordination, Christ has laid His hands upon you and has said: 'Ye are My witnesses.'"<sup>45</sup> Thus, she could state that "many souls will be saved through the labors of men who have looked to Jesus for their ordination and orders."<sup>46</sup> Church ordination, therefore, is not a prerequisite to serve God, because it is first the Holy Spirit who gives fitness for service to Christians who in faith are willing to serve.<sup>47</sup>

I believe this is how she also understood her own call to ministry. Although she was never ordained as a minister by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, she believed that God Himself had ordained her to her prophetic ministry, a spiritual ordination that was by far superior to any forms of human ordination. In her later years, while recalling her experience in the Millerite movement and her first vision, she stated, "In the city of Portland, the Lord ordained me as His messenger, and here my first labors were given to the cause of present truth."<sup>48</sup>

From these passages we can draw two initial conclusions concerning Ellen White's underlying thoughts on ordination. First,

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Ellen White's concept of the priesthood of all believers is the fundamental qualification for Christian service; every Christian is intrinsically a servant of God. Second, in a spiritual sense, God ordains every Christian to service.

### *The Ordination of Paul and Barnabas*

A number of other passages in Ellen White's writings give us significant thoughts on the meaning of ordination, and in all of them the primary focus of the discussion is the role ordination plays in furthering the evangelistic mission of the church. These passages include her commentary on the ordination of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13.

God foresaw the difficulties that His servants would be called to meet, and, in order that their work should be above challenge, He instructed the church by revelation to set them apart publicly to the work of the ministry. Their ordination was *a public recognition of their divine appointment* to bear to the Gentiles the glad tidings of the gospel.

Both Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God Himself, and the ceremony of the laying on of hands *added no new grace or virtual qualification*. It was *an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office and a recognition of one's authority in that office*. By it the seal of the church was set upon the work of God.

To the Jew this form was a significant one. When a Jewish father blessed his children, he laid his hands reverently upon their heads. When an animal was devoted to sacrifice, the hand of the one invested with priestly authority was laid upon the head of the victim. And when the ministers of the church of believers in Antioch laid their hands upon Paul and Barnabas, they, by that action, asked *God to bestow His blessing upon the chosen apostles in their devotion to the specific work to which they had been appointed*.

At a later date the rite of ordination by the laying on of hands was greatly abused; unwarrantable importance was attached to the act, as if a power came at once upon those who received such ordination, *which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work*. But in the setting apart of these two apostles, there is no record indicating that any virtue was imparted by the mere act of laying on of hands. There is only the simple record of their ordination and of the bearing that it had on their future work.<sup>49</sup>

Some significant insights about ordination appear in this commentary. First, Ellen White acknowledged that there is a calling and spiritual appointment before the church ordains someone, and ordination is a public recognition of this prior divine appointment. This, we have already seen, concurs with her understanding of the spiritual ordination of all believers. Second, she also stated that the rite of ordination does not in itself qualify someone for an office or task, this qualifying has already happened through the work of the Holy Spirit in one's life and ministry; rather, ordination is to be understood as a form of appointment to an office and a recognition that this person is given the authority to perform that office. Third, ordination is also a rite during which the congregation asks "God to bestow *His blessing* upon the chosen apostles." Fourth, ordination is for a *specific work* and is not meant to "immediately" qualify someone "for any and all ministerial work."<sup>50</sup> This implies there is room for various kinds of laying on of hands, for various kinds of work, ministry, functions or offices, each with specific responsibilities and, therefore, attending authority.

In this context, as we will see following, it is now possible to understand why Ellen White allowed for the church to decide whether some people, along with gospel ministers or itinerant preachers, could be ordained by the

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laying on of hands for other ministries. If one allows for a missionary understanding of the role of the church, then ordination is also a functional rite to affirm and commission individuals for various ministries and responsibilities that further the mission of the church. There is a world to be warned and a people to be prepared for the Second Coming of Christ, and those who are thus spiritually qualified should be entrusted with their mission, affirmed and blessed by the church's laying on of hands.

### *Ordination of Early Adventist Ministers*

Very early in Seventh-day Adventist history, the leading pioneers of the movement felt concerned about the confusion and false teachings that were manifested sometimes among the small group of Sabbatarian Adventist believers. Following the example of New Testament apostles who had set apart elders to oversee local congregations against false teachings and to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, these early Adventist leaders selected promising men and set them apart with prayer and laying on of hands. The criterion for their ordination was the "full proof" evidence "that they have received their commission from God." By ordaining them, the group of believers "would show the sanction of the church to their going forth as messengers to carry the most solemn message ever given to men."<sup>51</sup> The ordination of these early Adventist itinerant preachers served as a rite to authorize them to speak on behalf of the church and to preserve order in the emerging church.

### *Ordination to Other Forms of Ministry*

Ellen White earnestly believed that the ordained pastoral ministry alone is not sufficient to fulfill God's commission—that God is calling Christians of all professions to

dedicate their lives to his service.<sup>52</sup> Since the Church can acknowledge different kinds of spiritual gifts and ministries beyond those of pastor, elder, and deacon to meet the needs of the people, she favored the setting apart of trained professionals, including medical missionaries, by the laying on of hands. Among these groups of ministers, and given a broader definition of what ministry is, would be women who are engaged in personal evangelism. Strictly speaking, these two recommendations do not have biblical precedents, but they are possible given her understanding of ministry and ordination.

In 1908, in a manuscript to encourage the mission of Adventist medical institutions, Ellen White wrote about the need for cooperation between gospel workers and medical doctors in Adventist medical institutions. Her desire was to see the medical work of the church as the right arm of the church's evangelistic efforts, and she understood that pastors and medical workers were both essential to this work. She considered the work of the medical profession as a great means for proclaiming the gospel and, for this reason she believed medical missionaries ought to be set apart for God's service. In respect to this, she wrote:

The work of the true medical missionary is largely a spiritual work. It includes prayer and the laying on of hands; he therefore should be as sacredly set apart for his work *as is the minister of the gospel*. Those who are selected to act the part of missionary physicians, are to be set apart as such. This will strengthen them against the temptation to withdraw from the sanitarium work to engage in private practice.<sup>53</sup>

White believed that the work of the medical profession is a ministry for proclaiming the gospel. She saw a correlation between the

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setting apart of the medical missionary and the minister of the gospel and viewed the ceremony of the laying on of hands upon medical missionaries to be a form of ordination. In this ceremony, as with ordination to the more traditional offices of the church, the church acknowledges the blessings of God upon the medical profession and its practitioners, and this recognition by the church serves to strengthen the dedication of the worker in his or her service for God.

In a similar context, in 1895, Ellen White wrote a long article about the work of lay people in local churches. She urged ministers to let lay people work for the church and train them to do so. And she favored that women serving in local ministry also be set apart for the various forms of evangelism and ministry they do. She counseled:

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. *They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands.* In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. *This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor.*<sup>54</sup>

Here White counseled that God is leading the church in setting apart women for these various forms of ministry. It is God's will for the church to branch out, be strengthened and built up by ordaining women and men to serve in the various forms of gospel ministry and to provide care for the mental, physical and spiritual needs of others. Her understanding of ministry is broad, as is her

understanding of ordination. Ordination in this context is both asking God's blessing on the individuals and affirming their ministry for the church.

Some have argued that since Ellen White does not use the word *ordination* in these two examples, it should not be implied that she is referring to ordination to ministry, but that she refers only to a kind of spiritual affirmation of some lower types of ministry, such as the work of deaconesses, in local churches. While this may have been the case in her day, today in most Adventist churches these three types of ministry she mentions are usually done by ordained male pastors or elders, depending on the size of the congregation.

In both examples, Ellen White uses the same words Luke used in Acts 13 to describe Paul and Barnabas' ordination: They were set apart with prayer and laying on of hands. (By the way, Luke does not use the word *ordination*, either.) In her reflection on the ordination of the first Sabbatarian Adventist ministers, she does not use the word *ordination* but refers to setting apart and commission; yet, we naturally accept that she is referring to ordination. If Ellen White can describe these events as ordinations, we can certainly say her references to medical missionaries and women being set apart with prayer and laying on of hands are also referring to ordination. What matters here is not whether one event is an ordination and the other is not, on the basis of the presence or absence of the word *ordination* in her writings—they all refer to the same rite of laying on of hands. Instead of limiting our understanding of what ordination is and for whom it is valid, we need to broaden our understanding to include a variety of meanings and circumstances, as she invited us to do. Furthermore, her comment regarding the ordination of medical missionaries is obviously stating that in her mind there is only one kind

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of laying on of hands: “he [the medical missionary] therefore should be as sacredly set apart for his work *as is the minister of the gospel.*” All these comments form the picture of a non-sacramental and functional use of the word *ordination* that is better described by the words *affirmation* and *commissioning* than by the sacramentally loaded word *ordination*. Thus, with this context and meaning in mind, her view of the laying on of hands can be and is gender inclusive.

These two statements also support what we saw earlier—that for Ellen White, ministry is to be understood in broad terms and cannot be limited only to the work of an itinerant preacher or church pastor. Earlier, in our discussion of her comments about the need to have more women join ministry with their husbands and her invitation to women to be educated for ministry, her statements are clear that whether one is preaching a series of evangelistic meetings or giving a sermon on Sabbath morning, giving Bible studies in homes, or visiting families in need, all these activities are qualified as gospel or pastoral ministry. She invited and urged both men and women to be involved in ministry. She understood that these women “are recognized by God as being as necessary to the work of ministry as their husbands.”<sup>55</sup> Consequently, she approved of their labor in the gospel ministry, noting: “Again and again the Lord has shown me that women teachers are just as greatly needed to do the work to which He has appointed them as are men.”<sup>56</sup> White urged the church to recognize God’s call to women by the laying on of hands so that the ministry of the church might be more diversified and complete in its mission. This picture is also framed in the context of mission. She was passionate about the salvation of the lost, and she felt strongly that all Adventist men and women be active in all facets of ministry. While her

concern was missiological (accomplishing the mission of the church), ours has become ecclesiological (determining who has authority in the church).

Some may consider these thoughts somewhat radical and a rupture with the New Testament teaching on the ordination of deacons, elders, and pastors. However, what allowed Ellen White to see the laying on of hands in this broader sense is her non-sacramental, functional view of ordination. Although it symbolizes the giving of church authority, ordination is not primarily for the purpose of granting authority—in our denomination, church assemblies, committees, and boards do this. Ordination affirms the spiritual gifts God has given to a person and invites God’s blessings on this person’s ministry. Such an affirmation is in her view inclusive of males and females and is not to be limited to the ministries of deacons, elders, and pastors—clearly her theological understanding of the laying on of hands goes beyond biblical precedents. The organization of the church is to be adaptable to the needs of the church wherever it is located in the world, so that all may hear the message of God’s salvation in his or her own language and culture. Ordination and the laying on of hands is a means to bless people in ministry and to encourage them to do their ministry with the church’s affirmation. She did not view ordination as a sacrament to be given to only to a few men in the church, who form a cohort or caste of spiritually endowed ministers, and who have sole authority to lead the church.

One anecdote further illustrates Ellen White’s non-sacramental view of ordination. In 1873, John Tay joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church and soon felt called by God to volunteer his time as a missionary in the South Pacific. In 1886, he landed on the island of Pitcairn and succeeded by God’s grace in



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converting the entire population. But not being an ordained minister, he was not authorized to baptize the people on the island who accepted the three angels' messages.<sup>57</sup> Ten years later, Ellen White commented on this event and had this to say:

Another thing I want to tell you that I know from the light as given me: it has been a great mistake that men go out, knowing they are children of God, like Brother Tay, [who] went to Pitcairn as a missionary to do work, [but] that man did not feel at liberty to baptize because he had not been ordained. *That is not any of God's arrangements; it is man's fixing.* When men go out with the burden of the work and to bring souls into the truth, those men are ordained of God, [even] if [they] never have a touch of ceremony of ordination. To say [they] shall not baptize when there is nobody else, [is wrong]. If there is a minister in reach, all right, then they should seek for the ordained minister to do the baptizing, but when the Lord works with a man to bring out a soul here and there, and they know not when the opportunity will come that these precious souls can be baptized, why he should not question about the matter, he should baptize these souls.<sup>58</sup>

It is an interesting comment for Ellen White to say that *the idea that only an ordained minister can perform baptism, even in special circumstances, "is not any of God's arrangement; it is man's fixing."* Perhaps she overstated her response to what happened. But nonetheless, there is something in her understanding of ministry and ordination that leads her to say this. In this case, ministry is viewed as non-hierarchical, and ordination is viewed as an affirmation of God's prior spiritual ordination. Her passion for saving the lost is strong, and human church limitations to

what a layperson can do should not hinder the salvation of souls. If there are such limitations, even as to prevent baptism in the absence of an ordained minister, they are "man's fixing."

Admittedly, and to be fair, White did support the broader principle of unity and church order and agreed that ordination functions as a rite to show that ministers receive authority to work for the church. But if ordination is seen as a way to establish some hierarchy to keep lay people in their lower places, it is obvious here that she did not support such a view. She objected to the idea that *only* ordained ministers can represent the church as their exclusive rights and function. Clearly, in her mind, the link between ordination and granting church authority is somewhat fluid, and ordination is more akin to a commissioning to do God's service for the church.

### 4. Context and Hermeneutics

The question of the ordination of women is also a question of hermeneutics and how we understand the relevance and authoritative nature of the writings of Ellen White on this issue. I have attempted so far to present her broad understanding of ministry with multi-faceted functions and tasks, and her broad understanding of ordination as a function of the church to affirm and commission men and women to various forms of ministries and responsibilities. These *views of ministry and ordination* open avenues that the traditional Catholic sacrament of ordination cannot allow.

True, Ellen White did not specifically say that women could be ordained to become senior pastors of churches. But the interpretation of her writings must be done within the circumstances and times she wrote. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women in general did not occupy leadership functions in churches and society, and the dominance of male leadership is obvious.

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However, she encouraged women to be active in a multitude of functions and ministries and believed that with the proper education, women could occupy “any position of trust.”<sup>59</sup> Therefore, to limit our current practices to only what the church allowed in her day is not automatically in agreement with her thought.

The interpretation of Ellen White’s testimonies and writings cannot be static, because we must understand the times and circumstances that led her to say what she did and learn from them principles to guide our thinking and actions today. A statement written many years ago may not necessarily have the same force and relevance today as it did then. Attempting to explain how to use her writings, she stated in 1911 that the context of her thought is very important: “Regarding the testimonies, nothing is ignored; nothing is cast aside; but time and place must be considered.”<sup>60</sup>

An example of this is the question of the proper age for school entrance—an idea debated among Adventists a hundred years ago. In 1872, Ellen White had written that, “parents should be the only teachers of their children until they have reached eight or ten years of age.”<sup>61</sup> Many Adventists took this statement as an unvarying rule for the age of entrance into Seventh-day Adventist schools, and when in 1904, upon their return to the United States, her son W. C. White and his wife Ethel wished to enter their young children in the newly established school in St. Helena, California, the school administration refused to take their children on the basis of Ellen White’s statement. When she was asked about this, however, she explained that when this counsel was given there were no Adventist schools yet and her counsel had specific reference to the “common” [public] schools. Children younger than 9 or 10 were not prepared to discern and resist the temptations they would meet in the public schools. As the

Adventist school system became more extensive, she advised students of all ages to attend Adventist schools wherever they were available.<sup>62</sup> She advised using “common sense” in this regard and not to make her comments on entrance age an unbending rule and thus miss the underlying principle.<sup>63</sup>

### *The Ordination of Some of Our Pioneers*

This anecdote illustrates that we must take carefully into consideration the historical context of Ellen White’s writings before coming to any conclusions. One very human tendency is to superimpose our current understanding of issues on prior statements in her writings. Let me illustrate one major problem I see happening today: Through the years we have changed our practice regarding the ordination of men, but we have not been willing to do the same for women.

George I. Butler became president of the Iowa Conference in June 1865, even though he had “no experience as a preacher [i.e., as an evangelist].” It was not until June 1867 that he received a ministerial license and was then ordained later that year in September. “Interestingly,” notes Denis Kaiser, “even after he had been elected conference president, the church saw no need to hurry his ordination, as they apparently did not see it as necessary prior to him beginning his service as president.”<sup>64</sup> Similarly, Uriah Smith became editor of the *Review and Herald* in 1855, secretary of the General Conference in 1863, and president of the Michigan Conference also in 1863, a position he served in intermittently until 1872. He was not ordained until 1874.

Early Seventh-day Adventists ordained only the ministers among them who had given evidence that they were good evangelists or itinerant preachers. Ordination was a recognition of their gifts and that the church authorized them to be spokesmen for the

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truth. Those who were not itinerant preachers were not ordained, even if they served the church in some other capacity. As we grew in numbers and diversified our ministries, the role of ministers changed, and those who had responsibilities in the church were also ordained, irrespective of whether they had been itinerant preachers. So our practice of male ordination has evolved since the time of Ellen White to be more inclusive of other male forms of ministry.

The ordination of W. W. Prescott in 1889 is an illustration of that development. Prescott had never worked as a pastor or evangelist, yet during his service as president of Battle Creek College and education secretary of the General Conference, church leaders noticed the fruits of his educational work and his powerful preaching abilities. They were convinced of his divine calling and decided to ordain him in 1889. He counseled with Ellen White about his doubts and whether he should accept ordination. "If he could serve the cause of God any better in receiving ordination and credentials," she surmised, "it would be best" for him to be ordained.<sup>65</sup>

We should note that the elections of Butler and Smith to their functions would likely not be allowed today with our current church policies. But, in all honesty, that is not an entirely fair historical judgment or interpretation. If Elders Butler and Smith were working for the church today, they would have been ordained by the time they were asked to serve in their functions or would be ordained immediately upon being voted into a function. Our times and practices are different from those of our pioneers, and we cannot make direct comparisons and links. We can learn from the past but our present is different. Who receives ordination today is based on our current understanding of ministry and it is different from what our pioneers understood ministry

to be and thus who can be ordained. This also indicates that as we age we are following in the footsteps of many other denominations, and we are giving more and more attention to church structures and ecclesiastical roles, to who has authority within a hierarchy. Our pioneers did not have this preoccupation at first.

If this is what has happened with the development of the practice of ordination for men in ministry, how about the development of the practice of ordination for women in ministry? Why should such a development remain stagnant? In 1895, Ellen White recommended the ordination of women who were involved in visiting the sick, looking after the young, and ministering to the necessities of the poor. Even though some have argued that this ordination referred to the limited role of a deaconess in White's day, men who do the same functions today are now ordained as ministers or elders. In the 1860s and 1870s, men who did these same activities in local churches would also have been ordained as deacons. But now they are ordained as elders and ministers. Should we not ordain women as ministers or elders as well if they do the same functions as their male counterparts? If it is possible to allow for the development of the practice of ordination for men, why not allow the same for women? These are serious questions that must take into consideration the historical context of Ellen White's writings and our own current context.

If Ellen White was so willing to encourage women in various forms of ministry in the 1890s and 1900s, in a society and context in which women were not encouraged to do so, it is because she believed in a broad gender-inclusive ministry to warn a dying world of Christ's soon coming. While she was not concerned with the women's rights movement of her day, she was concerned about all Seventh-day Adventists joining together to

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spread the gospel. And today to limit what women can do in the church on the basis of only what the church allowed women to do in her day or on the basis of the limited options for ministry she offered women in those years, is taking her comments out of context—a context in which she encouraged progressive and innovative approaches to ministry. Rather than limiting ordination to men only, her comments open the door to women being ordained as well.

### *C. C. Crisler's Interpretation*

In March 1916, a few months after Ellen White died, her secretary, C. C. Crisler, received a letter from a sister Cox in Texas, asking him for Ellen White's opinion and counsel regarding the ordination of women as referred to in the *Review and Herald* article of July 1895. Although he did not presume to interpret what Ellen White meant, he ventured to say that "this article published in the *Review* does not refer to the ordination of women as ministers of the gospel, but rather touches upon the question of setting apart, for special duties in local churches, God-fearing women [as deaconesses] in such churches where circumstances call for such action." He added that "Sister White, personally, was very careful about expressing herself in any wise as to the advisability of ordaining women as gospel ministers. She has often spoken of the perils that such general practice would expose the church to by a gainsaying world; . . . This is not suggesting, much less saying, that no women are fitted for such public labor, and that none should ever be ordained; it is simply saying that so far as my knowledge extends, Sister White never encouraged church officials to depart from the general customs of the church in those matters."<sup>66</sup>

Crisler's comments are interesting in a number of ways. First, he refrains from using

the word *ordination* to refer to this action, calling it simply, as Ellen White did, a setting apart—and thus attributes much to the absence of the word *ordination* in this counsel. He also describes these women as doing the work of deaconesses in some local churches where they would be set apart. This in itself would show that these women were undertaking a new kind of ministry not performed heretofore by the average deaconess. Another comment that stands out is Crisler's opinion that Ellen White did not encourage church officials to depart from the church's general customs on this practice and that she was concerned about what people would say regarding such an uncommon practice. Ellen White was careful that the church not expose itself to "a gainsaying world." Although he may have been privy to some information we no longer have, there is no evidence that Ellen White counseled church leaders not to ordain women ministers. Also, Crisler believed that the ordination of women to ministry had not been on Ellen White's agenda because she was afraid of what the world would say, or that some churches would use this new practice as a way of disparaging the Seventh-day Adventist message.

Crisler's depiction of Ellen White's hesitant role or soft advocacy in some issues is accurate. While she was an uncompromising reformer on some social issues (e.g., temperance and education), in some other areas, she was soft spoken, not willing to raise opposition for the sake of it. When advocating a particular style of reform dress in the 1850s, she encountered some opposition and ridicule that made her back away from her advocacy. On this issue she was careful and measured, and did not wish the health reform message be hijacked by a secondary issue. Her funny-looking reform dress was finally discarded, not because it was not a good idea, but because it was too

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radical for some people. People made fun of it and discarded her counsels. What mattered was for women to be better dressed—the style and shape of the dress was secondary. The same can be said of her advocacy for the involvement of women in ministry. She was not interested in displacing men from the traditional roles of leadership they have had in the family, church, and society. Her thought naturally implies that because of their family and social roles, husbands/fathers will tend predominantly to work outside the home and will be more numerous in leadership roles, while wives/mothers will tend to care for the home and children and have less involvement in church and society. However, this traditional arrangement did not prevent some women from occupying various positions of ministry, even administrative positions, during Ellen White's time.<sup>67</sup>

Given the social and family constraints of her time, it is still remarkable that Ellen White was able to recommend that more women be involved in active ministry and in spreading the gospel. If there was ever an ideal social and family structure, it is likely the one we see in her writings. But times have changed tremendously. Today, in the United States, the ideal family model of a father working outside the home to supply his family's needs while the mother stays home to care for the children is becoming very rare. One-income families have a hard time to survive in our economic conditions and given today's lifestyle expectations. What we find instead in our churches are more and more family units of single parents, multi-generational families, and blended families. Single women (never married, divorced, or widowed) form a large segment of our congregations. In our western context, Ellen White's appeals for the involvement of more women in all forms of ministry are even more relevant

and significant. Our context begs for more women in ministry.

The fact that Ellen White was able to recommend the setting apart of medical missionaries and women involved in ministry, going beyond the bounds of biblical precedents, indicates that the church should be open to more women in ministry. The ordination of women in the Adventist Church is thus possible, because she understood ordination as a prayer of divine blessing, as a form of affirmation of one's spiritual gifts, and as a commissioning. In fact, we have already been ordaining women to ministry—we call it commissioning. Based on Ellen White's understanding of ordination, we can conclude there is no difference between the two rites—they are one and the same. The setting apart by laying on of hands and prayer is a means to commission someone to ministry. The church decides what authority comes along with that ministry, what the ministry is, and the person's qualification to perform it. It is not the rite of ordination that determines these factors.

### 5. Allowance for Diversity

One last area of theological reflection of Ellen White's writings I'd like to offer is regarding the allowance for diversity of thoughts, opinions, and practices she advocated in her life and ministry. We have a history of allowance for diversity within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The year 2013 marked the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1888 General Conference session in Minneapolis, Minnesota. What we remember most about this session is the acrimonious debates before and during this session. Two "major" issues were argued over: the identity of the law Paul referred to in Gal 3:24 and the identity of the ten northern European tribes that fulfilled the end of the prophecy of Dan 7. Some leaders

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and pioneers of our church felt Seventh-day Adventists could not change their teachings on these. Others felt it behooved Adventists to be faithful to Scripture and history and provide more accurate interpretations of these two passages.

Both sides of these controversies wished for White to provide the definitive interpretation and thus close the debates. But she refused to do so, and she objected to such a use of her writings. Instead, she pled with the delegates to study their Bibles and to come to some conclusions by themselves. In the end she commented that these two issues were not key “landmark” doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists and that diversity of opinions was possible. What mattered most for her was the exhibition of a proper, cordial, and gentle spirit among people and unity in the mission of the church.<sup>68</sup>

Another such argument occurred around 1910 regarding the interpretation of the word *daily* in the prophecy of Dan 8:11–13. Again, people appealed to White’s writings to settle the issue, and again, she refused to do so. She did not believe this issue was a “test question” and did not think her writings provided an exegetical interpretation of the passage. Like the other controversies in 1888, her main concern was directed toward the disunity, the rancor, the time spent in debate, and the distraction from evangelism.<sup>69</sup>

I find that these two controversies give us a paradigm for the use of Ellen White’s writings in the interpretation of Scripture, and they also show that her concern was primarily with church unity and mission rather than focusing on dividing, secondary issues. I cannot but muse about what she would say today regarding our use of her writings to muster support for one or the other side of our ordination debate. In the end, I learn also from these discussions that she allowed for diversity of thought for questions that she

felt were secondary and not key doctrinal beliefs of our church.

Many other examples of allowance for diversity could be given. We could reflect on the church’s teaching on vegetarianism and the importance Ellen White gave it, yet she allowed for flexibility and personal choices.<sup>70</sup> I have already alluded to the age of school entrance—and who can perform baptisms in special circumstances. We could talk about the crucial role of a mother in the home in rearing and caring for her children,<sup>71</sup> yet she herself allowed for exceptions and, for five years, gave the responsibility of raising her first son Henry to a trusted family while she and her husband preached the three angels’ messages. She did not feel good about this, but understood that God called her to make this sacrifice.<sup>72</sup> To some extent, personal circumstances and contexts allowed for exceptions and differences of opinions and practices.

I understand that allowing for exceptions may not be considered a good thing, because there’s a strong tendency among Adventists to call for uniformity of beliefs and practices. Sometimes we tend to do this when it comes to secondary issues and beliefs. At the same time, it is difficult to pigeonhole Ellen White when it comes to the behavior of others. There seem to be exceptions to hard-core rules: goals, values, and ideals are taught but are often displaced by or accommodated to the realities of life.

When it comes to the assigned role of women in family, church and society, there are ideals that she taught, and then sometimes there is the reality of a particular circumstance and context. One of Ellen White’s most prominent teachings, as we have seen, is her insistence that both men and women be involved in evangelistic ministry, but children in the home can interfere with

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the woman's ministry. One such example is the case of Isaac and Adelia Van Horn, who were married by James White in 1865. Soon after their marriage, they went as a pioneer missionary couple to Washington and Oregon. Ellen White was disappointed when they began to have children, for this interfered with their joint ministry.<sup>73</sup> Many years later, she reminded them of James' words at their wedding:

I remember the words of my husband when you were sent into this new field. They were these: "Isaac and Adelia, God would have you enter this new field together unitedly in the work. I would not trust you, Isaac, alone where you might lack in the financial working of the cause. Adelia will help you out with her business tact where you would be more inclined to be easy and not thorough in the work. Adelia will be your good [partner] to spur you up to energy. Both of you will make a perfect whole. God would have Adelia in the field. He would have you work side by side together, for this, the Lord has shown, was His will. We can afford to pay you better wages, with Adelia to help you, than for your labors alone. The Lord will bless you together."<sup>74</sup>

Ellen White then continued, writing to Isaac, "God did not ordain that you should take Adelia out of the field. God did not ordain that you should accumulate family cares to take yourself out of the field." However we interpret this situation, Ellen White desired for both Isaac and Adelia to be involved in ministry, and Adelia's talents were particularly needed in this missionary context. White felt the Van Horns had not been true to their calling by having children so soon after they entered ministry together. Exceptions to the ideals of a family home are sometimes needed.

Some people build intricate schemes of

interpretation of the writings of Ellen White to categorize the goals, ideals, and values that she espoused regarding women in general and to impose a limit on what women can do in the church today. There are those who advocate that families, church life, and society today should be following the same arrangements that Ellen White experienced in her day, or witnessed in her visions and wrote about in her writings. This grand scheme and ideal is sometimes based on an understanding of the relationship between the persons of the Godhead—that Jesus was submitted to the Father—thus implying that there is an intrinsic value for some people in church and society to be submitted to others. The same goes with the ranking and hierarchy of angels in heaven.<sup>75</sup>

Ellen White saw all these beautiful and inspiring scenes of angels in her visions. She wrote about the order and harmony she saw in heaven which gave her reasons for advocating order and harmony in the early Seventh-day Adventist Church organization.<sup>76</sup> Yet she urged the involvement of all people in church life, rebuking those elected and ordained to work for the church who used a form of kingly power to get what they wanted and to displace others from participating in the life of the church. She decried the use of power and authority on the basis of one's hierarchical standing in the church—no one has an intrinsic rank or importance that positions him as superior to others. While she affirmed leadership positions to facilitate the good and proper operations of the church and to avoid anarchy, confusion, and false teachings, a form of hierarchicalism that displaces, supplants, or controls others is not condoned in her writings. And she never used any of these concepts to limit what women can do in the church.

The inclusion of women in ministry will facilitate the completion of our mission. To think

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that only ordained men can do some of this work, or that only men can have a place or role to play in the accomplishment of some parts of this mission, is to me a traditionalist approach to our mission that will only hinder what we are about. I don't think Ellen White would approve of this in this day and age in many parts of the world. Maybe she would say we are hindering the role and ministry of women by refusing them ordination, and that it is unfair to have them do all the work and not have the blessing of the church to do so. She said the same thing about the unfairness of the pay scale for women while she lived in Australia. Her own life and ministry allowed for diversity of opinions on many questions and issues. She allowed for exceptions to some rules or ideals when the context demanded them.

In 1892, she stated, "We cannot then take a position that the unity of the church consists in viewing every text of Scripture in the very same light. The church may pass resolution upon resolution to put down all disagreement of opinions, but we cannot force the mind and will, and thus root out disagreement. These resolutions may conceal the discord, but they cannot quench it and establish perfect agreement."<sup>77</sup>

### Conclusion

I have attempted to understand from Ellen White's writings and her context a theological framework to understand first, what ministry and ordination are, and then how it can allow for the ordination of women. This framework is built on what she believed to be the role and mission of the church, that all Christians have a role to play in fulfilling this mission. It now behooves the church to recognize men and women who work for the church with the same form of affirmation or commissioning.

Ellen White's encouragement to women changed the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its ministry to the world. Today, we

continue to benefit from her influence. She allowed for diversity of thought and practice in many areas of personal and church life, in beliefs and behavior. Based on her writings, understood within her context, we have followed her lead and, according to our various cultural and national circumstances, have given women the opportunities to serve in a multitude of ministry functions. The question now is whether these women can be given the appropriate recognition to perform these tasks. My reading of her writings leads me to ask a simple question: Why not? I think Ellen White would still say that competent women can be given "any position of trust" and be set apart for them.

### Endnotes:

1. This chapter is adapted from a paper prepared for the General Conference Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) and presented in June 2013 (available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>), and reproduced in the North American Division *Theology of Ordination Study Committee Report*, November 2013, pp. 96–119.
2. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 456–495.
3. "The Duty of the Minister and the People," *Review and Herald* (Jul. 9, 1895): 434.
4. White, *Selected Messages*, 3 vols. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2006), 3:217.
5. White, 1SM 44.
6. For more information on how to interpret the writings of Ellen White, see George R. Knight, *Reading Ellen White: How To Understand and Apply Her Writings* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1997) and George R. Knight, "Interpretation of Ellen G. White's Writings," in Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon, eds., *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 900–903.
7. This act created much division among the population and set the stage for civil disobedience among abolitionists and Sabbatarian Adventists.



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The Fugitive Slave Act imposed heavy penalties on those who refused to help government slave catchers or who obstructed the recapture of a fugitive slave. Northerners were held directly responsible for helping recapture slaves who fled to the north. Ellen White stood firmly against slavery and saw it as a moral evil. She straightforwardly advocated civil disobedience in regard to the Fugitive Slave Act. "I was shown that we have men placed over us for rulers, and laws to govern the people. Were it not for these laws, the world would be in a worse condition than it is now. Some of these laws are good, and some bad. The bad have been increasing, and we are yet to be brought into straight places. But God will sustain his people in being firm, and living up to the principles of his word. Where the laws of men conflict with God's word and law, we are to obey the word and law of God, whatever the consequences may be. The laws of our land requiring us to deliver a slave to his master, we are not to obey, and we must abide the consequences of the violation of this law. This slave is not the property of any man. God is his rightful Master, and man has no right to take God's workmanship into his hands, and claim his as his own" (White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948] 1:201, 202).

8. See White, *Gospel Workers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 384–388; White, *Temperance* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1949).
9. See, for example, her books *Ministry of Healing and Counsels on Health*.
10. See, for example, her books *Education and Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*.
11. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4 vols. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 2:39; "Looking for that Blessed Hope," *Signs of the Times* [ST] (Jun. 24, 1889).
12. George R. Knight, *Ellen White's World: A Fascinating Look at the Times in Which She Lived* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), 105–109.
13. Ellen G. White to Edson and Emma White, October 17 (Letter 16a), 1870; Ellen G. White to W. C. White, October 17 (Letter 16), 1870.
14. Ellen G. White to James White, April 1 (Letter 17a), 1880.
15. See Gerry Chudleigh, "The Campbellite and Mrs. White," *Pacific Union Recorder*, (112:7) July 2012, 6. One of my doctoral students, Wendy Jackson, professor at Avondale College in Australia, has done a study comparing Alexander Campbell and Ellen White's views of church unity. Her dissertation is a fascinating comparison of their biblical hermeneutics and doctrine of the church.
16. J. N. Andrews, "May Women Speak in Meeting?" *RH* (Jan. 2, 1879): 324 (emphasis added).
17. J. N. Andrews, "Women in the Bible," *Signs of the Times* (Oct. 30, 1879): 324.
18. James White, "Women in the Church," *RH* (May 29, 1879):172.
19. Ellen White spoke in favor of male headship and leadership in the home but did not transfer this concept to the church or society. Furthermore, she based her thoughts on male headship in the home on the result of the fall of Adam and Eve, and not on the order of the creation of Eve after Adam. See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 58, 59. If the concept of male headship is rooted in the Creation order before the Fall, then it becomes a permanent status and invariably applies to all men and women in the church and society.
20. "The Laborer Is Worthy of His Hire," Manuscript 43a, 1898, in *Manuscript Releases* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 5:324–327.
21. I am grateful for insights I received from Denis Kaiser, a doctoral student at Andrews University, who has done recently a study of the development of the rite of ordination and the concept of ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church from 1850 to 1920. His study was commissioned by the Inter-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Denis Kaiser, "Setting Apart for the Ministry: Theory and Practices in Seventh-day Adventism (1850–1920)," paper prepared for the Biblical Research Committee of the Inter-European Division, Mar. 18, 2013; slightly revised May 13, 2013.
22. Ellen G. White to Brother Johnson, n.d. (Letter 33), 1879, in 19MR 56 (emphasis added).
23. White, 4T 390 (emphasis added).
24. White, 6T 322 (emphasis added).
25. White, 8T 229–230 (emphasis added).
26. *Review and Herald* (June 21, 1887) in *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2011), 117–118 (emphasis added).

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27. White, *Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2001), 35.
28. White, *The Retirement Years* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1990), 26.
29. "The Laborer Is Worthy of His Hire," Manuscript 43a, 1898, in 5MR 324–327.
30. In 1898, Ellen White had this to say regarding the adoption of children by ministers' families: "Letters have come to me from several, asking my advice upon the question, Should ministers' wives adopt infant children? Would I advise them to do this kind of work? To some who were regarding this matter favorably, I answered, No; God would have you help your husband in his work. The Lord has not given you children of your own; His wisdom is not to be questioned. He knows what is best. Consecrate your powers to God as a Christian worker. You can help your husband in many ways. You can support him in his work by working for him, by keeping your intellect improved. By using the ability God has given you, you can be a home-keeper. And more than this, you can help to give the message" (Manuscript 43a, 1898, in 5MR 325).
31. "All Kinds of Workers Needed," Manuscript 149, 1899, in MR 18:66, 67 (emphasis added).
32. I owe this insight to Leanne M. Sigvartsen, who has written on Ellen White's counsels regarding women engaged in various forms of ministry while she lived in Australia in the 1890s. Leanne M. Sigvartsen and Jan A. Sigvartsen, "Ellen G. White and the Influence of Colonial Australian Women," *AUSS* 53.1 (2015): 55–63.
33. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 290.
34. White, 6T 12.
35. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 163. Two chapters, in particular, clearly present her understanding of the purpose of the church: "God's Purpose in the Church," White, 6T 9–13, and "God's purpose for His Church," in AA 9–16.
36. One good example of this is the chapter "A Consecrated Ministry" in AA 359–371.
37. "A Preparation for the Coming of the Lord," RH (Nov. 24, 1904) (emphasis added).
38. See Ellen White's comments in connection with the rebellion of Korah in *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 398, 399.
39. Three centuries before Ellen White, Martin Luther also appealed to 1 Pet 2:9 to express his belief that every Christian is a priest for God. In a 1520 treatise in which he invited the German princes to reform the church, he wrote, "The fact is that our baptism consecrates us all without exception, and makes us all priests" (*An appeal to the ruling class of German nationality as to the amelioration of the state of Christendom* in John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections from his writings* (New York: Doubleday, 1962), 408).
40. Concerning 1 Pet 2:9 see, for example, White, *Testimonies to Ministers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 2005), 422, 441; 2T 169; 6T 123, 274. For John 15:16 see TM 212, 213.
41. "The Great Commission; a Call to Service," RH (Mar. 24, 1910).
42. "Our Work," ST (Aug. 25, 1898).
43. AA 110.
44. "A Preparation for the Coming of the Lord," RH (Nov. 24, 1904).
45. 6T 444 (emphasis added).
46. "Words to Our Workers," RH (Apr. 21, 1903).
47. AA 40.
48. Ellen G. White to "Dear Brethren and Sisters," October 19 (Letter 138), 1909, quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years, 1905–1915* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1985), 211 (emphasis added).
49. AA 161, 162 (emphasis added).
50. Much confusion prevails regarding the meaning of an office in Scripture and the writings of Ellen White. This passage indicates that an office, like that of the apostles Paul and Barnabas, is related to a function, task, or work. The office of apostle is for a specific work in the church, and in the case of Paul and Barnabas, it was to preach the gospel to Gentiles. Her comment, "At a later date the rite of ordination by the laying on of hands was greatly abused; unwarrantable importance was attached to the act, as if a power came at once upon those who received such ordination, which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work," seems to indicate again that someone's ordination should not be understood as necessarily qualifying this person for other future tasks he may be asked to perform. Rather, ordination is for a *specific* task. This comment invites some reflection on the Seventh-day Adventist practice of ordaining someone for life for

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- any and all ministerial functions someone may be asked to perform thereafter. Traditionally, one's ordination to Seventh-day Adventist ministry has served as an initiation rite that qualifies one to perform all future tasks of ministry, including pastoral ministry, evangelism, teaching, leadership, and administration. This ordination also remains valid in retirement even if the minister no longer functions in a ministry role.
51. White, *Early Writings* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 100, 101. Note that in this passage Ellen White does not use the word *ordination*, but rather refers to this rite as a setting apart and a commission. She uses these words and concepts synonymously.
  52. White, *Medical Ministry* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2003), 248, 249.
  53. Manuscript 5, 1908, in Ev 546 (emphasis added).
  54. "The Duty of the Minister and the People," RH (July 9, 1895) (emphasis added).
  55. Manuscript 43a, 1898, in 5MR 323.
  56. *Ibid.*, 5MR 325.
  57. In 1879, the General Conference voted that "none but those who are Scripturally ordained are properly qualified to administer baptism and the other ordinances." G. I. Butler, "Eighteenth Annual Session, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: Twelfth Meeting, November 24, 1879, 7 p.m.," Battle Creek, MI, General Conferences Archives.
  58. "Remarks Concerning the Foreign Mission Work," Manuscript 75, 1896 (emphasis added).
  59. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2011), 117, 118.
  60. "Regarding the Testimonies," Manuscript 23, 1911, in 1SM 57.
  61. 3T 137.
  62. MM 57, 58.
  63. An interview with Ellen White, "Counsel on Age of School Entrance," Manuscript 7, 1904, in 3SM 214-226.
  64. Kaiser, 33.
  65. Manuscript 23, 1889, in 12MR 57; Gilbert M. Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation*, Adventist Pioneer Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 80, 81.
  66. C. C. Crisler to Mrs. L. E. Cox, Mar. 12 and 22, 1916, in White, *Daughters of God* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2007), 253-255.
  67. Many studies have shown the involvement of women in various forms of ministry during Ellen White's time. Beverly Beem and Ginger Hanks Harwood, "Your Daughters Shall Prophesy": James White, Uriah Smith, and the 'Triumphant Vindication of the Right of the Sisters to Preach,'" *AUSS* 43.1 (2005): 41-58.
  68. Ellen G. White to "Brethren," August 5 (Letter 20), 1888, in *1888 Materials*, 38-46. A short summary of the issues discussed at the session is A. V. Wallenkampf, *What Every Adventist Should Know About 1888* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1988).
  69. Ellen G. White to "My Brethren in the Ministry," August 3 (Letter 62), 1910, in *Paulson Collection*. 42-44.
  70. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2001), 380, 381. See the entire chapter, 373-416.
  71. White, *Child Guidance* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 21, 22.
  72. White, 2SG iii.
  73. Ellen G. White to Isaac and Adelia Van Horn, (Letter 48) 1876, in DG 138-140.
  74. Ellen G. White to Isaac Van Horn, February 26 (Letter 8), 1884.
  75. Such a scheme leads most readily to an Arian view of the divinity of Christ. Ellen White believed in the eternal equality of all three persons of the Godhead. Here's a sample of her thoughts: "This Saviour was the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person. He possessed divine majesty, perfection, and excellence. He was equal with God" (1869; White, 2T, 200). "Before the entrance of evil, there was peace and joy throughout the universe. . . . Christ the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,—one in nature, in character, and in purpose,—the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. By Christ, the Father wrought in the creation of all heavenly beings. . . . and to Christ, equally with the Father, all Heaven gave allegiance" (1888; *The Great Controversy*, 1888 ed., 493). "He [Christ] was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore. The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God,

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existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father. He was the surpassing glory of heaven. He was the commander of the heavenly intelligences, and the adoring homage of the angels was received by Him as His right" RH [Apr. 5, 1906]).

76. White, EW 97.
77. "Love, the Need of the Church," Manuscript 24, 1892, in 11MR 266.



# JAMES WHITE FINDS THE ANSWER<sup>1</sup>

The Hermeneutical Key That Allowed Early Adventists to Make Decisions on Topics Not Adequately Covered in Scripture

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**CHURCH ORGANIZATION** was one of the hardest-fought battles in Adventism's early decades. *Extending over nearly two decades*, the struggle not only eventuated in aspects of church order not even suggested in scripture, but provided a key hermeneutical principle for deciding other topics not made explicit in the Bible.

In the process, James White and many others experienced a hermeneutical metamorphosis—a necessary transformation that allowed Seventh-day Adventism to develop into the worldwide force that it is today. Without the change, Adventism probably still would be a backwater religious group largely confined to the northeastern and midwestern United States.

## Deadlock

George Storrs set forth the basic position for the Adventist struggle over organization in 1844, when he proclaimed that “no church can be organized by man’s invention but what it becomes Babylon *the moment it is organized.*”<sup>2</sup> That proclamation rang true to a generation of Adventists who had been persecuted by their denominations as Millerism reached its crest in 1843 and 1844.

Of course, some of the founders of what became Seventh-day Adventism didn’t need much help on the anti-organizational front. For James White and Joseph Bates the stance came naturally, since they had come from the Christian Connexion, which had no effective church structure above the congregational level.<sup>3</sup> Even Ellen White, who came from the highly structured Methodist Episcopal Church, had seen the Babylonianish characteristics of her denomination as it defrocked ministers for advocating Millerism, sought to silence members who wouldn’t be quiet on the topic, and disfellowshipped those who chose not to obey that hierarchical order—including her own family, which faced a church trial and lost their church membership in 1843.<sup>4</sup>

*By no accident were the earliest Sabbatarian Adventists suspicious of the persecuting power of Babylon.* They had felt the power of church structures in a way that wasn’t pleasurable or, they believed, even Christian.

But as the Sabbatarians began to develop their own congregations in the early 1850s they soon realized that symbolic Babylon had more than one meaning in the Bible. It could represent not only a persecuting entity but also confusion.

It is that latter definition that James and Ellen White began to emphasize by late 1853 as they faced the problems of a disorganized movement that had little sense of direction

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and no structure above the congregational level. "It is a lamentable fact," James thundered through the pages of the *Review and Herald* in December 1853, "that many of our Advent brethren who made a timely escape from the bondage of the different churches [Babylon] . . . have since been in a more perfect Babylon than ever before. Gospel order has been too much overlooked by them. . . . Many in their zeal to come out of Babylon, partook of a rash, disorderly spirit, and were soon found in a perfect Babylon of confusion. . . . To suppose that the church of Christ is free from restraint and discipline, is the wildest fanaticism."<sup>5</sup>

His wife was of the same mind. Basing her sentiments on a vision received during her and James' eastern tour in the fall of 1852, she wrote that "the Lord has shown that gospel order has been too much feared and neglected. Formality should be shunned; but, in so doing, order should not be neglected. There is order in heaven. There was order in the church when Christ was upon the earth, and after His departure order was strictly observed among His apostles. And now in these last days, while God is bringing His children into the unity of the faith, there is more real need of order than ever before."<sup>6</sup>

Even Bates was on board regarding the need for church order of some sort. In harmony with his Connexionist background, Bates claimed that biblical church order must be restored to the church before the Second Advent. He argued that during the Middle Ages the "law-breakers" "deranged" such essential elements of Christianity as the Sabbath and biblical church order. God had used the Sabatarian Adventists to restore the seventh-day Sabbath, and it was "perfectly clear" to his mind "that God will employ law-keepers as instruments to restore . . . a 'glorious Church,' not having spot or wrinkle. . . . This unity of the faith, and perfect church order, never has existed since the days of the apostles."<sup>7</sup>

By 1853 the problem wasn't seeing the need for Church structure but biblical justification for such a move. And that need takes us to early Adventist hermeneutics.

### Hermeneutical Transformation and the Way Forward

While Bates was quite clear that the apostolic order of the church needed to be restored, he made no room for any element of organization not found explicitly in the New Testament. James White at this early period shared a similar opinion. Thus he could write in 1854 that "by gospel, or church order we mean that order in church association and discipline taught in the gospel of Jesus Christ by the writers of the New Testament."<sup>8</sup> A few months later he spoke of the "perfect system of order, set forth in the New Testament, by inspiration of God. . . . The Scriptures present a perfect system, which, if carried out, will save the church from Imposters" and provide the ministers with an adequate platform for carrying out the work of the church.<sup>9</sup>

J. B. Frisbie, the most active writer in the *Review* in the mid-1850s on church order, agreed with Bates and White that every aspect of church order needed to be *explicitly spelled out in the Bible*. Thus, he argued against any church name except the one given by God in the Bible. As he put it, "THE CHURCH OF GOD . . . is the only name that God has seen fit to give his church." He then referred his readers to such texts as 2 Corinthians 1:1 ("the church of God which is at Corinth"), noting that "it is very evident that God never designed that his church should be called by any other name than the one he has given." All other names, such as Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Methodist, were human inventions and "savors more of Babylon, confusion, mixture, than it does" of God's church. By the same logic, Frisbie implied, along with other Adventists,

## James White Finds the Answer

that they should not keep church membership lists, since the names of God's children are recorded in the books of heaven.<sup>10</sup>

With their literalistic biblical approach to church order, it is of little surprise that Frisbie and others soon began to discuss the ordination of deacons, local elders, and pastors. By the mid-1850s they were ordaining all three classes.<sup>11</sup>

Gradually, they were strengthening gospel order at the level of the local church. In fact, the individual congregation was the only level of organization that most Sabbatarians gave much thought to. Thus such leaders as Bates could preface an extended article on "church Order" with the following definition: "CHURCH, signifies a particular congregation of believers in Christ, united together in the order of the gospel."<sup>12</sup>

But in the second half of the 1850s the church-order debate among Sabbatarians would focus on what it meant for congregations to be "united together." At least five issues would force leaders such as James White to look at church organization more globally. The first had to do with the legal ownership of property—especially the publishing office and church buildings. Other issues included the problems of paying preachers, the assignment of preachers to work locations, the transfer of membership between congregations, and the question of how independent congregations should relate to each other. The problems related to the paying and assigning of preachers were especially difficult, since the Sabbatarians had no settled pastors. The issues the young movement faced logically led to thinking beyond the congregational level.

By 1859 those concerns were joined by others, including the need to extend missionary labor to new fields. Those needs and others drove James White to urge progressively the need for a more complex and adequate form of church structure.

"We lack system," he cried out in the *Review* on July 21, 1859. "Many of our brethren are in a scattered state. They observe the Sabbath, read with some interest the REVIEW: but beyond this they are doing but little or nothing for want of some method of united action among them." To meet the situation, he called for regular meetings in each state (yearly in some and four or five times a year in others) to give guidance to the work of the Sabbatarians in that region.<sup>13</sup>

"We are aware," he wrote, "that these suggestions will not meet the minds of all. Bro. Overcautious will be frightened, and will be ready to warn his brethren to be careful and not venture out too far; while Bro. Confusion will cry out, 'O, this looks just like Babylon! Following the fallen church!' Bro. Do-little will say, 'The cause is the lord's, and we had better leave it in his hands, he will take care of it.' 'Amen,' says Love-this-world, Slothful, Selfish, and Stingy, 'if God calls men to preach, let them go out and preach, he will take care of them, and those who believe their message'; while Korah, Dathan and Abiram are ready to rebel against those who feel the weight of the cause [e.g., James White] and who watch for souls as those who must give account, and raise the cry, 'You take too much upon you.'"<sup>14</sup>

White let it be known in the most descriptive language that he was sick and tired of the cry of Babylon every time that anyone mentioned organization. "Bro. Confusion," he penned, "makes a most egregious blunder in calling system, which is in harmony with the Bible and good sense, Babylon. As Babylon signifies confusion, our erring brother has the very word stamped upon his own forehead. And we venture to say that there is not another people under heaven more worthy of the brand of Babylon than those professing the Advent faith who reject Bible order. Is it not high time that we as a people heartily



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embrace everything that is good and right in the churches? Is it not blind folly to start back at the idea of system, found everywhere in the Bible, simply because it is observed in the fall-en churches?"<sup>15</sup>

As one who had the "weight of the cause" upon him, James White felt impelled to take his stand for better organization among Sabbatharians. Castigating those who thought that "all that was necessary to run a train of cars was to use the brake well,"<sup>16</sup> he firmly believed that in order to get the Advent movement moving, it had to organize. That task he would pursue with full vigor between 1860 and 1863.

Meanwhile, James' strategic place in the Sabbatarian movement had given him a scope of vision that not only separated him from the reasoning processes of many of his fellow believers but had transformed his own thinking. Three points White raised in 1859 are of special importance as we look forward to his organizing activities in the early 1860s.

First, he had moved beyond the biblical literalism of his earlier days, when he believed that the Bible must explicitly spell out each aspect of church organization. In 1859 he argued that "we should not be afraid of that system which is not opposed by the Bible, and is approved by sound sense."<sup>17</sup> Thus he had come to a new hermeneutic. *He had moved from a principle of Bible interpretation that held that the only things Scripture allowed were those things it explicitly approved—to a hermeneutic that approved of anything that did not contradict the Bible and good sense.* That shift was essential to the creative steps in church organization he would advocate in the 1860s.

That revised hermeneutic, however, put White in opposition to those, such as Frisbie and R. F. Cottrell, who continued to maintain a literalistic approach to the Bible that demanded that it explicitly spell something out before the church could accept it. To answer

that mentality, White noted that nowhere in the Bible did it say that Christians should have a weekly paper, a steam printing press, build places of worship, or publish books. He went on to argue that the "living church of God" needed to move forward with prayer and common sense.<sup>18</sup>

White's second point involves a redefinition of Babylon. The earliest Adventists had approached the concept in relation to oppression and applied it to the existing denominations. As we saw above, White reinterpreted it in terms of confusion and applied it to his fellow Sabbatharians. By 1859 his goal had advanced to steering the Advent cause between the twin pitfalls of Babylon as oppressor and Babylon as confusion.

White's third point concerned mission. Sabbatharians must organize if they were to fulfill their responsibility to preach the three angels' messages.

Thus, between 1856 and 1859, White shifted from a literalistic perspective to one much more pragmatic. Why, we might ask, did he make such a move while others among the Sabbatarian ministers remained rooted in their biblical (or, more accurately, unbiblical) literalism? I would suggest that the difference had to do with the fact that he was the one who felt the bulk of the responsibility for the Sabbatarian movement and had to make sure that it prospered in its mission in the real world.

A second round in the hermeneutical struggle took place when James White raised the question of incorporating church property in February 1860 so that it could be legally held and insured. He flatly stated that he refused to sign notes of responsibility for individuals who desired to lend their money to the publishing house. Thus the movement needed to make arrangements to hold church property in a "proper manner."<sup>19</sup>

White's suggestion called forth a vigorous

reaction from R. F. Cottrell—a corresponding editor of the *Review* and the leader of those opposed to church organization. Recognizing that a church could not incorporate unless it had a name, Cottrell wrote that he believed “it would be wrong to ‘make us a name,’ since that lies at the foundation of Babylon.” His suggestion was that Adventists needed to trust in the Lord, who would repay them for any unjust losses at the end of time. “If any man proves a Judas, we can still bear the loss and trust the Lord.”<sup>20</sup>

The next issue of the *Review* saw a spirited response from White, who expressed himself “not a little surprised” at Cottrell’s remarks. He pointed out that the publishing office alone had thousands of dollars invested “without one legal owner.” “The Devil is not dead,” he asserted, and under such circumstances, he knew how to shut down the publishing house.

White went on to claim that he regarded “it dangerous to leave with the Lord what he has left with us, and thus sit down upon the stool of do little, or nothing. Now it is perfectly right to leave the sun, moon and stars with the Lord; also the earth with its revolutions, the ebbing and flowing of the tides. . . . But if God in his everlasting word calls on us to act the part of faithful stewards of his goods, we had better attend to these matters in a legal manner—the only way we can handle real estate in this world.”<sup>21</sup>

On April 26 James White made a much more extensive reply to Cottrell, arguing that as long as “we are stewards of our Lord’s goods here in the land of the enemy, it is our duty to conform to the laws of the land necessary to the faithful performance of our stewardship, as long as human laws do not oppose the divine law.” White, significantly, also raised again the hermeneutical argument that he had used against the biblical literalists in 1859. Acknowledging that he could find no plain text

of scripture for holding property legally, he pointed out that the church did many things for which it could find no Bible text. He then moved on to Jesus’ command to let “your light so shine before men,” pointing out that He did “not give all the particulars how this shall be done.” At that point, he wrote that “*we believe it safe to be governed by the following RULE. All means which, according to sound judgment, will advance the cause of truth, and are not forbidden by plain scripture declarations, should be employed.*”<sup>22</sup> With that declaration, White placed himself fully on the platform of a pragmatic, common-sense approach to all issues not definitely settled in the Bible. Ellen White supported her husband in his struggle with Cottrell.<sup>23</sup>

The hermeneutical struggle renewed in October 1860 as the property difficulty came to a head at a conference James White called in Battle Creek to discuss the problem along with the related issues of legal incorporation and a formal name—a requirement for incorporation. Between September 29 and October 2, 1860, delegates from at least five states discussed the situation and possible solutions in great detail. All agreed that whatever they did should be according to the Bible, but as we might expect, they disagreed over the hermeneutical issue of whether something needed to be explicitly mentioned in the Bible. James White, as usual, argued that “every Christian duty is not given in the Scriptures.”<sup>24</sup> That essential point had to be recognized before they could make any progress toward legal organization. Gradually, as the various problems and options surfaced, the majority of the candidates accepted White’s hermeneutical rule.

The October 1860 conference accomplished several main goals. The first involved the adoption of a constitution for the legal incorporation of the publishing association. The second was that “individual churches so

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... organize as to hold their church property or church buildings legally." James White, still fighting the hermeneutical battle with the proof-texters, twice called the objectors to produce "one text of scripture to show that this is wrong." Not being able to find such a passage or to match his logic, the objectors surrendered, and the motion carried.<sup>25</sup>

### Concluding Thoughts

The above discussion appears to be one concerned with issues related to church organization. But that is only a surface reading of what took place. Undergirding each round of the struggle was something much more basic and important—the hermeneutical issue.

The early 1850s found all of the Sabbatarians in a literalistic, proof-texting frame of mind. Without an explicit text on a topic they would not and could not move forward.

James White found his way out of the rigid cul-du-sac in which they were trapped by revising his hermeneutics. He had come to realize that "we should not be afraid of that system which is not opposed to the Bible, and is approved by sound sense."<sup>26</sup>

With that hermeneutical breakthrough he provided the means by which he and his wife could guide the young movement into a mission to all the world. Without it, Seventh-day Adventism would have been hampered in its mission, as was every other branch of the Millerite movement. All, except the Sabbatarians, remained small and ineffective. All remained trapped in an inflexible hermeneutic that failed to let them operate effectively in the real world of doing church.

And what does James' new hermeneutic have to do with the topic of women in ministry, or even the ordination of women? EVERYTHING!

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A P. S. for those who don't get the point.

Several concerns directly relate to James White finding the hermeneutical key to issues not conclusively settled in the Bible, particularly those of women in ministry and the ordination of women. The first is that there is no biblical text or texts on either side of the discussion over women that conclusively settles the issues. If there were, the debate would be over.

Second, there are those, of course, who appeal to such texts as 1 Tim 2:11-15 and 1 Cor 14:34, 35 as the final answer. However, such an appeal not only has its own exegetical issues but is very problematic for Seventh-day Adventists. I demonstrate in another connection that such argumentation merely proves that Ellen White is a false prophet. After all, she spoke publicly all over the place and most certainly had "authority over men."<sup>27</sup>

The natural fallback argument to that logic is that Ellen White was a prophet rather than a minister. But that response contains the seeds of its own destruction in that it violates the plain words of Scripture, which says "woman" rather than "every woman except a female prophet." Here we must ask the question of just how much violence against the Bible is allowed in our attempt to defend a certain, preferred reading of a text?

Given Ellen White's prominence in Adventism, passages such as 1 Tim 2:11, 12 and 1 Cor 14:34, 35 had to be addressed early on and continuously in the denomination's history. Up until the time when the ordination of women issue arose, the Adventist response had been consistent. Namely, that the counsel given about women was rooted in the custom of time and place and was not to be woodenly applied in a world in which conditions had changed. Thus, as *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* puts it: "Because of the general lack of private and public rights then accorded women, Paul felt it to be expedient

to give this counsel to the church. Any severe breach of accepted social custom brings reproach upon the church. . . . In the days of Paul, custom required that women be very much in the background.”<sup>28</sup> The Adventist unanimity on the cultural interpretation of the passages, of course, hit a brick wall when the agenda of supporting the validity of Ellen White’s ministry ran head-on into the agenda of keeping women “in their place.” As might be expected, the new agenda of some has led to some interesting exegetical exercises that would have been strange fire indeed to James White, J. N. Andrews, J. H. Waggoner, and the other early Adventists, who consistently supported the cultural understanding of the disputed passages.<sup>29</sup>

### Endnotes:

1. An earlier version of this study was published as “Ecclesiastical Deadlock: James White Solves a Problem that had no Answer,” *Ministry* (July, 2014), 9–13.
2. George Storrs, “Come Out of Her My People,” *Midnight Cry* (Feb. 15, 1844): 238.
3. See George R. Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil: The Development of Adventist Church Structure* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2001), 15–18.
4. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years, 1827–1862* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1985), 43, 44.
5. [James White], “Gospel Order,” *Review and Herald* (RH) (Dec. 6, 1853): 173.
6. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1945), 97.
7. Joseph Bates, “Church Order,” *RH* (Aug. 29, 1854): 22, 23.
8. [James White], “Gospel Order,” *RH* (Mar. 28, 1854): 76.
9. [James White], “Church Order,” *RH* (Jan. 23, 1855): 164.
10. J. B. Frisbie, “Church Order,” *RH* (Dec. 26, 1854): 147.
11. See George R. Knight, “Early Seventh-day Adventists and Ordination, 1844–1863.” In *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 101–114.
12. Joseph Bates, “Church Order,” *RH* (Aug. 29, 1854): 22.
13. James White, “Yearly Meetings,” *RH* (Jul. 21, 1859): 68.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. James White, “Borrowed Money,” *RH* (Feb. 23, 1860): 108.
20. R. F. Cottrell, “Making Us a Name,” *RH* (Mar. 22, 1860): 140, 141.
21. James White, “Making Us a Name,” *RH* (Mar. 29, 1860): 152.
22. James White, “Making Us a Name,” *RH* (Apr. 26, 1860): 180–182, italics supplied.
23. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 1:211.
24. James White, in “Business Proceedings of B. C. Conference,” *RH* (Oct. 16, 1860), 169.
25. *Ibid.*, 170, 171.
26. James White, “Yearly Meetings,” *RH* (Jul. 21, 1859): 68.
27. George R. Knight, “Proving More Than Intended,” *Ministry* (March, 1996), 26–28.
28. Francis D. Nichols, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 8 vols (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 7:295, 296.
29. Denis Fortin, “What Did Early Adventist Pioneers Think About Women in Ministry,” April 8, 2010. Accessed Mar. 31, 2015 at <http://www.memory-meaningfaith.org/archives/>. See also, Theodore N. Levterov, “The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White’s Prophetic Gift, 1844–1889” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2011), passim.



# WOMEN IN SCRIPTURE: A SURVEY AND EVALUATION<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction and Orientation

SOME CHRISTIANS contend that the Old Testament illustrates and the New Testament admonishes that all women are to be under the authority of all men. Others insist that this is not the case. Thus, it becomes of utmost importance to meticulously and thoroughly evaluate the canonical evidence. In past eras of church history, this has customarily been a masculine endeavor, as women were generally excluded from theological studies.

Biblical interpretation during the last century has also been largely influenced by the historical-critical method, in which the biblical text is dissected with varying amounts either discounted or rejected. Subtle

syntax and linguistic nuances in the original languages have been either unrecognized or ignored, rather than considered essential to the interpretative process. For example, the characteristic repetitions in Hebrew narratives have often been attributed to sloppy later redactors rather than appraised for their import in the text.

The last fifty years or so have spawned new developments. Some accept the biblical canon but place it on parity with sacred texts of other religious traditions. Thus, detailed exegetical involvement with Scripture is not deemed important. Others urge the importance of a "close reading" of the biblical text, with attention rightly given to textual details through rhetorical criticism and/or narrative analysis.<sup>2</sup>

After centuries of male-dominated scholarship, the contemporary feminist movement has sought to redress what they perceive as male bias both in Scripture and its interpretation. One wing seeks to retain some vestige of importance for the Christian Bible. Others insist that any serious theological reflection must leave behind the canon's perceived male chauvinism, if women are to have any chance of being represented in the church.

Whether or not they accept some modicum of authority for Scripture, most feminists complain about its perceived extensive and oppressive patriarchy.<sup>3</sup> As a result, some radical feminists seek to revise Scripture or to reconstruct its history.<sup>4</sup> Most of them concur that Scripture, with its presumed male hierarchical posture, has been more of a curse than a blessing for women. The modern feminist movement, though displaying many divergent currents,<sup>5</sup> insists that women should release themselves from forced male domination throughout Judeo-Christian history. Their writing is strident, bitter, and unforgiving.

They frequently express revulsion of the

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church fathers' interpretation of Scripture and the myriad male-authored commentaries of the canon.<sup>7</sup> Radical feminists scorn a widespread, long-held Christian conviction that all women must be submissive to all men. They deride this as being forged through the centuries by male-dominated theology which, they insist, has denied them full citizenship in the Christian church.<sup>8</sup>

Some in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church are concerned that feminist influences have subtly (or not so subtly) swayed those who are encouraging the ordination of women. Any movement in this direction, they insist, demonstrates an obvious drift away from the eternal principles of Scripture which, they feel, instruct all women to be *under the authority* of all men.

Other SDAs, however, contend that the correct interpretation of Scripture teaches that women (when married) are under the headship of their husbands (because of sin, for their protection [Gen 3]), but in the church men and women stand together in full equality under Christ. Still others argue that the apostle Paul contradicts himself on this issue in his New Testament materials and thus should be ignored—or that his counsel is outdated in this modern era.

Historically, SDAs have maintained that Scripture is an indivisible unit and, when properly understood, contains no contradictions.<sup>9</sup> I hold this position and thereby do not believe that Paul can be inconsistent with himself. Nor am I a "feminist," but I do acknowledge the deplorable treatment of women through Christian history, as does Mary Kassian:

I am a woman. I have experienced the scorn and prideful superiority with which men have, at times, treated me. I have listened to insults against my capabilities, my intelligence, and my body. I have burned with anger as I have wiped

the blood from a battered woman's face. I have wept with women who have been forcefully, brutally raped—violated to the very core of their being. I have been sickened at the perverted sexual abuse of little girls. I have challenged men who sarcastically demean women with their "humor." And I have walked out of church services where pastors carelessly malign those whom God has called holy. I am often hurt and angered by sexist, yes, *sexist* demeaning attitudes and actions. And I grieve at the distortion of the relationship that God created as harmonious and good. As a woman I feel the battle. I feel the sin. Feminism identifies real problems which demand real answers.<sup>10</sup>

Such treatment has influenced many feminists to turn away bitterly from the church and Scripture. Recently, however, there have been a number of female and male scholars who have returned to the biblical text and drawn attention to much positive material there regarding women that has previously been overlooked or ignored.

One valuable consequence has been a more accurate understanding of Old Testament patriarchy. A "close reading" of biblical narratives is modifying a previously perceived negative bias and providing a much-needed *corrective* to previous perceptions of canonical women.<sup>11</sup> Throughout both testaments, women served not only in family and home administration but also in public and religious spheres. The roles of women in Scripture are varied and vigorous. At first glance, the male may appear to predominate by sheer numbers. However, historical writing itself must be correctly understood.

No history book is exhaustive. Each historical document includes certain events/people/ideas deemed by that historian as the most

crucial. The Christian canon with its extensive historical record, spanning multiple centuries, is not exhaustive either (as suggested in John 21:25 and Heb 11:32, 35, 36).<sup>12</sup> There are obvious time voids in both testaments.

Christians have long believed that the canon's content was superintended by God to record those people and events that, from the divine perspective, are decisive in salvation history. The historical panorama is expansive yet basically narrow in scope. The reader is informed of patriarchs and matriarchs, kings and queens, prophets and prophetesses—couched within gaps of time and information. In this light it becomes more precarious to insist that women have *always* been dominated by men. This is not possible to substantiate biblically. Probing the canonical texts again indicates this is not the case.

As Carol Meyers advises, patriarchy must be carefully defined in light of its original context. Feminists often appear biased negatively against patriarchy in any form. But Meyers posits that perhaps they have not adequately informed their position from the biblical record. She even proposes that Old Testament historical records indicate a seemingly equitable situation between male and female up to the time of the Israelite monarchy. As a result of the establishment of Israel's throne, she argues that great changes then affected Israelite society (as God had warned would happen through Samuel, 1 Sam 8:10–21)—with the equitable position of the female diminishing.<sup>13</sup>

Meyers also evaluates other factors contributing to the deteriorating status of woman, especially “the superimposition of Greco-Roman thought and cultural forms on the biblical world.” She notes:

Greco-Roman culture brought a dualistic way of thinking to the Semitic world; pairs such as body and soul, evil and good, female and male became aligned.

Eve was the victim of this alignment: female was linked with body and evil. Relegated to a position of decreasing power as the household lost its prominence, she then became associated with negative aspects of life. The misogynist expansions of the Eden story in early Christian Jewish literature begin to emerge. A new concept of Eve associated with sin, death, and suffering is superimposed so indelibly on the assertive and productive figure of the Eden narrative that we can hardly see the original woman of Genesis 2–3.<sup>14</sup>

This chapter aligns with Meyers' basic assumption that women are more prominent in Scripture than past perception has generally acknowledged. Her reasoning appears valid in light of numerous intriguing details in biblical narratives. Beyond the Old Testament, Christ's treatment of women in contrast with His society is also remarkable.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the apostle Paul, whom feminists regard with scorn, actually mirrors Christ's positive behavior toward women.

### Old Testament

#### *Genesis*

**Eve:** Because of the horrifying tragedy of the Temptation and Fall in Eden, she (and womanhood itself) has not fared well throughout Christian history, as Trevor Dennis notes:

The Garden of Eden has a terrible litter problem. It is knee deep in our prejudices and preconceptions. No patch of ground is more thoroughly spoiled than that on which Eve walks, . . . no biblical story has been more mistranslated, more misinterpreted than this one. . . . No biblical character has been more misunderstood and more maligned than the woman of the Garden . . . the lies that



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have been told about the woman of the Garden get the better of us, and trap us with their smooth talk as the snake traps her, whispering to us that women are somehow inferior to men, made to be subservient to them, and worse, are dangerous, needing to be kept under men's control.<sup>16</sup>

Many Genesis commentaries do not discuss Eve cordially, subtly implying (though commentators would probably deny that such implications were in their minds) that perhaps God was somehow deficient, even mistaken, in His design of woman. At least three aspects of the wondrous creation of Eve need to be reviewed:<sup>16</sup>

(1) Genesis 1 records God's words declaring gender equality during Creation:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let *them* have dominion . . ." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed *them* and God said to *them*, "Be fruitful and multiply . . . have dominion" (Gen 1:26-28).

Male and female *together* are given rulership (dominion) over the newly created world, not just Adam. Both *together* represent God's image.

(2) The two descriptions in Genesis of both Adam's and Eve's creation contain the same number of words (in Hebrew): "The writer has counted his words and been careful to match the lengths of his two descriptions exactly,"<sup>18</sup> deliberately presenting both accounts with equal emphasis.

(3) The word *helpmeet* or *helper*, used of Eve in Gen 2:20, has been used to infer Eve's position under Adam, coupled with the fact that Adam was created first before her. However, the Hebrew term translated "helpmeet" or "helper" in Gen 2:20 is used

many times in the Old Testament to "describe one as exalted as God himself, and almost always refers to one stronger than the one who needs the help."<sup>19</sup> Moreover, if one argues from Creation sequence, Adam should be subservient to the animals and birds, for they were created and blessed before he was (Gen 1:20-25). "Creation order" in the narrative record places Eve as the "crowning act" of creation! Dennis is right:

It is not the details of the text of these verses which most clearly celebrate the woman's worth, but the passage's position in the story. Her creation brings this first half of the story to its climax. Indeed, it represents the high point of the whole story of the Garden. . . . The narratives of the Old Testament often build up to a climax in the middle, and this one is no exception. The woman is the brightest jewel in its crown!<sup>20</sup>

**Sarah:** Abraham's life of faith has been extensively (and rightly) studied and admired. His wife, Sarah, though rarely acknowledged as being on a par with her husband, is equally remarkable.<sup>21</sup> The narrator intends that Sarah be regarded as critical to the divine covenant as Abraham himself. God talks with Abraham and also with Sarah (Gen 18:10-15). There is unwavering indication that it will be *Sarah's* offspring who will fulfill the covenant promise—even when Abraham contends with God that he already has a son (Gen 17:18, 19; cf. Isa 51:1, 2). God establishes the divine covenant with both Sarah and Abraham<sup>22</sup>—which the book of Hebrew also notes: "By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised" (Heb 11:11). Katheryn Darr comments on their biblical narratives:

He does not order her to comply with his planned deception. Rather, Abraham

must ask her to say that she is his sister. He cohabits with Hagar because Sarah wants him to; and when she decides that Ishmael is a threat to her own son's inheritance, Sarah succeeds in expelling both mother and child. Indeed, God defends her demand; and this is not the only time that the Lord acts on Sarah's behalf. In Pharaoh's court, and within the household of Abimelech, God is concerned that Sarah be protected and returned to her husband.<sup>23</sup>

Abraham and Sarah are closely bonded. They work together with household responsibilities, including preparing meals (Gen 18:1-8).<sup>24</sup> He accepts her counsel and does what she tells him to do (Gen 16:1-6; 21:8-12). Nor does he leave her when she cannot conceive. There "seems to be an affectionate bond between them. . . . When Sarah dies, Abraham can do nothing but weep. Sarah is a matriarch of the first order: respected by rulers and husband alike, a spirited woman and bold companion."<sup>25</sup>

**Hagar:** She is the victim of a grave mistake by Abraham and Sarah. Yet the poignant details of Gen 21 reveal this Egyptian slave woman as "more highly honoured in some respects than almost any other figure in the Bible."<sup>26</sup> The "Angel of the Lord" appears for the first time in biblical history to her (Gen 21:17). He even calls her by name (Gen 16:7, 8); whereas Abraham and Sarah merely call her "maid" and "bondwoman."

God does not abandon Hagar or her son Ishmael in a devastating situation caused by human error. The covenant through Abraham and Sarah is eternal, yet He pointedly provides for Hagar and her son. His promise to them is arrestingly similar to the covenantal promise they had been hearing for years in Abraham's household (Gen 16:10; 17:20). Dennis correctly notes:

How very surprising is the honour which is bestowed upon Hagar (and

upon Ishmael too) in Genesis 16. For a start, annunciations are a rare commodity in the Bible. . . . In only three cases is the promise of a son made to the one who will be the mother of the child. In only four cases does God make the announcement himself. . . . Only two women in the entire Bible receive annunciations from God himself, Hagar and the unnamed wife of Manoah.<sup>27</sup>

Hagar is also the only woman in the Old Testament, the only person in all of Scripture, to give deity a name: "El-Roi" (Gen 16:13a), which means "You are the God who sees me"—a unique Old Testament name which she speaks to God personally.<sup>28</sup> Hagar, a rejected slave woman, is one of three women to dialogue with God in Genesis (16:7-13).

**Rebekah:** Wife of Isaac, she reveals the same strong character that her mother-in-law Sarah did. The narratives of Rebekah impress Sharon Jeansonne:

Rather than minimizing Rebekah's contribution to the Israelite people, the narratives that introduce and develop the portrait of the second of the matriarchs are striking in the way she is depicted. Although she is described as being a beautiful wife for Isaac, she is not appreciated solely for her appearance. Like Abraham, her independence and trust are demonstrated by her willingness to leave her family and travel to a strange land.<sup>29</sup>

When Abraham directs his servant to find a wife for Isaac, one of his instructions is a significant reminder of a woman's status during the patriarchal era. Abraham insists: "If the woman is not willing to come with you, then you will be free from this oath of mine" (Gen 24:8), assuming "the woman will have the final say in the matter."<sup>30</sup> Indeed, ultimately Rebekah herself chooses to go. In fact, in the

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lengthy narrative of Gen 24 (the longest in the book), Rebekah's words affirming her choice are recorded and not merely summarized by the narrator (Gen 24:55-58).

Rebekah also arranges for the hospitality of Abraham's servant herself. The servant asks for a place in her "father's house" (v. 23), but she "ran and told her mother's household these things" (v. 28). Her father hardly says a word throughout.

Most important, there is a noticeable correspondence of key terms between Rebekah's narratives and Abraham's: They both leave behind "their country," "their kindred," and their "father's house"; both will be "blessed" and "become great." James Williams points out: "With this blessing the narrator quietly moves Rebecca into the cycle of God's promises to the patriarchs."<sup>31</sup>

After Rebekah marries Isaac and becomes pregnant, she went "to inquire of the LORD" (Gen 25:22):

The critical issue of this story comes into play as Rebekah suffers through her pregnancy. The children struggle within her and . . . Rebekah "inquires (*darash*) of the LORD." This phrase is of great importance in the Old Testament. Only the great prophets like Moses and Elisha and the greatest kings of Israel inquire of the Lord. . . . Rebekah inquires and, as a result, receives the oracle from Yahweh which destines her younger son to rule the older.<sup>32</sup>

Her delivery is recorded: "And her days were fulfilled that she should give birth" (Gen 25:24). This "formula" is used of only three biblical women: Elizabeth (mother of John the Baptist who prepared "the way of the Lord"), Mary (mother of Jesus) in the New Testament and Rebekah.

Later, when her son Esau married two Hittite women, this was a "grief of mind to

Isaac and Rebekah" (26:35, emphasis added). Inclusion of her distress regarding her son's marriage to two pagan women reveals that both Rebekah and Isaac were concerned about the covenant promise/line.<sup>33</sup> Rebekah is seen as an important woman in her own right. Narrative techniques such as dialogue, pacing, genealogical notation, and other literary features suggest her prominence in Israel's history.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, Rebekah takes up far more space in the patriarchal narratives than does her husband, Isaac, the patriarch. This is significant: "the presentation of Rebekah shows that women in Israel were viewed as persons who could make crucial decisions about their futures, whose prayers were acknowledged."<sup>35</sup>

It would be unfair to the Genesis narratives to argue that matriarchal wives were submissive to all men. Rather, while respectful of their husbands, they are intelligent, directive, and co-equal partners with their spouses. Carol Meyers is right:

Feminists who condemn or bemoan the apparent patriarch of ancient or other societies may be deflecting their energies from what should be the real focus of their concern: the transformation of functional gender balance to situations of real imbalance. . . . to free feminist critics from a misplaced preoccupation with biblical androcentrism and allow them to search for the dynamics that led to the dichotomizing of gender attributes by early postbiblical times.<sup>36</sup>

**Deborah:** The first Old Testament Deborah is mentioned only briefly in Genesis: at her death and burial (Gen 24:59; 35:8). When Jacob returns to Bethel, Rebekah's nurse dies. He is deeply moved by this loss and mourns her as an "honored member" of the family. Ellen White comments movingly:

At Bethel, Jacob was called to mourn the loss of one who had long been an honored member of his father's family—Rebekah's nurse, Deborah, who had accompanied her mistress from Mesopotamia to the land of Canaan. The presence of this aged woman had been to Jacob a precious tie that bound him to his early life, and especially to the mother whose love of him had been so strong and tender. Deborah was buried with expressions of so great sorrow that the oak under which her grave was made, was called "the oak of weeping." *It should not be passed unnoticed that the memory of this life of faithful service and of the mourning of this household has been counted worthy to be preserved in the word of God.*<sup>37</sup>

### *The Exodus*

A noteworthy roster of women appears as the Exodus epoch commences:

**Shiphrah and Puah:** These two midwives bravely disobeyed Pharaoh's command to murder newborn Hebrew baby boys. That they are named while Pharaoh is known only by his title is highly significant in Hebrew narrative. Also noteworthy is that they have two separate audiences with the monarch:

Of all the initiatives taken by human beings in Exodus 1–14, it is those of the women, however, that display the greatest courage, invite our keenest admiration, and have the most powerful influence on events. . . . Shiphrah and Puah and the women of 2:1–10 together succeed in defeating the policy of genocide, and save Moses from drowning.<sup>38</sup>

**Egyptian princess:** Divine providence ironically enlists the protection of Israel's future deliverer within the very Egyptian monarchy that issues the death decree. Ellen White

describes how the daughter of the most powerful ruler of the world at that time was directed by angels to the basket with baby Moses in it.<sup>39</sup> Fewell and Gunn are also insightful concerning the princess:

The actions of this non-Israelite are presented in direct parallel to those of the God of Israel: she "comes down," "sees" the child, "hears" its cry, takes pity on him, draws him out of the water, and provides for his daily needs" (cf. 3:7, 8). What she does for Moses, God is soon to do for Israel.<sup>40</sup>

**Jochebed:** Exodus records the unusual means she devises to spare baby Moses' life in the face of Pharaoh's grim decree. Her husband, Moses' father, is never referred to again after the brief mention in Exod 2:1, except in genealogical notation. All narrative attention is on his wife.

**Miriam:** The daughter of Jochebed, Moses' sister, exhibits intelligence and diplomacy, speaking courageously to the Egyptian princess by the river—cleverly suggesting a "nurse" for the baby in the basket.

Apparently Miriam never married. There is no mention of a husband or names of any children for her in the Exodus narratives as there is for Moses and Aaron. Exodus studies generally focus on her two brothers—any regard granted Miriam concentrates on her error (Num 12:1–10). This single woman's position during the Exodus has largely been underestimated. However, Scripture includes an indicative genealogical mention: Miriam is listed among the "sons of Amram" in 1 Chr 6:3. That she is mentioned in a chapter of fathers and sons underscores her prominence.

In the book of Exodus, Miriam is presented as a prophet, the second person in the Pentateuch so identified (Exod 15:20). At the crossing of the Red Sea she is seen in a dual role—prophetess and musician—at the side of

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her two brothers. God Himself insists: "For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam" (Mic 6:4, emphasis added). Even her death and burial are included in Scripture:

The fact that Miriam's death and burial were recorded at all is striking. Whereas other figures in the wilderness community (Hur, Eldad and Medad, Moses' wife and father-in-law, etc.) disappeared without mention, the notice of Num 20:1b seems to be at least an implicit witness that Miriam was a figure of some significance. . . .

It is noteworthy that Miriam is the only member of the wilderness community whose death is recorded without being explicitly connected with divine punishment (cf. Num 20:2-13, 22ff; Deut 32:48-52).<sup>41</sup>

### *Time of the Judges*

**Ruth:** Old Testament history includes the narrative of a young, childless pagan widow who chooses to abandon her ethnic identity, culture, and religion. She gave up all opportunity for security in her homeland to accompany her widowed mother-in-law—and this during the troubled downward spiral of Israel's history (Ruth 1:1).

Phyllis Tribble suggests that Ruth's choice to serve the God of heaven is just as radical a decision of faith as that of Abraham leaving Ur. While not minimizing Abraham's exceptional act of trust, recall that he traveled with his spouse, much wealth, and many household servants—plus being sustained by a direct call and divine promise. In this light, Ruth's radical decision to serve Naomi's God marks extraordinary courage.<sup>42</sup>

Ruth's and Naomi's initiatives are found in

a book where men never assume major roles. Yet the narrator does not exhibit any shock or aversion. Naomi's name (meaning "my delight" or "my pleasantness") was given to her in a time and culture where sons were more desired than daughters (Ruth 4:15), implying that Naomi's parents were "delighted" to have a daughter.<sup>43</sup>

Ruth, a Moabitess, the epitome of unselfishness, saves her mother-in-law's Israelite family from extinction. A veritable "redeemer," her self-sacrifice is highlighted in the book's closing genealogy—the sacred lineage of the Messiah. Ruth is a vital link in Israel's covenant history (Ruth 4:18-22; Matt 1:1-4)<sup>44</sup>—and hers is one of two Bible books named after a woman.

**Deborah:** The book of Judges includes the narrative of the second Old Testament Deborah—not only a wife and musician but also a prophet and judge:

Deborah is the only judge described as a prophet and, in the tradition of the other biblical prophets, she spoke the word of Yahweh. Her summons to Barak is couched in the command of Yahweh, and her prophetic competency is proved by the outcome of the battle and the extirpation of the enemy at the hand of a woman. In her song, Deborah proclaims the mighty acts of Yahweh.<sup>45</sup>

She is a military leader with identical authority to that of male generals—and a judge to whom other Israelites turn for legal counsel and to settle court cases (Judg 4:5). This woman is a recognized political leader, and through her Israel is called to war. The narrative indicates that she arbitrated disputes, assembled people to combat, and authoritatively declares the divine will.<sup>46</sup>

There is no negative reaction to her doing this in the text, nor is this situation suggested as peculiar or improper. Deborah is merely

introduced in the common Old Testament manner. No excuses or explanations are necessary that a woman should be in this prominent position. Vancil argues that "nothing in the narrative suggests that Deborah's gender improved or detracted from her status as judge/deliverer, nor is there indication that Yahweh had any reservations about her functioning in this role."<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, many have seen Deborah's judgeship as the single positive episode in the otherwise dreary history of male judges:

With few (but significant) exceptions, the development of each major judge narrative leads to a decline . . . even during the judge's lifetime. Typically, after becoming a leader of the people and eliminating the source of oppression, the judge leads the people away from Yahweh. . . . The exception . . . is Deborah.<sup>48</sup>

### *The Monarchy*

**Hannah** is the key transitional person in the pivotal shift from judges to monarchy. The Samuel books commence with an extended account of her:

The Books of Samuel are primarily concerned with . . . just one man, with David, for Samuel comes to prepare the way for him, while the account of the reign of Saul very soon becomes the story of David's own rise to power. . . . Hannah . . . appears right at the start of it all, when David is but a twinkle in the narrator's eye. Her story provides the beginning of this great chapter in Israel's story, just as Eve's began the whole work, and Shiprah and Puah and the women of Exodus 2 presided over the accounts of Israel's beginnings as a people in Egypt.

. . . Hannah will begin a tale which will lead Israel into the ambiguities of monarchy.<sup>49</sup>

In the opening chapter, Hannah's vow (1 Sam 1:10, 11) comprises her first recorded words. After this, she speaks more than anyone else in the first two chapters. In her initial prayer, she vows to dedicate her son as a Nazirite. According to Num 6, men or women take this pledge for themselves. When Samson's birth was announced, God declared that the child would be a Nazirite (Judg 13:4). However, on this occasion, Hannah vows: "What God commands in Judges 13, she herself vows at Shiloh." And Hannah prays her vow herself.

Hannah does not need Elkanah to pray for her. She prays, and in doing so becomes the first woman, indeed the *only* woman, in the entire Bible to utter a formal, spoken prayer, and have her prayer quoted in the text for us to read. . . . In the narratives of the Old and New Testaments Hannah's prayer is unique—and no other woman pays God such a vow as hers, either.<sup>50</sup>

She later describes her consecration of Samuel to Elkanah: "Hannah has not asked Elkanah to confirm her vow. . . . She presents her plan to dedicate Samuel as something already decided upon (1 Sam 1:22)."<sup>51</sup> Elkanah is not asked for his permission. He merely gives his blessing (1 Sam 1:23):

From now on he will have nothing to say, and nothing to do (he does not take any action in 2:20). Except for a few words of blessing from Eli in 2:20, all speech in the rest of Hannah's story will be put in her mouth, all the initiatives taken will be hers, all that is done . . . will be done by her.<sup>52</sup>

When Hannah brings Samuel to Shiloh in fulfillment of her promise to God, the narrative

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continues focusing solely on her. Ellen White notes that she travels with her husband;<sup>53</sup> however, Hannah takes the initiative (“Now when she had weaned him, *she took him up with her.*” 1 Sam 1:24, emphasis added). This is significant because Elkanah was a Levite (1 Chr 6:33-38), and Hannah’s actions are usually considered as belonging to the male. But Hannah journeys herself, for herself and by herself.

Hannah journeys expressly to perform her own vow. It is she who has come with such fine offerings for sacrifice, and, remarkably, with her own child to dedicate to the service of God. Hannah’s offering of Samuel is without parallel in biblical literature.

It is hard to respond adequately to such an act of Hannah’s and Eli does not try. This time he does not answer her. Only Hannah herself can speak to what she has done. After noting that she left Samuel with Eli, the narrator takes us straight into her song. For the second time she pours out her soul to God.<sup>54</sup>

Hannah’s exultant prayer is striking. One does not hear a tender lullaby. Instead, she makes a vigorous shout of triumph, enough to make Peninnah and Eli and their like tremble. There is nothing ladylike about it!

Indeed, it does not look like the song of a woman in Hannah’s position at all. At one point it uses the imagery of war. It speaks of the shattering of enemies, and closes with a prayer for the king. That final reference is significant, of course. In Hannah’s day there was no monarchy. . . . Hannah sings a *king’s song*!<sup>55</sup>

**Shunamite Woman:** In Second Kings is an extended account of a woman and her dying son (2 Kgs 4:8-37). The father plays a very minor role in this narrative, and nothing more is mentioned of the young boy after the miracle of Elisha—he is not of the covenant line and never named. Generally when this narrative is recounted, the emphasis is on the prophet Elisha and the miracle God wrought.

However, the text remains centered on the many determined actions of this earnest woman caring for her stricken son. Nor does she seek her husband’s permission when taking her decisive actions.

**Queen of Sheba:** This female potentate sets out on a lengthy and (for that time) perilous journey to seek *truth* rather than the political alliances and wars male kings were typically involved in (1 Kgs 10:1-13). King Solomon had earned a reputation as a wise man and: “men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon” (1 Kgs 4:32-34). One of the monarchs who came was a woman, the Queen of Sheba—apparently a scholar in her own right:

Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, *she came to test him with hard questions.* She came to Jerusalem . . . and spoke with him about all that was in her heart. So Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing so difficult for the king that he could not explain it to her. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon . . . she said to the king: “It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However, I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom . . . exceeds the fame of which I heard. Happy are your men and happy are these your servants who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the LORD your God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to *do justice and righteousness*” (verses 1-9, emphasis added).

## Women in Scripture: A Survey and Evaluation

This is a unique occasion in all Scripture: two potentates discussing truth and wisdom. Furthermore, this queen is a rare sovereign of whom involvement in no war or battle is recorded. This impressed the composer G. F. Handel (who also wrote "Messiah") to write a musical cantata of her visit to Solomon's court.

**Huldah** is a chief religious authority during the time of an intense religious revival (2 Kgs 22:14ff). The narrator implies there is no anomaly when the king of Judah sends Hilkiah the priest and Shaphan the scribe, along with several other prominent officials, to this woman to ask her concerning the meaning of the Book of the Law that had been found. As John Willis notes, "The biblical text does not suggest that seeking divine revelation from a woman was in any way unusual."<sup>56</sup>

The scroll of Deuteronomy (or perhaps the entire Pentateuch), with its crucial moral and political materials, was found as the Temple was being repaired and refurbished. Thus the authority the king recognizes in Huldah is significant. Ellen White explains:

At that time the prophetess Huldah was living in Jerusalem, near the temple. The mind of the king, filled with anxious foreboding, reverted to her, and he determined to inquire of the Lord through His chosen messenger, to learn, if possible, whether by any means within his power he might save erring Judah, now on the verge of ruin. *The gravity of the situation, and the respect in which he held the prophetess, led him to choose as his messengers to her the first men of the kingdom.*<sup>57</sup>

Some commentators have suggested that perhaps Huldah was consulted because there was no male prophet at the time. However, no less than Jeremiah was established in his prophetic office. Others have considered that Huldah's position was too important for a female and have suggested that Huldah might

have been a man. However, the text specifically states that Huldah was a wife (2 Kgs 22:14).

**Esther:** This is the second book in the Bible named after a woman. Esther lives at a time when God's people are in grave danger—and God enlists a woman as the agent of deliverance. The book highlights several women in the ancient Persian culture, where females were possessions for men and queens without authority. In Esther's book it is the women (Vashti, Zeresh, and Esther) who demonstrate the most discerning thinking. The men, with the exception of Mordecai, are not particularly noteworthy.

Queen Vashti has the courage to refuse the king's drunken suggestion to appear in an indecent manner—and is summarily deposed. Zeresh appears twice: the first time giving advice to her husband Haman when he gathers friends to gloat over his recent royal favors. The second time she speaks, Zeresh astutely warns: "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him, but will surely fall before him" (Esth 6:13). It is Zeresh, not Haman, who understands the implication of Haman's humiliation as he is forced to honor Mordecai throughout Persia's capital city.

Esther displays remarkable courage as she deals with the king's rash law of genocide. Though prudently not revealing her race earlier, when an extreme emergency develops for her people, she dangerously exposes herself and her nationality to save them. She is capable of strategizing and carrying out a dangerous course of action. God utilizes this woman as deliverer when the existence of His people is at stake.

Other Old Testament women could be considered, such as Abigail, who embarks on a diplomatic mission to dismantle a volatile situation, only later notifying her husband. She knew she must act immediately without



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consulting Nabal, knowing he could be abusive and waste crucial time. Also, note the "wise woman of Tekoa," who was enlisted to counsel King David.<sup>58</sup> There are also hints of inclusion of women in Israelite ceremonies, such as circumcision (Deut 10:16 and 30:1-10), as Alice Laffey notes:

Buried in this text . . . is the directive: Circumcise your hearts. The author here . . . thus transforms an essential sign of covenant partnership (cf. Gen 17:10-14; Exod 4:24-26) from one which can include only males to one which can include both men and women. . . . [Furthermore] verse 6 [of Deut 30] transforms the phrase of Deuteronomy 10:16, "circumcise your hearts." It is now not they, the Israelites, who are to do it (an imperative), but rather the Lord who will do it for them. . . . Making circumcised hearts rather than circumcised bodies the appropriate sign of the covenant relationship with Yahweh [yields] that relationship more directly available to women.<sup>59</sup>

### Wisdom Literature

**The Book of Psalms** is Israel's "hymnbook," used in sanctuary worship. One text, Ps 68:11, hints at wider involvement of women in Old Testament religion than is sometimes conceded: "The Lord gave the word; great was the host of those who proclaimed it." The Hebrew text reveals this "host" to be a *female* company, but only a few translations indicate this.<sup>60</sup>

**The Book of Proverbs:** The wisest man who ever lived urged the importance of listening to both father and mother (i.e., 1:8; 6:20; 10:1; 15:20; 17:25; 19:26; 20:20; 23:22; 23:24, 25; 28:24; 30:11, 17; 31:1—the mother noted as teaching). Maternal spiritual authority is equal with the father—reflecting the Decalogue's

fifth commandment to honor father *and* mother. Notably, all the women in the book of Proverbs give advice. They are judged by the caliber of their advice—not on their ability to bear children and to be at home under their husband's authority.

Proverbs 31:10-31 presents a detailed description of a "woman of strength," whose sphere is not limited by male headship. As an astute woman, she exhibits vast responsibility efficiently, and is directive. With independent initiative she makes prudent economic decisions on her own without having to wait for husbandly approval. She carries out business in textiles, agriculture, and real estate<sup>61</sup>—along with management of her household. Her spouse is not necessary to oversee or authorize her work. She exhibits physical strength (vv. 17, 25) and stamina. Words describing her are regularly used elsewhere in the Old Testament to describe the strength of men. The character traits she demonstrates are not exclusively restricted to males.

Just like her husband, she is known in the gates (vv. 26, 31), and her wisdom is acknowledged (v. 26). Equality of partnership is evidenced in the family unit—as seen throughout the Wisdom materials. She is an equal partner and parent of their family with her husband, exhibiting spiritual leadership as she "opens her mouth with wisdom." Notably, a life of wisdom is portrayed with great detail through a female model—rather than a male king or male prophet.

**The Song of Songs** represents full female/male equality in the marriage relationship. Meyers points out that in the relationship in this book, "the primary orientation lies with the female of the pair. . . . There is no trace of subordination of female to male, and there is a presence of power images for the female and not the male."<sup>62</sup>

### New Testament

#### *The Gospels*

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John contain many narratives of women.

**Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist:** When Luke mentions Zechariah's priestly lineage (Luke 1:5), he immediately indicates: "His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth." This is one of the rare times when a priest's wife is named in Scripture, spotlighted even more when Luke immediately adds: "And they were *both* righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (v. 6, emphasis added). Luke's pointed inclusion of "both" confers remarkable affirmation of Zechariah's wife. Later, when Mary comes to visit her, Elizabeth is "filled with the Holy Spirit" (just as it is prophesied of her son, v. 15), and she pronounces blessings (Luke 2:41–45).

**Anna:** At the time of Christ's baby dedication, Luke draws attention to the widow and prophetess Anna (2:36–38). He may be including her because she is the second witness testifying of the baby's significance: the stipulation that in "the mouth of two or three witnesses the thing is established" (Deut 17:6; Matt 16:18) was still observed. Thus Luke assigns an important role to Anna. Ellen White's passing comment also suggests this: "Anna, also a prophetess, came in and *confirmed Simeon's testimony concerning Christ*. As Simeon spoke, her face lighted up with the glory of God, and she poured out her heartfelt thanks that she had been permitted to behold Christ the Lord."<sup>63</sup>

Luke also records Anna proclaiming this great event in Jerusalem (Luke 2:28). Some have noticed a biblical pattern of God commissioning prophets to announce both the beginning and ending of timed prophecies. If so,

Anna figures large in the fulfillment of the 490-year Messianic prophecy. God enlists a female prophet to draw attention to this climactic event in salvation history in the capital city of Jerusalem. The verb form Luke uses of her activity implies she did this over and over again.

**Woman at Samaria's well:** The Gospels include impressive portraits of Christ dealing with women. The narrative in John 4 is a good case in point. The conversation with the woman at Samaria's well is the longest recorded discussion Jesus has with anyone—and she a Gentile woman. Ellen White notes that it is the "most important discourse the Inspiration has given us."<sup>64</sup> And Denise Carmody notes: "Jesus treated the woman as intelligent. He paid her the honor of assuming she could catch his drift. The more she pressed, the more forthcoming he was."<sup>65</sup> In fact, Jesus openly affirms to this woman that He is the Messiah (John 4:25, 26)—something He never could do in Israel with His own people.

Unfortunately, commentaries of John's Gospel repeatedly classify this woman as the town slut at worst, or at least a woman of questionable reputation. True, as Jesus points out, she had had five husbands and her current relationship was not lawful. The narrator, however, does not disclose whether any of the marriages had ended in death, or divorce—which only the male could initiate at that time. Nor does Jesus condemn her. Rather He commends her honesty—"you spoke truly" (v. 18).

The narrative also records how the men of Samaria returned with her to see Jesus, when she told them how He had told her "all things that I ever did" (v. 30). It is hard to imagine the male population of any city following a known harlot to see a person who could divine. It is also unlikely that the men of a town would believe a prostitute's word about the Messiah, or anybody, and go openly with her to see Him. Perhaps this woman has not been given her due credit.

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The narrative portrays her as a knowledgeable, informed woman. Her discourse with Christ reveals an intelligent familiarity with the political and theological issues of her time. And Jesus instructs her on the nature of true worship. Commentators regularly attribute major significance to this lengthy dialogue but not to this woman. However, she is the first person recorded in Christ's public ministry whose witness brought a group of people into a believing relationship with Jesus—as they tell her: “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world” (4:42). Ellen White relates how once she . . .

. . . found the Saviour, the Samaritan woman brought others to Him. She proved herself a more effective missionary than His own disciples. . . . This woman represents the working of a practical faith in Christ. Every true *disciple* is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary.<sup>66</sup>

Moreover, this narrative's position in the Gospel, immediately following that of Nicodemus (John 3), is not coincidental, serving to contrast the weak faith of a prominent male Jewish religious leader with the faith of a Gentile woman.<sup>67</sup>

**Mary and Martha:** The narratives of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus contain rich instruction regarding Christ's attitude toward women. Lazarus is miraculously raised from the dead, the last and greatest “sign” John records.<sup>68</sup> However, no direct speech of Lazarus is ever recorded. Rather, it is Martha who, as Frank Wheeler notes:

makes one of the premiere confessions of faith in the New Testament, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

. . . The confession by Martha in John 11 may be compared to the confession by Peter in the Synoptic Gospels at Caesarea Philippi. Martha's statement is very close to Matthew's account, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:16). The parallel confessions of Martha and Peter, according to Raymond Brown, are part of the tendency of the Fourth Gospel to give to women roles normally associated with Peter in the other gospels.<sup>69</sup>

On another occasion, Jesus coaxes Martha to accept her sister's priorities of wanting to study. His affirmation of this is noteworthy. However, Martha herself apparently had also been an avid student of Jesus, evidenced in her statement of faith (John 11:23–37).

Her sister Mary has always been acknowledged as an earnest student of the Messiah, even though:

Mary's choice was not a conventional one for Jewish women. She sat at the feet of Jesus and was listening to “his word.” Both the posture and the reference to Jesus' “word” seem to imply teaching, religious instruction. Jewish women were not permitted to touch the Scripture; and they were not taught the Torah itself, although they were instructed in according with it for the proper regulation of their lives. A rabbi did not instruct a women in the Torah. Not only did Mary choose the good part, but Jesus related to her in a teacher-disciple relationship. He admitted her into the “study” and commended her for the choice. A Torah-oriented role for women was not unprecedented in Israel . . . but the drift had been away from it.<sup>70</sup>

Mary was the first to see the resurrected Jesus. And Christ gave her the commission

to tell the disciples that He was ascending to the Father, making her the first to proclaim the resurrection!<sup>71</sup> Wheeler notes that "Mary's prominence among the witnesses of the resurrected Jesus is significant for John's readers. Of the six resurrection appearances of Jesus in the Gospels, five of them include Mary."<sup>72</sup> He also suggests:

[The focus in John's Gospel] appears to be on discipleship and giving testimony to Jesus as Messiah. In the fourth Gospel, women are shown to be capable of fulfilling that role as well as men. . . . However unexpected it might have been socially or religiously, women had a profound impact at crucial points in Jesus' ministry.<sup>73</sup>

The four Gospels never present Jesus treating women as inferior to men or teaching that all women should be under the headship of all men. This is a significant point for, at this time, the status of women in Judaism is understood to have been restrictive. For example, first-century rabbi Eliezer wrote: "Whoever teaches his daughter Torah is like one who teaches her lasciviousness."<sup>74</sup>

Women did not count for the minimum number necessary for worship. Nor could they bear witness. Jesus, however, repeatedly rejects these traditions. He never limited a woman's horizon to nurturing family and cooking. A woman once called to Him from a crowd, "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts which nursed You!" Jesus' answer amplifies a woman's role, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Luke 11:27, 28). Yet He never belittled the role of a mother. In fact, He likened Himself to a mother hen seeking to gather her baby chicks under her wings (Matt 23:37). In one trilogy of parables, all of which portray God's grace, in the center parable Jesus places a woman seeking a lost coin.

Scholars, even feminists, have widely acknowledged that Jesus treated both men and women with fairness and equality. However, the question is often asked: why did Jesus select twelve male apostles? The twelve were also all Jewish, yet the church does not expect all church leaders to be Jewish. Evelyn and Frank Stagg give one suggestion:

The twelve apostles included no women, nor did they include any Samaritans even though Jesus clearly repudiated the Jewish-Samaritan antipathy. Custom here may have been so entrenched that Jesus simply stopped short of fully implementing a principle that he made explicit and emphatic: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother, sister and mother" (Mark 3:35). The Twelve could be offering a parallel to the twelve patriarchs or twelve tribes of Israel, each headed by a son of Jacob, and thus dramatize the continuity with national Israel, now to include women, Samaritans and Gentiles. However, at this time this may have been an ideal awaiting its time of actualization. That Jesus did introduce far-reaching principles bore fruit even in a former rabbi who said "There is not any Jew nor Greek, not any slave nor free, not any male and female; for ye all are one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28)."<sup>75</sup>

### Paul's Writings

In spite of Paul's explicit Galatians declaration (3:28, quoted just above), he of all New Testament writers receives the greatest scorn from feminists, especially for his supposedly extreme chauvinistic statements in 1 Timothy. Because of what they consider as Paul's sexist language, these feminists often jettison all of Paul's teachings and many times the entire New Testament itself.<sup>76</sup>

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However, it is very dangerous to construct any scriptural teaching from a single text. Radical feminists and others neglect to compare Paul's counsel to Timothy in Ephesus with numerous other Pauline passages which reveal Paul's attitudes and dealings with women in churches he establishes in other cities. These details must be taken into account when 1 Tim 2 is interpreted.<sup>77</sup>

Paul clearly states that in Corinth women pray and prophesy in church (1 Cor 11:5). He requires, however, that they do so appropriately dressed in a manner that would not bring dishonor to their husbands or to the church (vv. 5-15). If women are enjoined to refrain from speaking (1 Cor 14:34, 35), it is to ban "disruptive verbal misconduct" of wives who were "giving free rein to 'irresistible impulses' to 'pipe up' at will with questions in the assembly."<sup>78</sup> Paul's desire was that in worship all things should be done "decently and in order" (1 Cor 14:40).

Several studies on the women of the Philippian church argue persuasively that "Philippi is perhaps the classic New Testament case study on the roles of women in the founding and developing of a local congregation."<sup>79</sup> In Romans 16, Paul sends greetings to twenty-six people in the church at Rome. John Stott is instructive:

Reflecting on the names and circumstances of the people Paul greets, one is particularly impressed by the unity and diversity of the church to which they belong. . . . The most interesting and instructive aspect of church diversity in Rome is that of gender. . . . Paul evidently thinks highly of them all. He singles out four (Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa and Persis) as having "worked hard." The verb *kopiaio* implies strong exertion, is used of all four of them, and is not applied to anybody else on the list. . . . The

prominent place occupied by women in Paul's entourage shows that he was not at all the male chauvinist of popular fantasy.<sup>80</sup>

Three names in this roster call for additional attention: (1) **Phoebe** serves as Paul's emissary, as did Titus and Timothy. Her designation as "deacon" (the Greek word is not translated "servant" when used for male church officers in the New Testament), does not imply the modern "deaconess" but rather the same position as the church leaders designated in 1 Tim 3:8-10; (2) **Priscilla** (v. 3 and also in the book of Acts) is named first before her husband (Acts 18:18, 26; 2 Tim 4:19). Whatever the reason for this ordering, Paul acknowledges her leadership and her teaching Apollos; (3) **Andronicus and Junia** (female) are mentioned with several details: that they are Paul's relatives and were fellow prisoners at some time; they also "were in Christ before" Paul and were "of note among the apostles."<sup>81</sup>

Paul's positive attitude toward women's full "citizenship" in the church is evident as he writes. For instance, in Rom 12:1, 2 Paul entreats the believers in Rome to:

"Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" (1b). Paul uses five more and less technical terms. He represents us as a *priestly people*, who, in responsive gratitude for God's mercy *offer* or present our bodies as living sacrifices. These are described as both *holy* and *pleasing to God*, which seem to be the moral equivalents to being physically unblemished or without defect, and a fragrant aroma [cf. Lev 1:3, 9].<sup>82</sup>

There is no differentiation here between men and women. All believers are functioning in a "priestly" role.

Nevertheless, it is Paul's first letter to Timothy in Ephesus that the early church fathers cite

and modern feminists despise as prohibiting women in ministry. Because of this passage, many feminists have forsaken Scripture and Christianity altogether—and many SDAs argue against women's ordination. But what if such an understanding of 1 Tim 2:9–15 has not taken account of the initial situation that Paul was addressing in Ephesus?<sup>83</sup>

Ephesus was a major center for Mother Goddess worship (“Diana of the Ephesians,” Acts 19:23–41). Some of its major tenets were that a female goddess gave birth to the world, that Eve was created before Adam, and that to achieve highest exaltation women must achieve independence from all males and from child-bearing. Sharon Gritz suggests that such false teaching was unbiblical and endangering the faith of the new Christian converts in Ephesus. Paul addresses these very points and seems to be counseling Timothy how to deal with such radical departure from Christian doctrine. Instead of exhibiting a negative attitude toward women, Paul is seeking to preserve their exalted position.<sup>84</sup> Thomas Geer suggests: “Paul’s concern in 1 Tim 2:8–15 is not that women might have authority over men in the church but that certain assertive women in the church who had been influenced by false teachers would teach error. For this reason, he charges them to ‘be silent.’”<sup>85</sup>

It is significant that Paul wrote this singular counsel to Timothy in Ephesus. When he wrote to churches in Philippi, Galatia, and Thessalonica (and others), different situations existed and different issues were addressed.

The interpretation suggested by Gritz, Rodriguez, and Geer (and others) enables all details of Paul’s personal ministry (including the women-organized-and-led Philippian congregation) and his written materials to be in perfect agreement—and dovetails with the positive presentation of Old Testament women seen above. Paul is even following

the positive example of Christ, who treated men and women with equal dignity, while preserving the divinely established marriage model of Gen 2:24. Indeed, Paul uses the marriage union as one metaphor for the church: Christ is the Bridegroom, the church, male and female, His bride. Significantly, the family structure since the fall (Gen 3:16–19) is not the model Paul utilizes for church structure. Rather he regularly uses the human body (such as in 1 Cor 12)<sup>86</sup> with Christ as the head and church members (male and female) represented as different body parts.

### Conclusion

Neither Old nor New Testament narratives of women can be used to illustrate that “according to Scripture” all women must be under the authority of all men. As we have seen, an entirely different situation exists: Women in Scripture are rightly seen functioning with competence and confidence in many different spheres, including positions of spiritual leadership. Feminists have been right to force attention on the abuse of women inside and outside the church. But they have been wrong in their understanding of the apostle Paul and Old Testament patriarchy. Upon a closer reading of both testaments, the entire canon affirms women, whether in the home or in public ministry, or both.

### Endnotes:

1. This study is adapted from the chapter of the same title in *Women in Ministry: Biblical & Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister, (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 157–186, used by permission.
2. For example, Robert Alter’s book, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic, 1981), has been pivotal in instructing how certain details within the narrative previously overlooked (such as repetitions, the importance of the dialogues [who speaks, the amount of dialogue with a narrative],

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- narrative sequences, etc.) are critical in correctly interpreting a narrative.
3. For example, Mary Daly writes: "If God in 'his' heaven is a father ruling 'his' people, then it is in the 'nature' of things and according to divine plan and the order of the universe that society be male-dominated" (M. Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, 2nd ed. [Boston: Beacon, 1985], 13). Carol P. Christ writes: "I left the church . . . because I concluded that patriarchy was deeply rooted in Christianity's core symbolism of God the Father and Son" (Aida Besancon Spencer, "'Father-Ruler': The Meaning of the Metaphor 'Father' for God in the Bible," *JETS* 39.3 [1996]: 433).
  4. They postulate a period of glorious peace and harmony during what they speculate was the pre-patriarchy period of the Mother Goddess. See, for example, Riane Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).
  5. Mary Kassian describes the movement as grouped "according to their political theories or historical mentors." They are "enlightenment liberal feminists, cultural feminists, Marxist feminists, Freudian feminists, existential feminists, and radical feminists. One religious woman-studies text delineates them as biblical (evangelical), mainstream (reformist), and radical (revolutionary)." (Mary A. Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel: The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1992], 219.)
  6. For example: "Every woman working to improve her own position in society or that of women in general is *bringing about the end of God*. All feminists are making the world less and less like the one described in the Bible and are thus helping to lessen the influence of Christ and Yahweh on humanity." These women will "change the world so much that He won't fit in anymore" (Naomi Goldenberg, *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions* [Boston: Beacon, 1979], 3, 10).
  7. One example: "The infamous passages of the Old and New Testaments are well known. I need not allude to the misogyny of the church fathers—for example, Tertullian, who informed women in general: 'You are the devil's gateway,' . . . or Augustine, who opined that women are not made in the image of God. I can omit reference to Thomas Aquinas and his numerous commentators and disciples who defined women as misbegotten males. I can't overlook Martin Luther's remark that 'God created Adam lord over all living creatures but Eve spoiled it all'" (Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, 3).
  8. "Someplace along the line, the effects of the sacraments are going to have to be able to be manifested in the ministries, as much for a woman as for a man. There's either something wrong with the present theology of ministry, or there is something wrong with the present theology of all the sacraments. If women qualify for baptism, confirmation, salvation, and redemption, how can they be denied the sacrament of ministry?" (Joan Chittister, "The Fullness of Grace," in *Cloud of Witnesses*, ed. Jim Wallis and Joyce Hollyday [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991], 186).
  9. Ellen White so comments: "As several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be a discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony" (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1999], v, vi). See also: "There is not always perfect order or apparent unity in the Scriptures. . . . Those who take only a surface view of the Scriptures will, with their superficial knowledge, which they think is very deep, talk of the contradictions of the Bible, and question the authority of the Scriptures. But those whose hearts are in harmony with truth and duty will search the Scriptures with a heart prepared to receive divine impressions" (White, *Selected Messages*, 3 vols. [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2006], 1:20).
  10. Kassian, 242.
  11. As Trevor Dennis comments: "Looking at these texts consistently from the points of view of their female characters has for me been exhilarating and liberating, but it has shaken me and disturbed me more than I could have anticipated. It has put me in touch with my own sexism, with destructive stereotypes about women, and about men also, deep rooted within me. . . . Shall I conclude that God always gives his more important tasks to men? But that would be absurd. . . . Shall I believe that he calls men and not women to be the conspicuous bearers of his promises? But I for one have had more than enough of that belief in the Church, and wish to see no more of the great harm it does to those who hold to it, or of

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- the greater harm it does to their victims" (Trevor Dennis, *Sarah Laughed: Women's Voices in the Old Testament* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994], 176).
12. John's Gospel ends with this sentiment: "This is the disciple who testifies of these things. . . . And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen."
  13. "The rise of the state meant the gradual end of a society in which the household was the dominant social unit. The locus of power moved from the family household, with its gender parity, to a public world of male control. The establishment of a nation-state meant the growing prominence of the military and of state and religious bureaucracies controlling economic development. These institutions are typically public and male controlled; whenever they become an important part of a society's organization, female prestige and power recede" (A. D. H. Mayes, *Judges* [Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1985], 189, 190).
  14. *Ibid.*, 196.
  15. Even the most radical feminists, such as Mary Daly, speak with great appreciation of Christ's attitude toward women: "In the New Testament it is significant that the statements which reflect the antifeminism of the times are never those of Christ. There is no recorded speech of Jesus concerning women 'as such.' What is very striking is his behavior toward them. In the passages describing the relationship of Jesus with various women, one characteristic stands out starkly: they emerge as persons, for they are treated as persons, often in such contrast with the prevailing custom as to astonish onlookers" (Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex: With a New Feminist PostChristian Introduction by the Author* [New York: Harper & Row, 1975], 37, 38).
  16. Dennis, 8.
  17. This section is heavily indebted to the sensitive discussion by Trevor Dennis's book (footnote 14).
  18. *Ibid.*, 13.
  19. *Ibid.*, 12.
  20. *Ibid.*, 16.
  21. Savina Teubal has suggested that she may have been an early priestess. It is not possible or necessary to confirm that idea, but Teubal's assertion does draw attention to the exceptional portrait of Sarah that Genesis presents: Sarah is the only matriarch whose death age is recorded, her burial at Mamre receives great attention, and Isaac consummates his marriage to Rebekah in his mother's tent. Teubal's theory also draws attention to the interest Abimelech exhibited in Sarah though she was 90 years old (Savina Teubal, *Sarah the Priestess: The First Matriarch of Genesis* [Chicago: Swallow, 1984], 110–122).
- Jack Vancil concurs regarding Sarah's importance: "Abraham's effort and negotiations to purchase a burial place for Sarah, as well as the site chosen raises more questions. . . . That an entire chapter would be devoted to her death and burial, and stressing such detail as it does has been observed by many commentators. . . . It is striking too, that after Sarah's death there is very little further told us about Abraham. The marriage to Keturah is told in order to mention Abraham's other descendants, but we do not even know where they lived" (Jack W. Vancil, "Sarah—Her Life and Legacy," *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Carroll D. Osburn, 2 vols. [Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995], 2:61–63).
22. "Fresh study of our female forebears . . . shows us that the matriarchs were learned, wise women who were highly developed spiritually." Teubal, xii.
  23. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious Than Jewels* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1991), 9.
  24. There does not seem to be a distinct division of labor between men and women in patriarchal households. Either gender could be a shepherd (Rachel and Jacob, Gen 29:9; 30:31). Rebekah and Laban shared farm chores and the particulars of family hospitality (Gen 24). Both sons of Rebekah knew how to cook (Gen 25:29; 27:1–4).
  25. Janice Nunnally-Cox, *Foremothers: Women of the Bible* (New York: Seabury, 1981), 9.
  26. Dennis, 176.
  27. Dennis, 68.
  28. *Ibid.*, 71. "The phrase the narrator uses for the naming is the usual one in Hebrew narrative. It is the same as the one used, for example, when the man in the Garden named his wife Eve, or Eve herself named her third son Seth."
  29. Sharon Pace Jeanson, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 53.
  30. Mary Donovan Turner, "Rebekah: Ancestor of Faith," *LTC* 20.2 (1985): 44, 45.



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31. James G. Williams, *Women Recounted: Narrative Thinking and the God of Israel*, Bible and Literature Series, vol. 6 (Sheffield, UK: Almond, 1982), 44. Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn concur: "It is she [Rebekah], not Isaac, who follows in Abraham's footsteps, leaving the familiar for the unknown. It is she, not Isaac, who receives the blessing given to Abraham (22:17). 'May your offspring possess the gates of their enemies!' (24:60)." *Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1993], 73. See also Mary Donovan Turner, "Rebekah: Ancestor of Faith," *LTQ* 20.2 (1985): 43, 44.
32. Turner, 44, 45.
33. *Ibid.*, 47.
34. For example, the genealogy in Gen 22:20–24 "presents the names of the children born to Abraham's brother Nahor and his sister-in-law Milcah. Nahor and Milcah's eight sons are listed, but the offspring of these eight sons, the third generation, are mentioned only in two cases. The offspring of Kemuel and Bethuel alone are deemed significant. The name of Kemuel's son, Aram, is given only in a parenthetical phrase. In contrast Bethuel's offspring is given greater attention. A separate phrase announces, 'Bethuel begat Rebekah' (22:35). Moreover, her name is arresting in this context because she is the first offspring who is mentioned." Even the placement of this genealogy after the account of the testing of Abraham (22:1–9) emphasizes the importance of Rebekah. Jeansonne, 54, 55.
35. Jeansonne, 69.
36. Carol Meyers, 45.
37. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 206, emphasis added.
38. Dennis, 114.
39. White, PP 243.
40. Fewell and Gunn, 93.
41. Rita J. Burns, "Has the Lord Indeed Spoken Only through Moses? A Study of the Biblical Portrait of Miriam." SBL Dissertation Series, 84 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), 120.
42. Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978). Denise Lardner Carmody reflects similarly: "Her pledge itself is religiously remarkable, because in it Ruth completely throws in her lot with Naomi's faith. A Moabite, Ruth presumably had her own gods and religious way. . . . So her dedication to Naomi is extremely radical. . . . By the grace of God, she had chosen to join the chosen people. . . . What an example she gave of daughterly devotion and religious discernment!" (*Biblical Woman: Contemporary Reflections of Scriptural Texts* [New York: Crossroad, 1989], 33, 34).
43. Louise Pettibone Smith, "Introduction to Ruth," *The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, TN: Parthenon, 1992), 829–832.
44. Andre LaCocque concludes: "In the book of Ruth, however, it must be noted that the genealogical motif, culminating as it does with the advent of King David, corresponds perfectly with the mention at the beginning of the story of Bethlehem, the home city of King David." (*The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel's Tradition* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990], 111.)
45. Charme E. Robarts, "Deborah—Judge, Prophetess, Military Leader, and Mother in Israel," in *Essays on Women* 2:74.
46. "Deborah is introduced by the epithet "*eshet lappidot*, . . . wife of Lappidoth." We might expect her importance to the story to lie in her role as wife. Yet we soon discover that wifehood reveals little about Deborah. It is not her relationship to her husband that will prove significant, but her relationship to Israel and to her appointed commander" (Fewell and Gunn, 122).
47. Vancil, 80.
48. Robarts, 76.
49. Dennis, 115, 116.
50. *Ibid.*, 123, 124.
51. *Ibid.*, 130.
52. *Ibid.*
53. White, PP 571.
54. Dennis, 132.
55. *Ibid.*, 133, emphasis Dennis'.
56. John T. Willis, "Huldah and Other Biblical Prophetesses," in *Essays on Women* 1:111.
57. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2002), 398.
58. Jacques Doukhan draws further attention to the whole tradition of Old Testament women in teaching functions, who instruct both males and females (see chapter two in this book).

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59. Alice L. Laffey, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: A Feminist Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1988), 605. The apostle Paul apparently saw this implication later (Phil 3:3; Col 2:11).
60. Jack Blanco recognizes this in his paraphrase of the Bible: "You, our Lord, spoke and victories were won. The women spread the news and everyone knew." (*The Clear Word: A Paraphrase to Nurture Faith and Growth* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994], 675.) See also the *New Living Translation*: "The Lord announces victory, and throngs of women shout the happy news." (*New Living Translation* [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House], 605.)
61. "She considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard. . . . She perceives that her merchandise is good," vv. 16, 18.
62. Carol Meyers, 180. See also Richard Davidson's following chapter (8) in this book.
63. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2006), 55, emphasis supplied.
64. Ellen White writes of Christ's discussion with the Samaritan woman (*Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948], 3:217. Another extended recorded conversation Jesus had was with the Syrophenician mother, also a pagan (Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30).
65. Denise Lardner Carmody, *Biblical Woman: Contemporary Reflections on Scriptural Texts* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 106.
66. White, DA 194, 195 (emphasis added).
67. Narrative sequencing is increasingly seen as significant in the structure of biblical books. In John's Gospel, this is seen repeatedly as he aligns narratives of those whose faith in Jesus is weak with those whose faith is strong.
68. Frank Wheeler notes: "The location of this story in the Gospel of John is significant. Just as the first sign was initiated by a women, Jesus' mother, the last sign is initiated by women, Martha and Mary." Frank Wheeler, "Women in the Gospel of John," in *Essays on Women* 2:215.
69. *Ibid.*, 216, 217. He continues, "Martha's statement may also be compared to the confession of Thomas in John 20. . . . Actually, Martha's confession is more powerful than Thomas' for she had not yet seen Jesus' or even Lazarus' resurrection."
70. Evelyn Staff and Frank Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 118.
71. The two disciples traveling to Emmaus on resurrection Sunday disparage the fact that the "women" have been the only ones to proclaim the resurrection: "*Certain women of our company*, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it *just as the women has said*; but Him they did not see. Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and show of heart to believe . . ." (Luke 24:22-25, emphasis added).
72. Wheeler, 219.
73. *Ibid.*, 223. He continues: "The fourth Gospel may not have as much to say directly about the public or official roles of women in the church as one might like. Nevertheless, this Gospel does make it clear that the faith, testimony, and discipleship of women is equal to that of men and is equally as important to the Christian community. The value of women's discipleship and influence has been tremendously overlooked" (224).
74. Mishnah *Sotah*, 3:4.
75. Stagg and Stagg, 123.
76. One example of outrage at Paul because of 1 Tim 2:11-15: "This professor linked God's judgment upon Eve at the fall (Gen 3) with our target verse and announced: . . . 'The punishments, subjection and child bearing, are the two issues in 1 Timothy 2:11-15. The woman's conduct in the fall is, according to Genesis, a primary reason for her universal, timeless subordinate relationship'" (Quoted by Thomas R. Edgar, "Contextualized Interpretations of 1 Timothy 2:12: An Analysis," unpublished paper presented at the national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Wheaton, IL, 1988). cf. Denise Lardner Carmody, *Biblical Woman: Contemporary Reflections on Scriptural Texts* (New York: Crossroad, 1989).
77. Nancy Vyhmeister deals with this issue in ch. 11 of this volume.
78. Carroll D. Osburn, "The Interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34, 35," in *Essays on Women* 1:242. On the matter of the women in the Corinthian church, see Larry Richards' chapter in this preceding book. See also Willis, "Huldah and Other Biblical Prophetesses," 2:120, 121. Also William F. Orr and James Arthur Walter, *1 Corinthians*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1976), 263, 264.

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79. A. Boyd Luter, "Partnership in the Gospel: The Role of Women in the Church at Philippi," *JETS* 39.3 (1996): 411. See also: W. D. Thomas, "The Place of Women in the Church at Philippi," *Expository Times* 83 (1972): 117-120; F. X. Malinowski, "The Brave Women of Philippi," *BTB* 15.2 (1985): 60-64; L. Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice: Paul's Letter to the Philippians and Luke-Acts as Received by First-century Women* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wikgren, 1988). Significant attention to the circumstances in Philippi is also found in such broader studies of New Testament women as E. M. Tetlow, *Women and Ministry in the New Testament* (New York, Paulist, 1980); B. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
80. Stott, 394-396.
81. Robert Johnston studies this significant detail along with Phoebe in chapter 3 of this book.
82. John Stott, *Romans: God's Good News for the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 394-396.
83. Leon Morris reminds that Paul's epistles were first-of-all and truly letters. "What Paul wrote was a series of genuine letters addressing specific situations in which he and his converts found themselves. He was not setting himself to produce literary works. Each of these missives was clearly written in the light of what was needed in a given situation; none was written with a view of adding to the stock of Jewish literature. They all focus on the situation confronting Paul at the time he wrote them." Leon Morris, *Galatians: Paul's Charter of Christian Freedom* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 13.
84. Ángel Rodríguez reaches a similar conclusion through a New Testament word study of the terms Paul is using. He concludes: "Having examined the New Testament evidence, we can now take a closer look at 1 Tim 2:11, 12. There is no doubt that Paul is concerned about controversies in the church. In verse 8 he exhorts men to pray "without anger or disputing." In the case of the women, the apostle is also concerned about behavior and attitudes that could be disruptive. . . . Why did Paul single out women? Possibly because some of them had become the target of false teachers and their instructions (2 Tim 3:6). As a result, they were bringing controversies into the church. Paul forbids this type of controversial and divisive speech when he says that "a woman . . . must be silent." Ángel Rodríguez, "Women's Words," *Adventist Review* (14 November, 1996): 27.
85. Thomas C. Geer, Jr., "Admonitions to Women in 1 Timothy 2:8-15," in *Essays on Women* 1:281-302.
86. "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews of Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. . . . But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. . . . Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." Paul then lists different offices of the church without regard to gender (1 Cor 12).

# SHOULD WOMEN BE ORDAINED AS PASTORS? OLD TESTAMENT CONSIDERATIONS

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## I. Genesis 1–3: The Foundational Data Regarding Man-Woman Relationships

A CONSENSUS WITHIN biblical scholarship has emerged in recent decades concerning the foundational nature of Gen 1–3 in the interpretation of Scripture: “whether one is evangelical or liberal, it is clear that Genesis 1–3 is the interpretive foundation of all Scripture.”<sup>1</sup> This is especially true with regard to the understanding of human nature and the relationship between man and woman: “The Bible’s first statement concerning humankind remains the normative statement that governs all others.”<sup>2</sup> “In the opening chapters of Genesis the triangular relationship of God/man/woman is set in place to explain and inform

subsequent narrative and legislation as it unfolds. The reader has the necessary framework to read the codes and recognise proper and improper behaviour.”<sup>3</sup>

In the modern discussion over whether women should be ordained as pastors, the foundational passage for both those who affirm and those who oppose women’s ordination is Gen 1–3. Those who affirm women’s ordination (often called “egalitarians”<sup>4</sup>) find in the Genesis Creation accounts a statement of full equality without hierarchy of man and woman, set forth as the divinely ordained Creation order. They see the rest of Scripture calling us back toward that Creation ideal, and allowing for women to fill any position of authority to which God calls and gifts them. Those who oppose the ordination of women (often called “hierarchicalists” or “complementarians”<sup>5</sup> or “subordinationists”) also go to Gen 1 and 2, where they find support for their view that male headship/leadership, both in the home and in the church, is a divinely ordained Creation ordinance. They see this reaffirmed in Gen 3 and the rest of Scripture, and thus they assert that women cannot assume the role of authoritative headship/leadership in the church. What is often common to *both* groups is a similar view of authority—as a top-down (“chain-of-command”) hierarchy. Opponents argue that such hierarchical headship/leadership in the church is a male prerogative; proponents urge that women should have equal rights to those hierarchical headship offices. What is the truth regarding these matters? Let us go to the opening pages of Scripture to discover what constitutes God’s Creation order for the relationship between men and women.

## II. Genesis 1: Gender Relationships of Male and Female in the Image of God

In Genesis 1:26–28 “the high point and goal has been reached toward which all of God’s creativity from v. 1 on was directed.”<sup>6</sup> Here

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in lofty grandeur is portrayed the Creation of humankind (*ha'adam*):

(26) Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." (27) So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (28) And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

### A. The Meaning of the Image of God and Male-Female Relationships

In a separate study, I have examined in detail what it means for humanity to be made in the image of God.<sup>7</sup> Based upon the clues in the text itself, one may identify three major ways in which humans constitute the image of God: (1) resemblance (structural constitution); (2) relationship (personal fellowship); and (3) representation (function). All three of these aspects of the *imago Dei* reveal a full equality without hierarchy between man and woman.

First, humans are made in God's "image" in terms of *resemblance* or structural constitution (i.e., in form and character). The Hebrew words *tselem* "image" and *demu* "likeness," although possessing overlapping semantic ranges, in the juxtaposition of v. 26 appear to emphasize the concrete and abstract aspects of the human being, respectively.<sup>8</sup> Important to note is that Gen 1:27 presents the equal pairing of male *and* female in parallel with "humankind" (*ha'adam*). Both male and female are made in God's image, according to

His likeness. While indeed the terms *male* and *female* connote sexual (biological) differences, there is no hint of headship/submission roles between male and female in this passage. Both are explicitly presented as "equally immediate to the Creator and His act."<sup>9</sup>

Second, humans are created in God's image in terms of *relationship*. Hardly coincidental is that only once in the Creation account of Genesis—only in Gen 1:26—does God speak of the divinity in the plural: "Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness." Many attempts have been made to account for this use of the plural, but the explanation that appears most consonant with both the immediate context and the analogy of Scripture identifies this usage as a "plural of fullness,"<sup>10</sup> also termed a "plural of fellowship or community within the Godhead."<sup>11</sup> This plural "supposes that there is within the divine Being the distinction of personalities" and expresses "an intra-divine deliberation among 'persons' within the divine Being."<sup>12</sup> It is crucial to recognize that in describing the divine interrelationships ("Let Us") which form an analogy with human relationships ("male and female"), the narrator gives no indication of a hierarchy in the Godhead, no reference to the asymmetrical submission of one Person (the Son) to the Other (the Father). In describing the interrelationship among the members of the Godhead, the emphasis in this text is upon the deliberation and fellowship of Equals. If there is any submission implied, it is a *mutual submission* of Equals, as the members of the Godhead discuss and deliberate together concerning the Creation of humankind. The divine "Let Us" implies that One is not commanding, and Another obeying; all are equally engaged in the deliberation. Such equality without any top-down hierarchy, by analogy, is thus emphasized with regard to the *mutual* submission in human (male-female, husband-wife) relationships, who are made relationally in the image of God.

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Third, humans are made in God's image in terms of *representation* or function. Whereas human rulers were not able to be in every place at one time and thus felt the need to erect an image representing themselves, the Godhead is omnipresent (Ps 139, etc.), needing no representative to take their place when they were not present. Yet, in an act of self-denying submission, the Godhead entrusts the responsibility of dominion over the earth to humankind. Thus there is submission in the Godhead, but it is submission of the full Godhead (the "Us") who together entrusted Their prerogative of dominion to humans They had made (Gen 1:26, 28)—humans whom the Godhead, in Their infinite foreknowledge, knew would rise up in rebellion against Them and eventually cost the death of the Son of God—God being ripped from God at Calvary. The submission of the Godhead is also displayed in Their giving freedom of choice to human beings, thus limiting Their own sovereignty. This is implied in the *imago Dei* of Gen 1:26–28 and also further indicated in the presence of the Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden (Gen 2:9).

Again, it is crucial to note that according to Gen 1:27, 28, both the man and woman are equally blessed. Both are to share alike in the responsibility of procreation, to "fill the earth." Both are to subdue the earth. Both are given the same co-managerial dominion over God's non-human Creation. As Rebecca Groothuis states it: "Both have been commanded equally and without distinction to take dominion, not one over the other, but both together over the rest of God's creation for the glory of the Creator."<sup>13</sup> No mention appears in this passage of any differentiation in the male's and female's authority to rule.

### B. Male Leadership Role in the Beginning?

Proponents of male headship as a Creation ordinance generally concede what they term an "ontological" equality (i.e., in personal and spiritual value before God) between the genders in Gen 1, but a functional headship/leadership role for the male is often seen as implied in Gen 1:26, where God identifies male and female as '*adam* "man." So Raymond Ortlund writes: "God cuts right across the grain of our peculiar sensitivities when He names the human race, both man and woman, '*man*.' . . . God's naming of the race '*man*' whispers male headship. . . ."<sup>14</sup> What Ortlund and others who employ this argument fail to recognize is that the word '*adam* *never* means "man" (in the sense or implication of male gender) in Scripture! The problem is a modern language translation issue, not an aspect of the Hebrew text. The word '*adam* is a generic term meaning "human person" or "humanity."<sup>15</sup> Aside from Gen 1–3, where it refers to the first human person, this term is *never* in the whole Hebrew Bible used to designate a "man" in the sense of male (as opposed to female). The use of '*adam* does not whisper male headship as a Creation ordinance.

According to Gen 1, male and female are regarded wholistically—as equal without hierarchy. The full equality of man and woman—in resemblance/constitution, in relationship, and in representation/function—is unhesitatingly proclaimed in the first chapter of the Bible and is evaluated by God Himself as "very good" (Gen 1:31)! In short, both man and woman participate equally and without hierarchy, in the image of God, just as the Godhead in Gen 1 is functioning in a relationship of equality without hierarchy among the Persons comprising that Godhead.

### III. Genesis 2: Gender Relationships According to the Divine Creation Order

The one major question which has dominated the scholarly discussion of man-woman relations in Gen 2 concerns the status of the sexes relative to each other that is set forth as a divine Creation ordinance. The “traditional” view—held by the vast majority of Christian commentators and theologians before the twentieth century—has held that according to Gen 2, woman was created by nature inferior to man, and thus women as a class or even race are not competent and must be excluded from leadership or from exercising authority in the home, church, or society.<sup>16</sup> Many recent proponents of male leadership as a Creation ordinance now acknowledge that Gen 1 emphasizes equality on the personal and spiritual level, but at the same time maintain that Gen 2 emphasizes a male leadership and female submission role on the functional or societal level.<sup>17</sup> Does Gen 2 affirm a fully egalitarian view of the relationship between the sexes, or does it support a hierarchical ranking in which man is in some way in leadership over the woman at Creation?

#### *A. Gender Hierarchy (Male “Headship”) as a Creation Ordinance? Evaluation of Arguments*

The main arguments from the narrative in Gen 2 used by Adventist (and other conservative) hierarchicalists to prove a “Creation order” of hierarchical gender ranking may be summarized as follows: (1) man is created first and woman last (vv. 7, 22), and the first is head/leader and the last is subordinate; (2) man, not woman, is spoken to by God and does the speaking (vv. 16, 17, 23); (3) woman is formed for the sake of man—to be his “helpmate” or assistant to cure man’s loneliness (vv. 18–20); (4) woman comes out of man (vv. 21, 22) which implies a derivative

and subordinate position or role; (5) woman is created from man’s rib (vv. 21, 22) which indicates her dependence upon him for life; and (6) the man names the woman (v. 23), which indicates his authority or leadership over her. Do these points really substantiate a hierarchical relationship between the sexes? Let us look at each point in turn.

**Man created first.** First, because man is created first and then woman, it has been asserted that “by this the priority and superiority of the man, and the dependence of the woman upon the man, are established as an ordinance of divine creation.”<sup>18</sup> Adventist (and other conservative) “complementarians” (hierarchicalists) today generally avoid the word *superiority* for man but argue instead for male leadership from this order of Creation. But a careful examination of the literary structure of Gen 2 reveals that such a conclusion of hierarchy does not follow from the fact of man’s prior creation. Hebrew literature often makes use of an *inclusio* device (also called an “envelope structure” or “ring construction”) in which the points of central concern to a unit are placed at the beginning and end of the unit.<sup>19</sup> This is the case in Gen 2. The entire account is cast in the form of an *inclusio*, in which the creation of man at the beginning of the narrative and the creation of woman at the end of the narrative correspond to each other in importance.<sup>20</sup> The narrator underscores their equality of importance by employing precisely the same number of words (in Hebrew) for the description of the creation of the man as for the creation of woman! As Trevor Dennis puts it: “The writer has counted his words and been careful to match the lengths of his descriptions exactly.”<sup>21</sup> The movement in Gen 2 is not from male leadership to female submission, but from incompleteness to completeness. Woman is created as the climax, the culmination of the story, and as Adam’s full equal.<sup>22</sup>

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I have found no evidence in Gen 1 and 2 that the law of the primogeniture (“firstborn”) is operative at Creation. The study by Carl Cosaert on 1 Tim 2 in this volume (ch. 15) also demonstrates that Paul is not referring to the priority of Creation (Adam as “firstborn”) to substantiate male headship as part of the Creation order. Mention of “firstborn” and “birthright” and related terms in Scripture are only employed to describe conditions after the Fall (e.g., Gen 4:4; 10:15; 25:31–36). Even after the Fall, the law of the firstborn was not a hard-and-fast rule. In fact, in the case of the patriarchal covenant line in Genesis, it is regularly the second-born (or sometimes an even later-born), not the first-born, who inherits the birthright: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and Ephraim. In the New Testament, Jesus Himself is not the firstborn in His human family (He had older half-brothers through the line of Joseph), and when the term *firstborn* is employed of Jesus, it does not refer to His chronological order of “birth” but to His “pre-eminence” (that is the meaning of the Greek *prōtotokos* in Rom 8:29; Col 1:15, 18; Rev 1:5).

This does not deny that (at least) Adam was the one-time “head of the human family” (6T 236), “the father and representative of the whole human family” (PP 48). But according to the Creation narrative this is not based upon the priority of Adam in Creation, nor upon the law of primogeniture. Rather, Adam’s representative headship of the entire human race is based upon the biblical principle of corporate solidarity, the individual(s) representing the many.<sup>23</sup> Adam bears the Hebrew name *ʾadam*, which is also the name meaning “humankind” (Gen 1:26, 27; 5:1, 2). Only Adam in OT salvation history is given this name. Adam the individual is in corporate solidarity with the *ʾadam* which is humanity as a whole.

With reference to Adam as the “head of the entire human race,” at first glance it may seem apparent that he exercised this representative role alone. However, the biblical text also makes clear that God gave both the first man and the first woman the name “Adam” (Gen 5:2). Eve also was given a representative role in solidarity with the entire human race, as “Mother of all living” (Gen 3:20). The spiritual followers of God are traced through *her* “seed” and *not*, as might be expected, through Adam’s (Gen 3:15, contrary to usual reference to a man’s “seed” elsewhere in Scripture). So it is very possible that God intended from the start that both Adam and Eve serve as representative heads, mother and father, of the entire human race. Thus both would have joined the “sons of God” in the heavenly council instead of Satan, representing this earth (Job 1 and 2). As a parallel to this usage, Ellen White states that “Adam was crowned king in Eden, and to him was given dominion over every living thing that God had created” (SDABC 1:1082), although it is evident from the biblical text that Eve equally exercised this dominion (Gen 1:26, 28; cf. PP 50). Likewise, although Ellen White mentions Adam as “head of the human family,” she does not thereby necessarily exclude Eve, his “equal partner” and “second self” in that representative role. Regardless of whether Adam served in this headship alone or along with Eve, what is important to our issue in this chapter is that this was a *one-time, representative (non-hierarchical, or better, inverse-hierarchical servant) headship*, and involved headship of the entire human race, both men and women. Non-hierarchical (or inverse-hierarchical) representative headship may be illustrated in United States politics, where congressmen in the House of Representatives serve to *represent* their constituency, but by no means are in hierarchical authority over them. This



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*representative* (not *hierarchical*) headship of the “first Adam” (1 Cor 15:54) was not passed on from generation to generation. Intended to be a one-time representative headship, it was usurped by Satan (who became the “prince of this world,” John 12:31) and was restored by the “last Adam” (1 Cor 15:54). Hence there is no indication here of female subordination to male headship; rather, what was intended was the entire human race, male and female, being represented by the Father (and Mother) of the human race.

**Man’s priority of address.** A second argument concerns the man’s priority in speaking and being spoken to in the narrative. It has been claimed that the man’s leadership over his wife before the Fall is revealed in that God addresses the man, and not the woman, and also in that the man does the speaking in the narrative of Gen 2, not the woman. However, such a claim fails to take into account the movement of the narrative from incompleteness to completeness and climax as has been pointed out above. As part of the process of bringing the man to realize his “hunger for wholeness”<sup>24</sup>—that he is alone and, like the other creatures, needs a partner—God indeed speaks to him, warning him not to eat of the forbidden tree. As soon as God created a human being, such information was crucial for that being to avoid transgression and in order to be a free moral agent with the power of choice. But the divine impartation of such knowledge to the man before the woman was created does not thereby reveal the leadership of the man over his partner.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, only the man speaking (not the woman) in Gen 2 does not reveal his pre-Fall leadership over the woman any more than only Eve speaking (and not Adam) outside the Garden (Gen 4) reveals Eve’s leadership over Adam after the Fall.

**Woman created for the sake of man.** If a hierarchy of the sexes is not implied in the

order of their creation or *priority* of speech, is such indicated by the *purpose* of woman’s creation, as is suggested in a third major argument for the hierarchical interpretation? Gen 2:18 records the Lord’s deliberation: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him ‘ezer *kenegdo*” (KJV—“a help meet for him”; RSV—“a helper fit for him”; NASB—“a helper suitable to him”). The Hebrew words ‘ezer *kenegdo* have often been taken to imply the inferiority or subordinate status of woman. But this is not the meaning conveyed by the Hebrew! The masculine noun ‘ezer is usually translated as “help” or “helper” in English. However, this is a misleading translation, because the English word *helper* tends to suggest one who is an assistant, a subordinate, an inferior, whereas the Hebrew ‘ezer carries no such connotation. In fact, of the nineteen occurrences of ‘ezer in the Hebrew Bible outside of Gen 2, sixteen employ ‘ezer to describe a *superordinate*—God himself as the “Helper” of Israel.<sup>26</sup> The other three occurrences outside Gen 2 denote military allies.<sup>27</sup> Never does the word refer to a subordinate helper. As elsewhere in the OT, in Gen 2 the word ‘ezer is a relational term, describing a beneficial relationship, but in itself does not specify position or rank. The specific position intended must be gleaned from the immediate context. In the context of Gen 2, with God bringing the parade of animals (all apparently with mates) but Adam finding no fitting companion, the “help” intended is clearly “real companionship that can be given only by an equal.”<sup>28</sup> This “help” or benefaction is indeed “for the man” (v. 18), in the sense that she “would bring benefit to Adam,”<sup>29</sup> but this does not imply a hierarchy of roles. The benefit brought to the man is that at last he has an egalitarian partner.

Genesis 2:18 and 20 confirm this equality of ranking with the expression which adjoins ‘ezer; namely, *kenegdo*. The word *neged*

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conveys the idea of “in front of,” “opposite,” or “counterpart,” and a literal translation of *kenegdo* is thus “like his counterpart.” Used with *‘ezer* this prepositional phrase indicates no less than equality without hierarchy: Eve is Adam’s “benefactor/helper,” one who in position and status is, as recognized by the standard Hebrew lexicon, “*corresponding* to him, i.e., equal and adequate to himself.”<sup>30</sup> She is Adam’s “soul-mate,”<sup>31</sup> his equal partner, in nature, relationship, and function. The phrase *‘ezer kenegdo* in no way implies a male leadership or female submission as part of the Creation order but instead affirms the full equality of man and woman.

**Woman came out of man.** As a fourth alleged indication in Gen 2 of male leadership and female submission, it has been argued that since woman came out of man, since she was formed from man, therefore she has a derivative existence, a dependent and subordinate status. That her existence was in some way “derived” from Adam cannot be denied. But derivation does not imply subordination! The text indicates this in several ways. Note, for example, that Adam also was “derived”—from the ground (v. 7) but certainly one is not to conclude that the ground was his head or leader!<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, as the first woman was derived from man, every subsequent man comes from woman, so there is an expression of integration, not subordination, indicated here (see Gen 3:20).

Again, woman is *not* Adam’s rib. It was the raw material, not woman herself, that was taken out of man, just as the raw material of man was “taken” (Gen 3:19, 23) out of the ground.<sup>33</sup> Samuel Terrien rightly points out that woman “is not simply molded of clay, as man was, but she is architecturally ‘built’ (2:33).” The verb *banah* “to build,” used in the Creation account only with regard to the formation of Eve, “suggests an aesthetic intent and connotes also the idea of reliability and

permanence.”<sup>34</sup> To clinch the point, the text explicitly indicates that the man was asleep while God created woman. Man had no active part in the creation of woman that might allow him to claim to be her head.<sup>35</sup>

**Woman created from man’s rib.** A fifth argument used to support the hierarchical view of the sexes concerns the woman’s creation from Adam’s rib. But the very symbolism of the rib points to equality and not hierarchy. The word *tsela*’ can mean either “side” or “rib.” Since *tsela*’ occurs in the plural in v. 21 and God is said to take “one of” them, the reference in this verse is probably to a rib from Adam’s side. By “building” Eve from one of Adam’s ribs from his side, God appears to be indicating the “mutual relationship,”<sup>36</sup> the “singleness of life”<sup>37</sup> in which man and woman are joined. The rib “means solidarity and equality.”<sup>38</sup> Created from Adam’s “side [rib],” Eve was formed to stand by his side as an equal. This interpretation appears to be further confirmed by the man’s poetic exclamation when he sees the woman for the first time (v. 23): “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!” The phrase “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” indicates that the person described is as close as one’s own body. It denotes physical oneness and “a commonality of concern, loyalty and responsibility.”<sup>39</sup> The expression certainly does not lead to the notion of woman’s subordination or submission to man, but rather implies full equality without hierarchy, in constitution, relationship, and function. Ellen White well captures the meaning when she writes:

Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh,

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she was his second self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it." Ephesians 5:29. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one" (PP 46).

Some have taken Ellen White's statement that Eve was "to be loved and protected by him [Adam]" as indicating male hierarchical headship, but protection here implies greater physical strength, not hierarchy! A government leader's bodyguards are protectors, but that does not make the leader subordinate to them. *The context of Gen 2 is not one of hierarchy but of symmetrical equality.*

**Man named woman.** The last major argument used to support a hierarchical view of the sexes in Gen 2 is that in man's naming of woman (v. 23) is implied man's authority over her, as his naming the animals implied his authority over the animals.<sup>40</sup> This conclusion is predicated upon the commonly repeated thesis that assigning names in Scripture signifies authority over the one named, but this widely held scholarly assumption has been recently effectively challenged, with examples from numerous Scriptural passages.<sup>41</sup> George Ramsey shows from the OT data of naming that "if the act of naming signifies anything about the name-giver, it is the quality of *discernment*" and not the exercise of authority or control. Even if the man did name the woman in Gen 2:23 (which I argue below is unlikely),

The exclamation in Gen 2:23 is a cry of discovery, of recognition [cf. Jacob's cry in Gen 28:16, 17, prior to bestowing the name Bethel], rather than a prescription of what this creature built from his rib shall be. An essence which God had already fashioned is recognized by the man and celebrated in the naming.<sup>42</sup>

The preceding poetic lines of Adam's speech confirm that exercise of leadership authority is not intended here: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." This clause, as already noted, clearly connotes mutuality and equality, not subordination. The second part of Gen 2:23 also confirms this interpretation: the arrangement in Hebrew is chiasmic (symmetrical parallelism), with the words for "woman" and "man" placed in parallel in the center,<sup>43</sup> "suggesting a corresponding and equal relationship to one another."<sup>44</sup>

With regard to the naming of the animals, the man is not exercising his authority over them but classifying them.<sup>45</sup> This can be seen in the immediate context of man's being "alone" and this being "not good" (v. 18), evidencing that God's bringing of the animals to the man for him to name further implies that the man is entering into a delightful companionship with the animals, only to ultimately discover that such companionship is inadequate to satisfy his quest for complete reciprocity and mutuality.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, it appears most probable that Adam does *not* name the woman before the Fall at all. The designation *'ishah* occurs in the narrative *before* Adam ever meets her (Gen 2:22). She is already called "woman" by the narrator even before the man sees her. Jacques Doukhan has shown that Gen 2:23 contains a pairing of "divine passives," indicating that the designation of "woman" comes *from God*, not man. Just as in the past, woman "was taken out of man" *by God*, an action with which the man had nothing to do (he had been put into a "deep sleep"), so in the future she "shall be called woman," a designation originating in God and not man. Doukhan also indicates how the literary structure of the Genesis creation story confirms this interpretation.<sup>47</sup>

No indication is found in the text that the wordplay in v. 23 between *'ish* (man) and

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'ishah (wo-man), and the explanation of the woman being taken out of man, are given to buttress a hierarchical or headship ranking of the sexes; rather, in context, they are best understood to underscore man's joyous recognition of his second self. In fact, the word 'ish (man) first appears in this verse; the man becomes aware of his own identity as he discerns the identity of 'ishah (wo-man). In his ecstatic poetic utterance the man is not determining who the woman is—any more than he is determining who he himself is—but rather delighting in his recognition of what God has done. He is saying yes to God in recognizing his own sexual nature and welcoming woman as the equal counterpart to his sexuality.<sup>48</sup> After the Fall Adam *did* give his wife a name (Eve), but even then it is more probable that he is discerning what she already was by the promise of God, “mother of all living” (Gen 3:20), and not exercising authority over her.<sup>49</sup>

In short, none of the arguments advanced from Gen 2 to support a hierarchical or headship relationship between the sexes can stand the test of close scrutiny. In light of the foregoing discussion, I concur with a host of other commentators and scholarly studies in their conclusion that Gen 2, like Gen 1, contains no statement of dominance, subordination, or leadership/submission in the relationship of the sexes.<sup>50</sup> Rather, these very arguments affirm the opposite of what is claimed by those who oppose ordination of women. The man and woman before the Fall are presented as fully equal in rank, with no hint of a hierarchy of nature or relationship or function; no leadership/submission ranking between husband and wife.

This affirmation of the full equality and mutuality of man and woman in the Gen 2 account of Creation is all the more striking when seen in contrast with the other ancient Near Eastern creation accounts which contain

no separate narration of the creation of woman. The Genesis Creation narratives not only give a detailed account of origins, but at the same time appear to serve as a direct polemic against the mythological creation stories of the ancient Near East.<sup>51</sup> By its special, lengthy, separate account of the creation of woman in Gen 2, the Bible is unique in ancient Near Eastern literature with its high valuation of woman on an equal par with man.

### *B. Different Roles for Man and Woman in Creation?*

Those who oppose women's ordination insist that Gen 2, like Gen 1, depicts different roles for men and women. It is true that the terms *male* and *female* imply biological differences, and an affirmation of the egalitarian relationship of Adam and Eve does not deny their complementarity.<sup>52</sup> They were to have no interests independent of each other, and yet each had an individuality in thinking and acting. They were bone of each other's bone, flesh of each other's flesh, equal in being and rank, and at the same time they were individuals with differences.

While biological gender differences are acknowledged in Gen 1 and 2, other differences between the genders are not described. The emphasis of the stories is on a shared equality of nature and status and responsibility. Since the biblical text in Gen 1 and 2 differentiates between the sexes (male and female) but does not specify certain behaviors that belong exclusively to the male and others that are exclusively the domain of the female, it seems inappropriate to go beyond the biblical evidence to insist that certain gender-specific “roles” such as “male headship” and “female submission” are part of the Creation order.

While the text of Gen 1 and 2 implies complementarity between the sexes, it presents no stereotypical roles that

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constitute the "essence" of manhood and womanhood, respectively. Both genders, without differentiation, are made in the image of God; both are given the command to be fruitful and multiply; both are commanded to fill the earth and subdue it; both are commanded to have dominion over all the other creatures (Gen 1:27, 28). They are equal partners corresponding to each other, with full reciprocity and mutuality, and without hierarchy (Gen 2:18). Any attempt to distill the essence of the "roles" of man and woman, respectively, from the opening chapters of Genesis is going beyond the revelation of the text.<sup>53</sup> Complementary wholeness without hierarchy is the portrait of man-woman relationships in Gen 1 and 2.

In fact, the very use of the term *role* by gender hierarchicalists/subordinationists to describe a permanent subordination of women to men is highly problematic. The French word *role* had its origins in regard to the part that an actor played on the theater stage. In the 1930s the word *role* became a key term in the secular humanistic discipline of functional sociology ("role theory"). It was only in the mid-1970s that the term *role* was combined with a new understanding of Creation orders, and introduced into the ordination debate by George Knight III, in his book *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Women and Men*.<sup>54</sup> Knight, and the many who have since followed his lead, attempt to distinguish between gender equality in person and role differentiation in function. Whereas earlier opponents of women's ordination simply assumed that women are inferior to men and thus are subordinate to male headship, the new argumentation since Knight's book redefines women's subordinate status based upon role differentiation.

Kevin Giles provides an incisive critique of this new kind of argumentation:

The recently popularized usage of terminology and ideas drawn from the theater and humanistic sociology actually contradicts divine revelation. . . . When conservative evangelicals interpret biblical teaching on women and men in terms of role differentiation, we have to recognize that they are reading into the text something that is not there and that is never mentioned prior to the 1960s. To use their own terminology, they are not being "biblical."<sup>55</sup>

The use of the term *role* by recent opponents of women's ordination is not only unbiblical, but also logically flawed. The term *role* by its very definition refers to something transient and secondary, not something part of a person's essential nature or being. Perhaps without realizing it, those who use an argument based upon "role differentiation" have actually recast the term *role* in essential terms; roles are regarded not only as functions, but are part of the very essence of the person. Paul Petersen states the matter concisely: "From the point of semantics, when anyone speaks about an eternal role, it is no longer a role, but describes the very essence and being. . . . Per definition a role cannot be permanent or eternal."<sup>56</sup>

What those who oppose women's ordination call "role differentiation" is actually a permanent, hereditary social division based solely upon gender. The dictionary term which best fits this description is *caste*. On the basis of "complementarians" interpretation of Gen 1 and 2, viewed through the lens of their assumed understanding of 1 Tim 2, "half the human race is subordinated to the other half." According to this interpretation, "in creation God instituted an *unchanging social order* that gives men the leading role in the home and excludes women from leading . . . in church."<sup>57</sup> This is nothing less than a caste system in which there is permanent subordination of

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the female gender to the male gender. Against this and all other caste systems Ellen White's words apply: "No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption" (COL 386). "Caste is hateful to God. He ignores everything of this character" (CC 291).

Evangelical hierarchical "complementarians" often support the permanent subordination of women to men by analogy to the Trinity, in which they argue there is found the subordination of the Son to the Father. Many Adventists have taken over this evangelical analogy between man-woman relationships and the Trinity in their opposition to women's ordination. But what they apparently have failed to recognize is that the analogy only works if one takes the common evangelical position on the Trinity, i.e., that it involves the *eternal subordination* of the Son. The analogy is then straightforward: just as the Son was *eternally* subordinated to the Father, so women are *permanently* (from Creation) subordinated to men in the home and in the church. Ironically, Adventists who use this argument of analogy to the Trinity do not normally accept that the Son was *eternally* subordinate to the Father but see Him as only *economically* subordinate in the context of solving the sin problem (in the Incarnation),<sup>58</sup> since they realize that the idea of eternal subordination is not biblical and ultimately undermines the doctrine of the Trinity. Nonetheless, they seek to retain the analogy, when in actuality the analogy without the *eternal* subordination of the Son undercuts the very argument they are trying to make. Logically, if Christ's subordination to the Father is only temporary (in the context of the sin problem) and is changeable, then by analogy the subordination of women to men is only temporary (in the context of the Fall), and is changeable.

Those who oppose women's ordination often support the hierarchical interpretation of gender relations in Gen 1 and 2 by referring to the "order" in heaven, in which there is hierarchy even before sin entered the universe: there were the "commanding angels" (GC 646) and others who followed the commands (PP 37). According to this argument, if such hierarchy is appropriate in heaven before sin, why should it not be appropriate in Eden between Adam and Eve before the Fall? In response to this argument, I affirm that Scripture does indeed recognize hierarchy on earth before the Fall: Adam and Eve, as co-equal vicegerents of God, were made "a little lower than God [LXX, angels]" (Ps 8:5); and they both had dominion over the rest of the animal kingdom, who were "lower orders of being" (PP 45). (However, as I will argue later/below, this was actually an "inverse hierarchy"—one of servanthood.) But this hierarchy from angels to humans to the lower orders of animals, did not involve a hierarchy among human beings themselves.

This is not to deny that if humans had not sinned, and the human family had expanded into a developed society, there would have been representatives chosen for various positions of responsibility, in parallel to the ordered society of the angels. But such "ordering" of society would not have been based upon a "caste" system, in which persons, simply by virtue of their gender, without regard for their aptitude and training, were stratified into different levels of society in which women were subordinated to men.

We do not have much information in inspired sources regarding the "order" among the angels in heaven before the Fall, but the evidence available leads to the conclusion that such heavenly order is based, not upon a permanent and hereditary "caste" system, but rather, angels were chosen for their various

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duties because of their particular aptitude and skill for the tasks assigned, and those positions of responsibility could change over time. See, for example, the description of the qualities such as wisdom and musical talent that fitted Lucifer for his post of covering cherub and choir leader (Ezek 28:12–14; 1SP 28). Moreover, Lucifer was specifically installed in this position and was removed from it when he sinned (Ezek 28:14, 16), and his position was replaced by Gabriel, who then became “next in rank to the Son of God” (DA 232).

While order among humans, involving certain persons in representative positions of responsibility, would probably have developed eventually had the first pair not experienced the Fall, order did not necessarily involve hierarchical headship in the beginning. Egalitarian marriages today testify to the possibility of an ordered marriage relationship without hierarchical structures. (I am experiencing such a relationship!) And such egalitarian gender relationship is that which is described in Gen 1 and 2 as part of the Creation order. Some argue that “every ship must have a captain” and in parallel, therefore, the couple in Eden had to have one “in charge.” But the first family was not a ship! Even today, many business firms pride themselves in being established and run by senior partners who are fully equal, with no hierarchy between them. (My uncle ran such a successful CPA business in full partnership with another accountant.) According to Gen 1 and 2, such was the full partnership of equals without hierarchy in the Garden of Eden before the Fall.

### C. Mutual Submission of Husband and Wife from the Beginning

With regard to marriage, the complementarity established by God involves a *mutual* submission involving both husband and wife as the divine ideal, both before and

after the Fall. This is apparent from Gen 2:24: “therefore [*al-ken*], a man leaves [*‘azab*] his father and his mother and cleaves [*dabaq*] to his wife, and they become one flesh [*basar ekhad*].”<sup>59</sup> The introductory “therefore” [*al-ken*] indicates that the relationship of Adam and Eve is upheld as the pattern for all future human sexual relationships, and not just an etiological insertion to explain the common legal custom at the time of Moses. Robert Lawton insightfully points out, as I will expand further below, that it was *not* the normal custom in OT patriarchy for the man to leave his father and mother, but rather for the woman to leave. Therefore, the Hebrew imperfect verb in this context is best taken not as a frequentative imperfect “he [typically] leaves” but as a potential imperfect “he *should* leave.” The verse thus expresses “a description of divine intention rather than of habitually observed fact.”<sup>60</sup> What is particularly striking in v. 24 is that it is the *man* who is to “leave” (*‘azab*). It was a matter of course in the patriarchal society at the time Gen 2 was penned that the wife left her mother and father. But for the husband to “leave” was revolutionary!<sup>61</sup> In effect, the force of this statement is that both are to leave—to cut loose from those ties that would encroach upon the independence and freedom of the relationship.

Likewise, it is the *man* who is called upon to “cleave, cling” (*dabaq*) to his wife. This Hebrew term implies a strong voluntary attachment involving affectionate loyalty, and is often used in the OT to describe Israel’s “cleaving/clinging” to the Lord.<sup>62</sup> It was expected in a patriarchal society that the woman would have such attachment to her husband, and hence the force of this statement is that *both* man and woman are to “cleave” or “cling” to each other. Reciprocal “clinging” implies a mutual submission without hierarchy—a self-sacrificing love where the

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husband identifies himself with his wife so as to provide for her needs, and vice versa (as Paul recognizes in his citation and elaboration of the verse in Eph 5:21–31). Finally, in the context of the marriage covenant, the husband and wife are to become “one flesh” (*basar ekhad*). This expression, like the “leaving” and “cleaving” in Gen 2:24, implies a mutual submission. It indicates a oneness and intimacy in the total relationship of the whole person of the husband to the whole person of the wife, a harmony and union with each other in all things.

This mutual submission of husband and wife parallels what we have seen above regarding the Godhead—a mutual submission of Equals as They deliberated together regarding Creation of humankind (Gen 1:28), and in submission together as They entrusted Their dominion over this earth into the hands of humanity. Mutual submission in the symmetrical (non-hierarchical) relationship of Adam and Eve before the Fall leaves no room for an asymmetrical (hierarchical) “servant leadership” on the part of the man over the woman as a creation ordinance.<sup>63</sup>

### *D. Man and Woman as Priests in the Pre-Fall Eden Sanctuary*

Genesis 2 not only portrays Adam and Eve as equal partners in mutual submission in their marriage relationship; the narrative also indicates that both of them served as priests officiating in the pre-Fall sanctuary worship services in the presence of Yahweh.

Contrary to a common misunderstanding, the inspired writings of Scripture and Ellen White do not restrict the concept or use of the term “sanctuary” only to denote the place for solving the sin problem. Neither is the term “temple” the only designation for the pre-Fall place of worship. Throughout the Bible and the writings of Ellen White, the terms “sanctuary” and “temple” are used interchangeably, and

both terms are used to describe the same heavenly, holy residence of God in existence *before sin entered the universe*, with a function that goes *beyond solving the sin problem* and centers in worship.<sup>64</sup>

There is abundant biblical evidence that the pre-Fall Garden of Eden is to be regarded as the original sanctuary on earth. The evidence for this conclusion has been documented by scores of biblical scholars.<sup>65</sup>

The most explicit indicator that the Garden of Eden is considered a sanctuary is the use of the terminology of “Eden” (Heb. *eden*, which probably means “land of bliss, happy land”) and its identification as a garden (Heb. *gan*; Gen 2:8). In Ezek 28:13, a passage clearly describing the heavenly sanctuary,<sup>66</sup> these same two terms are used together again: the Covering Cherub is described being “in Eden [*eden*], the Garden [*gan*] of God” while he was yet perfect. The Garden Sanctuary described in Ezek 28:13 must be the heavenly, not the earthly Eden, because the Covering Cherub (Lucifer, later called Satan, Isa 14:12; Rev 12:9) was present there *before* he sinned, before he was expelled from heaven to this earth (Ezek 28:16–17; cf. Rev 12:7–9). Ezekiel 28 takes us back to the existence of the heavenly Eden sanctuary before the planting of the Garden of Eden sanctuary on earth.

Just as the later earthly tabernacle in the wilderness was built as a copy (Heb. *tabnit*; Gk. *typos*) of the heavenly original (Exod 25:9, 40; Heb 8:5), so earth’s first sanctuary, the earthly Garden of Eden, was created by God as a copy of the original heavenly sanctuary, and this is confirmed by Moses using the exact same phraseology “Garden of Eden” as employed by Ezekiel in describing the original heavenly sanctuary.

It is of vital importance to recognize that before the entrance of sin the heavenly sanctuary did not function to solve the sin



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problem, but served primarily as a place of worship. Ezekiel 28 indicates the location of the heavenly sanctuary/temple as “on the holy mountain of God” (vv. 14, 16), and the parallel passage in Isaiah 14 calls this mountain “the mountain of the assembly [*mo’ed*]” (v. 13). Before the rise of the sin problem in the universe, the heavenly sanctuary served as a place of assembly where unfallen beings gathered to worship and serve their Maker! This was the original function of the Heavenly Eden, the Garden of God.

Similarly, the earthly Eden sanctuary, a copy of the heavenly original, functioned as a place where Adam and Eve worshiped their Creator.<sup>67</sup>

Affirming sanctuary language in Gen 1–2 is not a matter of reading illegitimately back into

the first chapters of Scripture subsequent descriptions of the sanctuary/Temple (as sometimes claimed), but rather acknowledging that according to the canonical biblical evidence the first earthly sanctuary (Eden and its surroundings) was created as the counterpart of the heavenly sanctuary. In light of this foundational insight from the wider biblical canon, we may then turn to the numerous other details of the earthly Eden sanctuary which correlate with the later biblical sanctuaries/temple, and recognize that Moses utilized sanctuary language to describe the earthly Eden (and its surroundings) as a sanctuary. Note the following table for a few examples of the more than forty textual parallels that I have found thus far:

**Table 1: Textual Parallels between Earthly Eden and Other Biblical Sanctuaries**

| Textual Parallels                                     | The Earthly Garden of Eden Sanctuary                                             | Other Biblical Sanctuaries                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. “Eden”                                             | “Garden of Eden” (Gen 2:8, 10, 15)                                               | “Eden, the Garden of God,” identified with the heavenly sanctuary (Ezek 28:13)                                          |
| 2. Orientation                                        | Eastward (Gen 2:8)                                                               | Eastward (Exod 27:13-16; 36:20–30; 38:13–18; 1 Kgs 7:21; Ezek 47:1)                                                     |
| 3. Divine “planting”                                  | “Planting” ( <i>nata’</i> ) of the garden (Gen 2:8)                              | “Planting” ( <i>nata’</i> ) at the place of His sanctuary (Exod 15:17; cf. 1 Chr 17:9)                                  |
| 4. “In the midst”                                     | Tree of life “in the midst” ( <i>betok</i> ), of the garden. (Gen. 2:9)          | The living presence of God “in the midst” ( <i>betok</i> ), of His people in the sanctuary (Exod 25:8)                  |
| 5. God “walking around” (only two times in Scripture) | God “walking around” ( <i>Hithpael</i> of <i>halak</i> ) in the garden (Gen 3:8) | God “walking around” ( <i>Hithpael</i> of <i>halak</i> ) in the midst of the camp of Israel (Deut 23:14 [Heb. 15])      |
| 6. Flowing river                                      | River flowing from the central location in the Garden (Gen 2:10)                 | River flowing from the sanctuary shown to Ezekiel (Ezek 47:1–12) and from the throne of God as shown to John (Rev 22:1) |
| 7. Precious metals                                    | Bdellium, and onyx, and gold                                                     | Bdellium (Num 11:7), onyx                                                                                               |

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|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>8. Three spheres of ascending holiness</b> | The earth, the garden, and the midst of the garden                                                                                           | The court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>9. Series of verbal parallels</b>          | "Saw [ <i>ra'ah</i> ] . . . made [ <i>'asah</i> ] . . . finished [ <i>kalah</i> ] . . . blessed [ <i>qadash</i> ]" (Gen 1:31; 2:1; 2:2; 2:3) | "Saw [ <i>ra'ah</i> ] . . . made [ <i>'asah</i> ] . . . finished [ <i>kalah</i> ] . . . blessed [ <i>qadash</i> ]" (Exod 39:43; 39:32; 40:33; 39:43)                                                              |
| <b>10. Six + Sabbath.</b>                     | Creation in six days (each introduced by the clause "And God said"), followed by the seventh day Sabbath (Gen 1:3–2:3)                       | Instructions for construction of the tabernacle (Exod 25–31) divided into six sections (introduced by the phrase "The Lord said to Moses"), followed by the seventh section dealing with the Sabbath              |
| <b>11. Portrayals of the natural world</b>    | Plants and animals of creation week                                                                                                          | Lilies and other flowers, palm trees, oxen, lions of the Solomonic temple (1 Kgs 6:29, 32, 35; 7:26, 29, 36), artistic portrayals representative of the return to the lost Garden, the earth's original sanctuary |
| <b>12. "Light" of the menorah</b>             | The term for "light" (Heb <i>ma'or</i> , "lamp") used to describe the sun and moon in Gen 1:14–16; they are "lamps" of the Eden sanctuary    | This term is found elsewhere in the Pentateuch <i>only</i> for the light of the menorah in the Holy Place of the sanctuary (Exod 25:6; 35:14; 39:27, etc.).                                                       |

The suffusion of sanctuary language in Gen 1–2 leads inescapably to the conclusion that the Garden of Eden is to be regarded as the original sanctuary on this earth, the original place of worship.

In light of this sanctuary context, the paired use of the two Hebrew terms *'abad* and *shamar* in Gen 2:15 to describe the work of Adam and Eve in the Eden garden is extremely significant. According to this verse, the first couple were put in the Garden to "tend" [*'abad*] and "keep" [*shamar*] it. These Hebrew terms literally mean to "serve" and "guard" respectively, but imply more than the fact that Adam and Eve were entrusted with a responsible stewardship of serving and protecting their environment. These two Hebrew words, when used together

elsewhere in the Pentateuch, and elsewhere in the whole OT in the setting of the sanctuary, consistently function as a technical expression for the service of the priests and Levites in the sanctuary (see Num 3:7–8; 8:26; 18:3–7). Thus, the use of this paired terminology in the setting of the Eden Garden sanctuary clearly implies a priestly function for the first couple in the Garden of Eden.

That a worship setting is implied in Gen 2:15 is also emphasized by the choice of words for "put" in this verse. When Moses first states that God "put" the man in the Garden (v. 8), he uses the common Hebrew word for "put," *sim* (used over 800 times in the OT). But in v. 15, where he delineates the specific task of humans to "serve" and "guard" the Garden,

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Moses uses the less common verb *nuakh*, which (in the causative *Hiphil* form) literally means “to cause to rest.” This is the term used in connection with God’s resting on the Sabbath and human worship of God on that day (Exod 20:11; 23:12; Deut 5:14), and in particular this verb (or its noun form *menukhah*) refers to God’s “resting place” in His sanctuary in the setting of worship (Num 10:36; Ps 132:8, 14; Isa 66:1; 1 Chr 28:2). By shifting from *sim* to *nuakh* in Gen 2:15, Moses is setting the tone for the worship-oriented interpretation of this verse, with Adam and Eve as priests serving in the Eden sanctuary.<sup>68</sup>

Adam and Eve are portrayed as creative co-participants, spiritual intimates, yes, priests, in the sacred worship service of the Eden sanctuary. This is in harmony with the original (pre-sin) worship function of the heavenly sanctuary (“Eden, the Garden of God,” Ezek 28:13), where Lucifer, adorned with the same stones as the High Priest in the later earthly sanctuary, apparently served a similar priestly function as worship leader (Ezek 28:13–14). And it is also in harmony with the heavenly sanctuary’s return to its primary worship function after the windup of the Great Controversy, with the redeemed serving as priests in that Temple (Rev 5:10; 7:15; 20:6; 21:3).

Note also that the work of the priest in the OT earthly sanctuary after sin involved the functions of leader in the worship service (Num 18:7; cf. Num 6:23–27), teacher (Deut 33:10), and judge or decision-maker (Deut 19:16), fully appropriate to a pre-Fall context. The OT priest was also an offerer of sacrifices (Lev 1–7). Before sin, there were of course no bloody sacrifices or intercession because of sin, but offering “sacrifices of praise” (Heb 13:15), along with other functions of a priest, was certainly appropriate. Furthermore, even the role of priest as mediator was appropriate

in a context before sin. A mediator’s function is not just in connection with solving the sin problem. A mediator is a “go-between.” According to John 1:1–3, “in the beginning” at creation Christ was the “Word.” A word is that which “goes-between” someone’s mouth and another person’s ear so that there can be communication between the two parties. In a separate study of Prov 8:22–31 and other OT passages, I have shown that from the beginning of creation Christ served as the “Angel [Messenger] of the Lord,” the “Go-between” or Mediator, between an infinite God and finite creatures.<sup>69</sup> Ellen White may be referring to this larger role of Christ’s mediation when she writes: “Christ is mediating in behalf of man, and the order of unseen worlds is also preserved by His mediatorial work” (MYP 254). Adam and Eve likewise were mediators, “go-betweens,” representing God to the creatures over which they had dominion. Ellen White writes: “He [Adam] was placed, as God’s representative, over the lower orders of being. They cannot understand or acknowledge the sovereignty of God, yet they were made capable of loving and serving man” (PP 45).

From the very beginning, before the Fall (as well as after the Fall at the gate of Eden, Gen 3:21),<sup>70</sup> woman, as well as man, is welcomed into the priestly function in the Eden sanctuary, to be a leader in worship and to serve in other priestly functions alongside her male counterpart.

### *E. The Nature of Human Dominion/ Authority: Inverted Hierarchy*

It is not enough to recognize that Adam and Eve functioned as priests in the Eden Sanctuary before the Fall. We must also inquire as to the nature and status of their priestly work. Did this pre-Fall priesthood give them authoritative leadership status? In order to answer this question, we must revisit the

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dominion of humans over the earth assigned to them in Gen 1:26. Reading this passage from the standpoint of our modern concepts of authority in the context of fallen humanity, we might be tempted to see this “dominion” or rulership as one of hierarchical power/authority on the part of humans to subject the rest of Creation according to their will and wishes. However, the dominion given in Gen 1:26 is further defined in Gen 2:15, where God challenges our post-Fall concepts of rulership hierarchy. God puts the human in the Garden to *abad* and to *shamar* the Garden. These words literally mean “to serve” and “to guard.” Although the term *abad* in other creation passages (Gen 2:5 and 3:23) has the primary meaning of “to till/work [the soil]” (with the addition of the word *ground*), in 2:15 (without the use of *ground*) it is probable that the connotation of “serving” is especially present. As Victor Hamilton writes: “The word we have translated as *dress* is *abad*, the normal Hebrew verb meaning ‘to serve.’ So again the note is sounded that man is placed in the garden as servant. He is there not to be served but to serve.”<sup>71</sup> To state it differently, “Man is to function as the servant leader in the inverse hierarchy.”<sup>72</sup>

The inverted hierarchy of humans in their servant leadership over the earth also applies—with even greater force—to the kind of spiritual leadership envisaged for Adam and Eve in their role as priests in the Eden sanctuary. The Eden priesthood is a role of *abad*—servanthood! Adam and Eve were not to exercise the hierarchical authority of “chain of command” but to display an inverted hierarchy of servanthood. Such a model of servant leadership—involving both man and woman—is the model set forth from the beginning as God’s ideal in the setting of public worship. As we have pointed out above, this servant pattern of submission is already modeled by the Godhead in the Creation.

### IV. Genesis 3: Man-Woman Relationships After the Fall

When God comes to the Garden after Adam and Eve sinned, He initiates an encounter that constitutes nothing less than a “legal process,” an investigative trial judgment conducted by God.<sup>73</sup> God begins the legal proceedings with an interrogation of the “defendants,” and the defensive and accusatory responses by Adam and Eve (vv. 9–14) indicate the rupture in inter-human (husband-wife) and divine-human relationships that has occurred as a result of sin. Following the legal interrogation and establishment of guilt, God pronounces the sentence in the form of curses (over the serpent and the ground, vv. 14, 17) and judgments (for the man and the woman, vv. 16–19).

The judgment pronounced upon the woman is of particular concern in this chapter (v. 16):

- (a) I will greatly multiply your pain [*itsabon*, hard labor] in childbearing;
- (b) in pain [*itsabon*, hard labor] you shall bring forth your children;
- (c) yet your desire [*teshuqah*] shall be for your husband,
- (d) and he shall rule [*mashal*] over you.

The meaning of the last two enigmatic lines (v. 16c and d) of the divine sentence is crucial for a proper understanding of the nature of God’s provision for man-woman relationships after the Fall.

#### *A. Genesis 3:16: Divine Judgment and the Relationship Between Adam and Eve: Major Views*

Six major views have been advanced for the interpretation of this passage.<sup>74</sup> The various major interpretations of Gen 3:16 in its larger context may be summarized in the following chart:

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| Man-Woman Relationships in the Beginning (Gen 1–3)— <i>Major Views</i>           |                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Creation<br>(Gen 1 and 2)                                                        | Fall<br>(Gen 3)                                                  | Divine Pronouncement<br>Concerning Eve (Gen 3:16)                                                                                                                                  |
| 1. Hierarchical<br>(Submission of woman to male leadership)                      | Violation of male-female hierarchy and/or ruptured relationships | <i>Description</i> of the perversion of hierarchical relationships (woman seeks to control man and/or man exploitively subjugates woman)                                           |
| 2. Hierarchical<br>(Submission of woman to male leadership)                      | Violation of male-female hierarchy and/or ruptured relationships | <i>Prediction</i> that woman would desire to get out from under man's authority, and prescription that man must exercise his "godly headship" to restrain her urge to control him. |
| 3. Hierarchical<br>(Submission of woman to male leadership)                      | Violation of male-female hierarchy and/or ruptured relationships | <i>Reaffirmation</i> of original hierarchical roles as a continued divine blessing, or a statement of continued subjugation of woman by man                                        |
| 4. Egalitarian<br>(Full equality with no submission of woman to male leadership) | Ruptured relationship between the sexes                          | <i>Predictive description</i> of the consequences of sin—man usurps authority over the woman—which "curse" is to be removed by the Gospel with return to egalitarianism            |
| 5. Egalitarian<br>(Full equality with no submission of woman to male leadership) | Ruptured relationship between the sexes                          | <i>Permanent prescription</i> of divine will in order to preserve harmony in the home after sin: wife's submission to her husband's leadership                                     |
| 6. Egalitarian<br>(Full equality with no submission of woman to male leadership) | Egalitarian relationship continues                               | <i>Blessing</i> of equality (no hierarchy of leadership/submission) in the midst of a sinful world and its challenges                                                              |

### *B. The Meaning of Gen 3:16: Evaluation of Views and Evidence in the Text*

In assessing the true intent of Gen 3:16, I must immediately call into question the first three interpretations which proceed from the assumption that a gender hierarchy existed before the Fall (views one, two, and three). My analysis of Gen 1 and 2 has led to the conclusion that no such submission of woman to man's leadership was present in the beginning.

Nor is there any indication of male leadership over the woman, and female submission to the man in the account of

the Temptation and Fall (Gen 3:1–7). The temptation of the woman by the serpent is presented in vv. 1–6. In this passage the woman's response to the serpent reveals her to be intelligent, perceptive, informed, and articulate, contrary to frequent assertions in the past that she was feeble-minded, weak, and naive.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, the temptation to which both Adam and Eve yielded was the temptation to become like God—to exercise moral autonomy in acting against the express command of God. God specifically states that the sin of both of them was—not the violation of a man/woman leadership/submission

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principle, but eating from the tree from which He commanded them not to eat (3:11). As Hess aptly puts it, "The challenge of the snake is not directed against the man's authority. It is against God's authority."<sup>76</sup> While the passage may well allow for the interpretation that Eve wandered from Adam's immediate presence, lingered at the forbidden tree, and later offered the fruit to her husband,<sup>77</sup> there is no warrant in this text for maintaining that their sin consisted of the woman getting out from under the authoritative leadership of her husband, or of her husband failing to exercise his "godly headship" to restrain her. Marris rightly concludes: "the woman's sin in 3:1-7 has nothing to do with usurping the man's authority; rather, it involves exalting herself above the Creator to determine for herself right and wrong."<sup>78</sup>

Marris also correctly points out that God's statement to the man in 3:17 ("Because you have listened to the voice of your wife") does not imply that the man had failed to control his wife or had abdicated his leadership role. Rather, it is simply "an acknowledgment of the man's decision to follow his wife's direction rather than God's command."<sup>79</sup> The sin of Adam was not in "listening to" or "obeying" his wife *per se*, but in "obeying" his wife *rather than* or *in opposition to* God's explicit command not to eat of the fruit. Of course, this is not to deny that there is "strength in numbers" in withstanding temptation, and Eve made herself more vulnerable to the serpent's attack by separating from her husband. But such fortification against temptation by partners standing together is just as applicable in a totally egalitarian relationship (which I see here before the Fall) as in a hierarchical one (which I do not find in the narrative before Gen 3:16).

Many Adventist opponents of women's ordination have used the following quotation from Ellen White to attempt to prove that Eve's

sin consisted in seeking to get out from under the authority of her husband. In the context of interpreting Gen 3, Ellen White writes:

Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband's side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it. A similar result will be reached by all who are unwilling to take up cheerfully their life duties in accordance with God's plan. In their efforts to reach positions for which He has not fitted them, many are leaving vacant the place where they might be a blessing. In their desire for a higher sphere, many have sacrificed true womanly dignity and nobility of character, and have left undone the very work that Heaven appointed them (PP 59).

A careful examination of the immediate context of this passage makes clear that the "higher sphere" which Eve hoped to enter was to be *like God*, not to get out from under her husband's headship. The sphere which God had assigned her was to be an equal partner "by her husband's side," not to be in submission to her husband's male headship: this is made clear in the previous paragraph

In the creation God had made her the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with His great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other (PP 58).

The asymmetrical submission of one to the other came only after the Fall! Likewise, Ellen White's reference to "restless modern Eves" is

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not describing their attempts to usurp male headship in the home or church, but rather describes any attempt on their part to “reach positions for which He has not fitted them.” This principle applies equally to men as to women, as one aspires to a position that he/she does not have the necessary preparation for filling, or abandons other work God has given him/her to do in attempts to advance in career or status.

Neither does the argument have persuasive power that after the Fall God approached and addressed the man first because the man was in a position of leadership over his wife. God questions the man first for a number of reasons that are apparent in the text: (1) A primary reason no doubt is that the man was created first and the first one to have received the command not to eat from the fruit of the forbidden tree (2:17), and since he had been the one directly and personally warned, it was natural for him to be the one God would approach first. But such choice in no way implies pre-Fall male leadership over his wife. This is clear because, (2) the man clearly is not approached by God on behalf of his wife, but solely on his own behalf, since the personal pronoun of God’s question in v. 9 is singular, not plural: “Where are you [singular]?” (3) In the dialogue between God and the man, the man does not function as the woman’s overseer; in answer to God’s questioning he explains only his own behavior, not that of the woman, and instead of being her spokesperson, he is her accuser. (4) The woman is summoned to give her own testimony concerning her behavior, and answers directly on behalf of herself. (5) The interrogation of vv. 9–13 proceeds in chiasmic (reverse) order from that in which the characters in the narrative are introduced in vv. 1–8, with God in the center of the structure (this is in harmony with an overarching chiasmic structure of the entire chapter,<sup>80</sup> and with another reversal of

order in vv. 14–19 ). (6) In this legal trial investigation, God must examine the witnesses one by one to demonstrate their individual guilt; the man blames the woman, who then naturally in turn is put on the witness stand for divine interrogation. (7) The answers of both man and woman, with their blame of others (the woman and the snake respectively), reveals that “sin’s breakdown of the creation order was not an abdication of divinely instituted hierarchy but the loss of loving harmony between the man and the woman”<sup>81</sup> Paul Borgman states it well, “That no sort of one-way submission could be part of the Ideal Marriage is underscored by what is lost.”<sup>82</sup> I conclude that those espousing views 1–3 who argue for implications of hierarchy from Gen 3:1–13 are reading into the text what does not exist in the chapter, just as they have done for Gen 1 and 2.

I also find that view four (that Gen 3:16 is only descriptive, and not in any way intended by God) is unsatisfactory, despite its popularity, because it fails to take seriously the judgment/punishment context of the passage, and the nature of this judgment/punishment as indicated by the text. As I have already noted, Gen 3:16 comes in a legal trial setting, a “legal process,” a “trial punishment by God,”<sup>83</sup> and v. 16 is thus not just a predictive description but a divine sentence involving a new element introduced by God.

Thus the basic thrust of view five seems correct, even though for reasons described below, I avoid using the term *prescriptive*. The divine origin of the judgment upon Eve is underscored by the Hebrew grammar of God’s first words in the legal sentencing (Gen 3:16): “I will greatly multiply [*harbâ ‘arbeh*, literally, ‘multiplying I will multiply’]. . . .” The use of the first person singular “I” refers to the Lord Himself who is pronouncing the judgment, while the Hebrew infinitive absolute followed by the finite verb implies “the absolute certainty

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of the action.”<sup>84</sup> God is not merely *informing* the woman of her fate; he is actually pronouncing the juridical sentence introducing the state of affairs announced in Gen 3:16. In the context of the other judgments/punishments of Gen 3, and the use of the generic name for “man” and “woman,” it is clear that the biblical writer intended to indicate that this judgment was not just applicable to the first man and woman, but was to extend beyond to the human race outside the Garden.<sup>85</sup>

It also seems clear that according to Gen 3:16c–d, a *change* is instituted in the gender relationships after the Fall. God is not simply reiterating or reaffirming a relationship that had already existed in the beginning. The intent of v. 16a is unmistakable: “I will greatly multiply your *‘itsabon* [pain, anguish, (hard) labor].” There was no pain/anguish/hard labor prior to sin. This is announcing a change in conditions, and sets the tone for the parallel changes prescribed in the remainder of the verse. This conclusion is confirmed by the judgments/curses upon the serpent and the man—both announcing radical changes from the previous Edenic conditions.

Some suggest that the changes inherent in the judgments after the Fall are only quantitative, and not qualitative, and actually parallel preexisting conditions before the Fall. According to this argument, (1) woman already had the capacity to give birth before the Fall; this is only now rendered painful; (2) the man already labored in agriculture; it now becomes hard labor; and (3) in the same way, male headship was already in place before the Fall, but now only is especially emphasized. But such argument fails to take into account the actual parallels/contrasts, and totally overlooks the fourth ultimate judgment—of death as a result of sin. The true contrasts move from a complete absence of conditions before the Fall to their presence after the Fall: (1) and (2)

from no pain or hard labor (of both man and woman) to pain and hard labor; (3) from no hierarchy (no male headship) to hierarchy in man-woman relationships; and (4) from no death to the inevitability of death.

The changes in Gen 3:16c–d clearly involve the subjection/submission of the wife to the husband. The force of the last line (v. 16d) is unavoidable: “he [your husband] shall rule over you.” The verb *mashal* in this form in v. 16d means “to rule” (and not “to be like” or “to be irresistible” as some have suggested) and implies submission/subjection.<sup>86</sup> At the same time, the verb *mashal* “rule” employed in Gen 3:16 is not the same verb used to describe humankind’s rulership over the animals in Gen 1:26, 28. In the latter passages, the verb is *radah* “to tread down, have dominion over,” not *mashal*. In the Genesis accounts a careful distinction is maintained between humankind’s dominion over the animals and the husband’s “rule” over his wife. Furthermore, although the verb *mashal* does consistently indicate submission, subjection, or dominion in Scripture, “the idea of tyrannous exercise of power does not lie in the verb.”<sup>87</sup> In fact, there are a number of passages where *mashal* is used with the connotation of servant-leadership, to “comfort, protect, care for, love.”<sup>88</sup> In later usages of *mashal* in Scriptural narratives (e.g., the time of Gideon), the people of Israel are eager to have someone to “rule” (*mashal*) over them (Judg 8:22), and the term *mashal* describes the rulership of Yahweh and the future Messiah.<sup>89</sup> Thus *mashal* is predominantly a concept of blessing, not curse.

The semantic range of the verb *mashal* thus makes it possible to understand the divine sentence in v. 16 as involving not only punishment but promised blessing, just as the sentence pronounced upon the serpent and man included an implied blessing in the curse/judgment.<sup>90</sup> As Cassuto puts it, “The decrees



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pronounced by the Lord God mentioned here are not exclusively *punishments*; they are also, and chiefly, *measures taken for the good of the human species* in its new situation.<sup>91</sup> This also fits the pattern of Gen 1–11 as a whole, where each sequence involving divine judgment was also mitigated by grace.<sup>92</sup>

That the element of grace/blessing is especially emphasized in this verse is confirmed by recognizing the same synonymous parallelism between v. 16c and v. 16d, as occurs between v. 16a and v. 16b:<sup>93</sup> the divine sentence upon Eve concerning her husband's servant-leadership is shown to be a blessing by its placement in synonymous parallelism with Eve's "desire" for her husband. The meaning of the Hebrew word *teshuqah* is "strong desire, yearning,"<sup>94</sup> and not, as has been suggested, "turning [away]."<sup>95</sup> This term appears only three times in Scripture, and its precise connotation in Gen 3:16 is illuminated by its only other occurrence in the context of a man-woman relationship, i.e., Song 7:11 (Eng. v. 10). In this verse, the Shulamite bride joyfully exclaims, "I am my beloved's, and his *desire* [*teshuqah*] is for me." As will be argued below, this passage is in all probability written as an intertextual commentary on Gen 3:16. Along the lines of this usage of *teshuqah* in the Song of Songs to indicate a wholesome sexual desire, a desire for intimacy, the term appears to be employed in Gen 3:16c to indicate a blessing accompanying the divine judgment.<sup>96</sup> A divinely ordained, intimate (sexual) yearning of wife for husband will serve as a blessing to sustain the union that has been threatened in the ruptured relations resulting from sin.<sup>97</sup> As Belleville puts it, "The wife's desire is as God intended—a desire to become 'one flesh' with her husband (Gen 2:24)."<sup>98</sup>

Thus, an essential feature of the sixth view of Gen 3:16 (the aspect of divine blessing) also seems to be valid. If Gen 3:16d is seen to be

in synonymous parallelism with v. 16c (as v. 16a is with v. 16b), then the emphasis upon promised blessing as well as judgment should also apply to a man's relationship with his wife. The husband's servant-leadership in the home, even though it grows out of the results of sin, may be regarded as a divine blessing in preserving the harmony and union of the relationship. As is implied in the semantic range of *mashal*, this is to be a servant-leadership of protection, care, and love. In the modern idiom, the husband is to lovingly "take care of" his wife.

Genesis 3:16c and d together also seem to be a combined blessing that relates to the first part of the verse (v. 16a and b). The conjunction *waw* linking the first two lines of this verse with the last two lines should probably be translated as "yet," as in some of the modern versions.<sup>99</sup> God pronounces that even though the woman would have difficult "labor" in childbearing—an ordeal that would seem naturally to discourage her from continuing to have relations with her husband—"yet," God assures her, "your desire shall be for your husband," and his loving servant-leadership will take care of you even through the roughest times. He will be your "strong umbrella" of protection and care.<sup>100</sup> The ruptured relationship between husband and wife, indicated in the spirit of blaming by both man and woman immediately after the Fall (Gen 3:12, 13), is to be replaced by reconciliation and mutual love, with the wife resting in her husband's protective care.

At the same time, the synonymous parallelism between v. 16ab and v. 16cd, as well as the parallelism with vv. 17–19, also reveal that it is not inappropriate for humankind to seek to roll back the curses/judgments and get back as much as possible to God's original plan. Few would question the appropriateness of taking advantage of

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advances in obstetrics to relieve unnecessary pain and hard labor during delivery, or of accepting agricultural and technological advances to relieve unnecessary hard labor in farming, or by scientific and medical advances to delay the process of death. In the same way, it is not inappropriate to return as much as is possible to God's original plan for total egalitarianism ("one flesh," Gen 2:24) in marriage, while at the same time retaining the validity of the servant-leadership principle for husbands as it is necessary in a sinful world to preserve harmony in the home. Thus it is appropriate, indeed important, to speak of a divine remedial<sup>101</sup> or redemptive<sup>102</sup> provision, rather than "prescription" (which may to some imply a permanent divine ideal) in these verses. As husbands and wives learn more and more to live in harmony through the infusion of divine grace, there is less and less need to resort to the voluntary submission of the wife to the husband in order to maintain harmony and unity in the home, and a gradual return to egalitarian relationship as before the Fall. As will become apparent later in this study, such movement back toward the egalitarian marriage of pre-Fall Eden is the canonical thrust of the Old Testament.

Thus I suggest a seventh interpretation of Gen 3:16 that combines elements of views five and six above. Like view five, there is a *qualified divine sentence announcing the voluntary submission of the wife to her husband's servant-leadership as a result of sin*. This involves, however, not so much a judgment as a *promised blessing* (as suggested in view six) *of divine grace designed to have a remedial/redemptive function leading back as much as possible to the original plan of harmony and union between equal partners without hierarchy*.

Three final points may be underscored with regard to the practical application of this passage today. First, as already alluded

to above, although in Gen 3 the husband is assigned the role of "first among equals"<sup>95</sup> to preserve harmony and union in the marriage partnership, yet this does not contradict the original divine ideal of Gen 1:26–28, that both man and woman are equally called to accountable dominion, sociability, and fruitfulness. Nor does it nullify the summary statement of Gen 2:24 regarding the nature of the relationship between husband and wife. Gen 2:24 is clearly written in such a way as to indicate its basis in the pre-Fall ideal ("For this reason," i.e., what has been described before) and its applicability to the post-Fall conditions. God's ideal for the nature of sexual relationship after the Fall is still the same as it was for Adam and his equal partner [*ezer kenegdo*] in the beginning—to "become one flesh" in non-hierarchical (symmetrical) mutual submission. The divine judgment/blessing in Gen 3:16 is to facilitate the achievement of the original divine design within the context of a sinful world. The context of Gen 3:16 reveals that it is entirely appropriate for marriage partners to seek to return as much as possible to non-hierarchical egalitarianism in the marriage relationship.

Second, the functional behaviors attached to Adam and Eve in the divine judgments of Gen 3 correspond to what will be their respective primary concerns in a sinful environment, but do not lock husband and wife into predetermined, or mutually exclusive, roles. Even as the divine judgments in Gen 3 were given separately to Adam and Eve and dealt with the aspect of life with which they would have primary concerns, at the same time the judgments of both overlapped with and included each other. Their concerns were not to be mutually exclusive. The divine judgments state what will be true with regard to Eve's primary concern (childbearing), and what will be true with regard to Adam's primary concern

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(food production), but the judgment nowhere limits or predetermines that these concerns must remain exclusively (or even primarily) the woman's and the man's, respectively. The context of Gen 3:16 reveals the appropriateness of husbands and wives seeking to return as much as possible to pre-Fall egalitarianism, including equally-shared functions of dominion (work) and fruitfulness (procreation), as described in Gen 1:26–28.<sup>104</sup>

Third, the relationship of subjection/submission between Adam and Eve prescribed in v. 16 is not presented as applicable to man-woman role relationships in general. The context of Gen 3:16 is specifically that of marriage: a *wife's* desire (*teshuqah*) for her own husband and the *husband's* "rule" (*mashal*) over his own wife. This text describes a *marriage* setting, not a general family or societal or worship setting, and thus the submission of wife to husband prescribed here cannot be broadened into a general mandate subordinating women to men (whether in society or in the church). The *mashal-teshuqah* remedial provisions of Gen 3:16 are specifically linked to the woman's relationship to her own husband and to the husband's relationship to his own wife. Because of the poetic parallelism in Gen 3:16 between the husband's "rule" and the wife's "desire," if one attempts to broaden the husband's *mashal* role prescribed in this passage (v. 16*d*) so as to refer to men's "rule" of women in general (both home and the wider society), then to be faithful to the poetic parallelism it would be necessary to broaden the *teshuqah* of the wife (v. 16*c*) for her husband to include the (sexual) desire of women for men in general, not just their own husband! The latter broadening is obviously not the intent of the passage, and therefore the former cannot be, either. Thus, any suggestion of extending the marriage-specific provision of Gen 3:16 beyond the

husband-wife relationship to become a divinely prescribed mandate for the leadership of men over women in general is not warranted by the text. As will be shown in the remainder of this chapter, the rest of the Old Testament is consistent with this position, upholding the remedial/redemptive *mashal-teshuqah* divine provision for husband and wife as beneficial to preserve the marriage relationship (and ultimately return it to the egalitarian ideal), but not extending the *mashal-teshuqah* relationship beyond the marital relationship and not barring women from roles of servant leadership within the covenant community at large.

I find it instructive to note that Ellen White adopts the basic interpretation I have summarized above:

And the Lord said, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." In the creation God had made her the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with His great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other. Eve had been the first in transgression; and she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was now placed in subjection to her husband. Had the principles joined in the law of God been cherished by the fallen race, this sentence, though growing out of the results of sin, would have proved a blessing to them; but man's abuse of the supremacy thus given him has too often rendered the lot of woman very bitter and made her life a burden (PP 58–69).

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When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that in all things she should be his equal. The holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other; and yet each had an individuality in thinking and acting. But after Eve's sin, as she was first in the transgression, the Lord told her that Adam should rule over her. She was to be in subjection to her husband, and this was a part of the curse. In many cases the curse has made the lot of woman very grievous and her life a burden. The superiority which God has given man he has abused in many respects by exercising arbitrary power. Infinite wisdom devised the plan of redemption, which places the race on a second probation by giving them another trial (3T 484).

Within these same quotations, Ellen White emphasizes the same points as emerge from the biblical text: (1) Before the Fall Adam and Eve were equal "in all things," without hierarchical role distinctions. (2) The hierarchical relationship with asymmetrical "submission on the part of one" came only *after the Fall*. (Note that this is in direct contradiction to the traditional interpretation of 1 Tim 2:12, which sees Gen 3:16 as merely reaffirming the hierarchical headship of Gen 1, 2.) (3) The hierarchical relationship was a remedial provision, given by God to Adam and Eve so that "their union could be maintained and their harmony preserved." (4) This remedial arrangement was limited to the marriage relation: Eve "was placed in subjection to her husband." Ellen White never broadens this to men-women relations in general in the church. (5) The subjection of the wife to her husband "was part of the curse," and the "plan of redemption" gave the race an opportunity to reverse the curse and return to the original plan for marriage whenever possible.

Ellen White also gives us clear indication as to the reasons why it was Eve who was placed in subjection to her husband and not the other way around. She says nothing about "male headship" before the Fall; in fact, she denies this by pointing to Eve as "in all things" the equal of Adam. Rather, she gives three reasons for Eve's submission to Adam and not vice versa: (1) "Eve had been the first in transgression;" (2) "she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction;" and (3) "it was by her solicitation that Adam sinned." Based upon these three criteria, it would seem reasonable to assume that if *Adam* had been first in transgression, if *he* had fallen into temptation by separating from his companion, and if it was by *his* solicitation that Eve sinned, then, Adam would have been placed in subjection to his wife, and not the other way around.

These conclusions regarding gender relations in Gen 1-3 have significant implications for the current Adventist and wider Christian debate over the role of women in the home and in the church. Major concerns of both "egalitarians" and "complementarians" (hierarchicalists) in the modern debate are upheld, and at the same time both groups are challenged to take another look at the biblical evidence. With the "egalitarians" (and against "complementarians") it can be affirmed that Gen 1-2 presents God's divine ideal for men and women at Creation to be one of equality both in nature and function, with no leadership of the male and no submission of the female to that male leadership. With "complementarians" (and against "egalitarians") it can be affirmed that God's provision for harmony and unity *after the Fall* does include the wife's submission to the servant-leadership of her husband. Against the "hierarchical" position, however, the evidence in Gen 3:16 already points to the implication

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that the male servant-leadership principle is limited to the relationship between husband and wife. Also against the “hierarchical” position, the evidence of this text points toward a provision which is *qualified by grace*—a temporary, remedial/redemptive provision representing God’s less-than-the-original-ideal for husbands and wives. This implicitly involves a divine redemptive call and enabling power to return as much as possible to the pre-Fall egalitarianism in the marriage relationship, without denying the validity of the servant-leadership principle as it may be needed in a sinful world to preserve unity and harmony in the home. Also against the “hierarchical” position, Gen 1–3 should not be seen as barring women from accepting whatever roles of servant leadership in the believing community (church) or society at large to which they may be called and gifted by the Spirit.

Finally, as pointed out above, often common to *both* egalitarians and “complementarians” (hierarchicalists) is a similar view of authoritative leadership in the church—as a “chain-of-command,” top-down hierarchy. Opponents of women’s ordination argue that such authoritative leadership in the church is a male prerogative; proponents urge that women should also have the right to such authoritative leadership offices. Against *both* hierarchicalism and egalitarianism, I find that the biblical data in Gen 1–3 presents a surprising third alternative, of inverted hierarchy, in which servanthood and submission on the part of leaders—following the servanthood/submission example of the Godhead Themselves—takes the place of top-down, “chain-of-command” leadership. Seventh-day Adventists, with their unique understanding of the issues in the Great Controversy theme, in which Satan has accused God of not being willing to exercise humility and self-denial,<sup>105</sup>

have a unique opportunity to lift up the divine model of self-denying servanthood before the world. It is hoped that these conclusions, by moving beyond both hierarchialism and egalitarianism to a biblical “third alternative,” may assist in breaking the impasse in the current discussion within Adventism as well as the wider evangelical world.

### V. The Pattern for Husband-Wife Relations Outside of Eden

#### A. *Servant Leadership of the Husband/Father in OT Families*

**Patriarchy.** There is little question that in ancient Israel (and throughout the ancient Near East) a patriarchal structuring of society was the accepted norm, and the father was the “titular head of the ancient Israelite family.”<sup>106</sup> The family, not the individual, was the basic unit of society in ancient Israel. In familial/marital situations the father assumed legal responsibility for the household. His formal leadership and legal authority are evidenced in such concerns as family inheritance and ownership of property, contracting marriages for the children, and overall responsibility in speaking for his family.<sup>107</sup> (Compare our modern use of the term “head of household,” which has some of the same legal implications as in biblical times.)

The institution of patriarchy (“rule by the father”) was wisely arranged by God in His condescension to the human fallen condition, as a temporary remedial and redemptive measure to bring about unity and harmony and integrity in the home in the midst of a sinful world. Patriarchy, as intended by God, was not evil in itself but rather one of those God-ordained remedial provisions instituted after the Fall, but not the ultimate divine ideal.<sup>108</sup> The very term *patriarchy* (“rule of the father”), or the OT phrase *father’s house* (*bet ’ab*),

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emphasizes the role of the *father* to his children, not the *husband* to his wife. As we will observe below in concrete examples throughout OT history, the “patriarchy” of OT times consisted in the *father’s* authority over his children, not his authority over his wife. Furthermore, this was *not* male authority over women, but the authority of one patriarchal figure over all of his descendants, male and female. As will also become apparent below, it is fully compatible with this patriarchal model of leadership to have a *matriarch* functioning in an egalitarian relationship with her husband, the patriarch, and the married children of the patriarch and their spouses likewise functioning in an egalitarian marriage.

**Examples of the husband’s servant leadership.** What we have just said about patriarchy does not deny the remedial measure of the husband’s servant leadership in the home and the wife’s respect for her husband, as provided in Gen 3:16. In the narrative of the life of Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18:12), Sarah refers to her husband as “my lord” (*adoni*), and elsewhere in Scripture the word *ba’al* (“lord”—both as a verb and a noun) is used to identify the husband.<sup>109</sup> However, the meaning of these terms must not be pressed too far, for they often may simply denote polite respect. As I concluded with regard to a husband’s “rule” over his wife in Gen 3:16, the description of husband as “lord” seems to emphasize his position as the “titular head” of the family and not his domination or hierarchical authority over the wife in marriage.<sup>110</sup> The husband has authority to accomplish his task of representing the family, not authority over his wife. This becomes evident in the next section of this chapter as Sarah and Abraham and other couples in the OT demonstrate a very egalitarian marriage.

The attendant servant leadership and/or legal responsibility and protection given by

God as a remedial provision to the husband in Gen 3:16 seems implied in the Mosaic legislation concerning wives who were “under their husbands” in Num 5:19, 20. These verses do not spell out exactly how the wife is “under” her husband, but in context it seems best to supply the expression “under [the legal protection of]” or “under [the legal responsibility of].” In light of other OT evidence which reveals many examples of essentially egalitarian husband-wife relations, to supply the unqualified term “authority”—“under [the authority of]”—as in many English versions, is too strong.

### B. Return to the Edenic Ideal of Egalitarian Marriages

Although Gen 3:16 provided a remedial measure of husband (servant) leadership to preserve harmony and unity in the home, the ideal of egalitarian marriages set forth in Gen 2:24 was still the ultimate divine plan for marriage. The OT provides many examples of marriages in which the husband and wife have moved (or are moving) back toward that egalitarian ideal.

**Egalitarian marriages of OT husbands and wives.** It came as a surprise to me in my research—actually, building upon the research of my wife!—to discover that the Hebrew patriarchs mentioned in Scripture from the OT “patriarchal” period were regularly portrayed as married to a powerful *matriarch*, and their marital relationships were described as functionally non-hierarchical and egalitarian.<sup>111</sup> In her preceding chapter on “Women in Scripture” in this book, Jo Ann Davidson demonstrates the egalitarian relationships between matriarchs and their husbands in the patriarchal period.<sup>112</sup> She also points out examples of the egalitarian marriage relationship in other Israelite homes depicted throughout the history of the nation. The embodiment of (or move

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toward) the pre-Fall ideal of an egalitarian marriage is revealed in the descriptions of the day-to-day relationships between husbands and wives throughout the OT, in which the "ancient Israelite wife was loved and listened to by her husband, and treated by him as an equal. . . ." <sup>113</sup> "The ancient Israelite woman wielded power in the home at least equal to that exercised by the husband . . . ; she participated freely and as an equal in decisions involving the life of her husband or her family." <sup>114</sup>

**Egalitarian treatment of men/husbands and women/wives in Pentateuchal laws.** The various laws dealing with major cultic, ethical, and moral prohibitions and infractions are fully egalitarian. The Decalogue is clearly intended to apply to both men and women, using the gender-inclusive second masculine singular "you" to apply to both men and women. (If the masculine "you" were not gender-inclusive, then such commands as "You shall not steal" would only prohibit men and not women from stealing.) The judgments of the chapters following the Decalogue (the so-called Covenant Code) which apply the "Ten Words" to specific cases make explicit that both male and female are included (Exod 21:15, 17, 20, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32), and this appears to set the standard for later legal material where gender inclusiveness is to be implied although masculine terminology is used. <sup>115</sup> With reference to ritual impurity legislation, the Hebrew Bible presents "a system that is rather even-handed in its treatment of gender." <sup>116</sup> Aside from the menstrual uncleanness that applies only to women, "the other major sources of ritual impurity are clearly gender-blind." <sup>117</sup> Pentateuchal legislation that seems to give women/wives a subordinate status or place their sexuality under the "possession" of the male leader of the household should actually be viewed as setting forth the obligation of the husband/father to protect his wife/daughter's sexuality

and personhood and thereby the integrity of the family structure. These are laws that are designed to protect women, not oppress them. I have set forth the evidence for this conclusion with regard to each of these laws elsewhere. <sup>118</sup>

As an example, the tenth commandment (Exod 20:17; Deut 5:21) is often cited to demonstrate how a wife was considered as man's "chattel," but in actuality, the wife is not here listed as property but as the first-named member of the household. <sup>119</sup> That the wife was not considered as "chattel" or on the level of a slave is confirmed by the fact that an Israelite could sell slaves (Exod 21:2-11; Deut 15:12-18) but never his wife, even if she was acquired as a captive in war (Deut 21:14).

As another example, some have argued that the woman was the "property" of the husband because at the time of the marriage, the bridegroom gave the father of the bride the "brideprice" or "dowry"—thus implying that the husband "bought" his wife much as he bought other property. However, the term *mohar* (used only three times in the OT: Gen 34:12; Exod 22:17; and 1 Sam 18:25), often translated "brideprice," is more accurately translated as "marriage present," <sup>120</sup> probably represents the compensation to the father for the work the daughter would otherwise have contributed to her family, <sup>121</sup> and probably ultimately belonged to the wife and not the father. <sup>122</sup>

In contrast to elsewhere in the ancient Near East, where vicarious punishment was carried out (i.e., a man was punished for a crime by having to give up his wife or daughter, or ox or slave), indicating that indeed wives and daughters were viewed as property of men, in biblical law no such vicarious punishment is prescribed. <sup>123</sup> Likewise, in contrast to other ancient Near Eastern laws, where a husband is permitted to "whip his wife, pluck out her hair, mutilate her ears, or strike her, with

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impunity,"<sup>124</sup> no such permission is given to the husband in biblical law to punish his wife in any way.

Far from being regarded as "chattel," according to the fifth commandment of the Decalogue and repeated commands throughout the Pentateuchal codes, the wife/mother was to be given equal honor as the father within the family circle (Exod 20:12; 21:15, 17; Lev 20:9; Deut 21:18–21; 27:16). There is "no discrimination in favor of father and against mother. The mother's authority over the son is as great in the law codes as is that of the father."<sup>125</sup> The same penalty is imposed upon the son for striking or cursing his father or his mother (Exod 21:15, 17). In fact, amid a Near Eastern milieu in which the mother was often controlled by the son, Lev 19:3 surprisingly places the mother *first* instead of the father in the command: "Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father." This reversal from normal order clearly emphasizes the woman's right to equal filial respect along with her husband. Likewise, the fourth commandment of the Decalogue implicitly places the husband and wife on a par with each other: in Exod 20:10 the masculine "*you shall not*" clearly includes the wife, since she is not mentioned in the list of the household dependents that follows.

When one looks at the empirical evidence of family life as it emerges from the OT narratives and laws, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the wife was treated by her husband in an egalitarian manner, that the wife exercised an equal power in the home and participated equally in the family decisions. The "functional non-hierarchy" in ancient Israel makes any question of exact legal or jural equality a moot point.<sup>126</sup>

**Husband and Wife in Proverbs.** In the book of Proverbs, the position of woman is regarded as one of importance and respect.

The wife is placed upon an equal footing with the husband in numerous passages: both have equal authority in the training of children (1:8, 9; 6:20; 23:25); the mother is entitled to the same honor as the father (19:21; 20:20; 23:22; 30:17). A lofty view of the true dignity and value of woman in her own right seems implied in the personification/hypostasization of wisdom as a great lady in Prov 1–9.<sup>127</sup> The wife is particularly singled out for praise and honor in Prov 12:4: "An excellent wife [*eshet kayil*, lit. 'woman of power/strength/might'] is the crown of her husband."

This high valuation becomes concretized in the paean of praise in Prov 31.<sup>128</sup> Here in an intricately and elegantly crafted acrostic and chiasmic<sup>129</sup> form, a portrait is provided of the *'eshet kayil*—the "mighty woman of valor"—<sup>130</sup> who is "far more precious than jewels" (v. 10). Many have recognized that this *summa summarum* of a wife's virtues encompasses all the positive characterization of woman in the book of Proverbs, and at the same time this valiant woman serves as an embodiment of all the wisdom values of the book, "the epitome of all the Lady Wisdom teaches. . . . Throughout the Book of Proverbs women are neither ignored nor treated as inferior to men; in fact the climactic conclusion found in 31:10–31 elevates womanhood to a position of supreme honor."<sup>131</sup>

**Husband and Wife as Egalitarian Partners in the Song of Songs.** In the Song of Solomon we find the OT inspired commentary on Gen 1–3, providing insight as to the nature of the relationship which God envisaged between a husband and wife. This book, written by Solomon in the early years of his reign during the some twenty years of his monogamous marriage to "the Shulamite,"<sup>132</sup> shows that even after the Fall it is possible to return to the fully egalitarian (non-hierarchical) marriage relationship as before the Fall.



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In the Song of Songs we come full circle in the OT back to the Garden of Eden. Several recent studies have penetratingly analyzed and conclusively demonstrated the intimate relationship between the early chapters of Genesis and the Song of Songs.<sup>133</sup> In the "symphony of love," begun in Eden but gone awry after the Fall, the Song constitutes "love's lyrics redeemed."<sup>134</sup> Phyllis Tribble summarizes how the Song of Songs "by variations and reversals creatively actualizes major motifs and themes" of the Eden narrative:

Female and male are born to mutuality and love. They are naked without shame; they are equal without duplication. They live in gardens where nature joins in celebrating their oneness. Animals remind these couples of their shared superiority in creation as well as their affinity and responsibility for lesser creatures. Fruits pleasing to the eye and tongue are theirs to enjoy. Living waters replenish their gardens. Both couples are involved in naming; both couples work. . . . whatever else it may be, Canticles is a commentary on Gen 2-3. Paradise Lost is Paradise Regained.<sup>135</sup>

The Song of Songs is a return to Eden. In parallel with Gen 2:24, the Song depicts the ideal of "woman and man in mutual harmony after the fall."<sup>136</sup> "What is extraordinary in the Song is precisely the absence of structural and systemic hierarchy, sovereignty, authority, control, superiority, submission, in the relation of the lovers."<sup>137</sup> The Song of Songs highlights egalitarianism, mutuality, and reciprocity between the lovers. The Song "reflects an image of woman and female-male relations that is extremely positive and egalitarian."<sup>138</sup> "Nowhere in the OT is the equality of the sexes. . . . as real as in the Song."<sup>139</sup> "Nowhere in ancient literature can such rapturous mutuality be paralleled."<sup>140</sup>

The keynote of egalitarianism is struck in Song 2:16: "My beloved is mine and I am his." The same refrain recurs in 6:3: "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." And a *third* time in 7:11 [ET 10]: "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me." Scholars have not failed to point out the implication of this thrice-repeated refrain: "love-eros is mutual; it puts the two partners on a perfectly equal footing . . ."<sup>141</sup> "The present verse [7:11] speaks of a relationship of mutuality, expressed in a formula of reciprocal love like that in 2:16, 6:3. In the Song, sex is free of notions of control, dominion, hierarchy."<sup>142</sup> Daniel Grossberg's assessment of the reciprocity and mutuality of roles between man and woman is not an overstatement:

In all of Canticles there is hardly a thought, idea or deed that is not attributed to *both* the male and the female. Almost all expressions (spoken both inwardly, outwardly, and acted) are shared by the two lovers in the Song of Songs. . . . Sexism and gender stereotyping, so prevalent in ancient (and modern) literature is totally lacking in Canticles. Instead, undifferentiated, shared roles and positions are the rule. Harmony, not domination, is the hallmark of the Song of Songs. . . . In Canticles, neither one of the couples is subordinate; neither is minor. The Song revolves around them both equally. They are costars sharing the spotlight.<sup>143</sup>

David Dorsey's literary structural analysis of the Song demonstrates how each of its seven sections reinforces and enhances the theme of reciprocity/mutuality, by means of various structuring devices, including alternation of speeches, initiations, and invitations, and the numerous matchings of reciprocal expressions of love. He concludes:

These structuring techniques underscore the point that the two lovers are

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equally in love, equally adore one another, and are equally ready to initiate, to suggest, to invite. The ideal conveyed by the author's structure (as well as by the contents of the speeches) is an egalitarianism and mutuality in romantic love that is virtually unparalleled in ancient Near Eastern literature. In a world that was strongly patriarchal, where love lyrics often portrayed the man as a "bull" and the woman as something less than his equal, the Song of Songs represents a surprisingly high view of woman and a remarkable vision of the ideal of equality and delightful reciprocity in the marriage relationship.<sup>144</sup>

A number of modern studies have pointed out that the Song of Songs constitutes a reversal of the divine judgment set forth in Gen 3:16, and a return to Eden before the Fall (Gen 1 and 2) with regard to the love relationship between husband and wife.<sup>145</sup> Such a reversal seems implicit in the Song's echo of Eden's "desire" (*teshuqah*)—a term found only in Gen 3:16 and Song 7:11 [Eng. v. 10] with reference to sexual desire between man and woman. In Song of Songs 7:11 [Eng. v. 10], the third of the woman's three explicit affirmations of mutuality with her lover (along with 2:16 and 6:3 already cited above), the Shulamite says: "I am my beloved's, and his desire (*teshuqah*) is for me." Whereas the judgment of God in Gen 3:16 stated that the woman's desire (*teshuqah*) would be for her husband, and he would "rule" (*mashal*) over her (in the sense of servant leadership), now the Song describes a reversal—the man's desire (*teshuqah*) is for his lover.

However, contrary to the feminist readings that see here a movement away from a distorted use of male power (which is their [misguided] interpretation of Gen 3:16), I find a re-affirmation of the divine ideal of full

equality ("one-fleshness") between husband and wife set forth in Gen 2:24 without necessarily denying the validity of Gen 3:16. Song of Songs does not nullify the provision of Gen 3:16 whereby the servant leadership of the husband may be necessary to preserve the harmony in the home. But the Song reveals that after the Fall it is still possible for man and woman to experience that mutual, reciprocal love wherein headship/submission is transcended and the egalitarian ideal of Gen 2:24 is completely realized. The lovers in the Song return to Eden as egalitarian, mutual, reciprocal partners, without headship of husband over wife.

### VI. The Pattern for Male-Female Relationships in the Covenant Community

Despite the prevailing patriarchal society of OT times, in the OT we find numerous women in public ministry, including leadership roles in the covenant community, in harmony with the pattern set in Gen 1–3. I cite some of these examples in the sections that follow.

#### A. Women and the Priesthood: God's Original Plan and Subsequent Condescension

Perhaps the most-often-cited OT evidence for "male headship" in the OT covenant community is the fact that the Israelite priesthood was confined only to men. For many Adventist (and other Christian) gender hierarchicalists/subordinationists, this is a crucial indication that women were (and still should be) barred from having a leadership role over men in the covenant community (the church).

But the Bible gives a different picture of the divine will regarding the priesthood. God's original purpose for the priesthood on earth included both male and female! As I have already argued above, Gen 1–3 gives the

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surprising picture that both Adam and Eve had the same role as the Levites and priests of the Mosaic tabernacle in the original Eden sanctuary (Gen 2:15; cf. Num 3:7, 8, 38; 18:2–7), and that God himself inaugurated both Adam and Eve as priests (Gen 3:21) after the Fall.

It may come as a further surprise for many to learn that this arrangement for both male and female priests continued to be God's ideal at the time of the Exodus when the Mosaic tabernacle was to be erected.

God's original plan for Israel was that *all* Israel be a "kingdom of priests" (Exod 19:6). This does not simply refer to a corporate function of the nation of Israel offering salvation to the surrounding nations, as frequently claimed. In a penetrating study of Exod 19, John Sailhamer has shown that it was God's original purpose for all Israel to be individual priests, and this was indicated in God's call for all the people, men and women, to come up on the mountain as priests to meet God on Sinai.<sup>146</sup> Although many modern translations translate Exod 19:13*b* as a call on the third day for Israel to come only "to the mountain" (NIV) or to "the foot of the mountain" (NLT) or "near the mountain" (NKJV), the Hebrew is precise: after three days of sanctification (Exod 19:11–13*a*) God is calling all Israel to "go up [Heb. *alah*] on the mountain" (so the NRSV and NJPS). Angel M. Rodriguez has shown that there were three spheres of holiness in connection with Mt. Sinai, corresponding to the three spheres of holiness in the sanctuary that was later constructed: (1) the plain in front of the mountain where the people camped (Exod 19:2), equivalent to the sanctuary courtyard; (2) the level place part way up the mountain where the priests and the 70 elders later met with God (Exod 24:10), equivalent to the Holy Place; and (3) the top of the mountain where Moses alone went (Exod 24:15–18), equivalent

to the Most Holy Place.<sup>147</sup> According to God's original plan, all the people of Israel—including men and women—were to come up on Mt. Sinai, to the place on the mountain equivalent to the Holy Place in the later sanctuary, where only the priests could enter.<sup>148</sup>

Only after the people refused to come up on the mountain because of their fearfulness and lack of faith (Exod 19:16; Deut 5:5), and after their subsequent sin in the worship of the golden calf (Exod 32), did God introduce the specialized priesthood into the sanctuary equation. In this alternate plan for the priesthood, most men were also excluded—all non-Israelites and, within Israel, all except for one family in one tribe in Israel.

In God's alternate plan condescending to human failure, why did He choose men and not women? Some have suggested that a woman was restricted from the priesthood in Israel because of her regular (monthly) ritual uncleanness that would have prevented her from serving in the sanctuary for up to one fourth of her adult life. Others suggest that the amount of upper body strength required to lift the sacrificed carcasses, or serve as military "guards" of the sanctuary, would have made it very difficult for women to serve in the professional capacity as priests.<sup>149</sup> Still another suggestion is that "Since women's place in society is determined by their place within the family, women are not normally free to operate for extended periods outside the home."<sup>150</sup> Others consider the typological connection, with God appointing a male priesthood to point to the coming of Jesus, who in His humanity was male. While these and other rationales may have contributed to the exclusion of women from the specialized priesthood in Israel, they do not seem to constitute the main reason.

The male-only priesthood in Israel was in stark contrast to the other ancient Near Eastern cultures where the cultic personnel

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included priestesses. Otwell insightfully observes: "Since other peoples in the ancient Near East worshiped in cults which used priestesses, their absence in the Yahwism of ancient Israel must have been deliberate."<sup>151</sup> Yahweh's institution of a male priesthood in Israel was made in the immediate aftermath of the worship of the golden calf, linked to the Egyptian/Canaanite fertility cults.<sup>152</sup> In this context, the choice of only male priests seems to have constituted a strong polemic against the religions of surrounding nations to which Israel succumbed at the foot of Sinai, religions which involved goddess worship and fertility-cult rituals. A primary function of the priestesses in the ancient Near East during the last half of the second millennium and the first millennium was to serve as a "wife of the god," and such a function for a woman in the religion of Yahweh was out of the question.<sup>153</sup> The exclusion of women in the specialized Israelite priesthood helped to prevent syncretistic contamination of Israel's sanctuary services with the introduction of the divinization of sex and sexual immorality that was so deeply imbedded in Canaanite Baal/Asherah worship.

Thus, the restriction of the priesthood to males from the house of Aaron in no way reveals a denigration of women's status, and likewise in no way implies that women are barred from leadership (teaching/administrative) roles in the covenant community. In fact, on the basis of Deut 33:8-10, Jacques Doukhan points to three essential duties of the Levitical priesthood: (1) didactic and administrative leadership functions (judging, teaching); (2) prophetic functions (oracular techniques, especially with the Urim and Thummim, to determine the future or will of the Lord); and (3) cultic functions. He then goes on to show that two of the three functions of the priest, the prophetic and the (teaching/administrative) leadership, were allowed of women (witness

the OT women who functioned as prophet, teacher, and judge).<sup>154</sup> It was only the cultic function that was barred to women, probably because of the polemical concerns directed against the ancient Near Eastern priestesses' involvement in the divinization of sex, in the context of Israel's apostasy into fertility cult practice at Mt. Sinai.<sup>155</sup>

Yet in the New Testament the Gospel restores God's original plan. Not a few male priests, but once more the "priesthood of *all* believers" (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6), as it was in the beginning.

### *B. Examples of OT Women in Public Ministry*

For more complete discussion of OT women in public ministry, I refer the reader to the immediate prior chapter on "Women in Scripture" in this book by Jo Ann Davidson. Here I summarize by highlighting the leadership roles of such women as Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and a few others.

**Miriam.** Miriam's high profile and valuation is indicated by the fact that her story is utilized by the narrator as bookends for the Exodus event: She appears at the bank of the Nile as the Exodus account begins, and at the end of the story, on the bank of the Red Sea, she reappears (Exod 2:1-10; 15:20, 21)! Thus "the story of salvation of Israel delivered from Egyptian bondage begins and ends with Miriam. . . . Miriam's story brackets the salvation of the Lord! Israel's salvation from Egypt begins when Miriam saves Moses, and it ends when Miriam sings her song."<sup>156</sup> Miriam is presented as a prophet (Exod 15:20), and musician, and prominent co-leader of Israel with her brothers during the Exodus (Mic 6:4).

**Deborah.** Deborah was both prophet and judge. Such a dual position was held only by Moses and Samuel in the history of Israel and indicates the highest spiritual and judicial

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authority. It cannot be overemphasized that the *only* judge described in any detail without mentioning serious character flaws (or pointing out how their life “went sour”) was a woman!<sup>1457</sup> And “the only judge who combines all forms of leadership possible—religious, military, juridical, and poetical—is a woman!”<sup>158</sup> In both narrative and poetry, Deborah is unequivocally presented as one of the most powerful woman leaders in the Bible. She is the recognized political leader of the nation, “one of Israel’s chief executive officers.”<sup>159</sup> She is the military leader on an equal footing with the male general Barak.<sup>160</sup>

Deborah is a judge of the same stature as all the other judges in the book of Judges, one to whom men as well as women turned for legal counsel and divine instruction.<sup>161</sup> She is a prophetess, providing spiritual leadership in Israel. Contrary to a common modern claim, the role of prophet(ess) in Scripture entails leadership of men just as surely as the role of a teacher. Some seek to make a distinction between the prophet—who is only a messenger of God, and has unusual authority only because of being a prophet, with no leadership authority on his/her own to do more than deliver the prophetic message—and the teacher, who has an office of leadership authority to explain or apply the message.<sup>162</sup> But the prophetic witness throughout Scripture, including the narrative of Deborah, belies this false distinction, showing that if anything, the prophet has *more* authoritative leadership—including the authority to explain and apply the divine message—than the teacher.<sup>163</sup>

A nineteenth-century activist for woman’s suffrage provided an apt summary analogy of Deborah’s status when she noted that Deborah “appears to have been much the same as that of President of the United States with the additional functions of the judicial and religious offices of the nation. Hence this

woman was President, Supreme Judge, and Right Reverend in the theocratic Republic of Israel.”<sup>164</sup>

No indication exists in the Judges text that such female leadership of men as well as women in the covenant community was looked upon as opposed to the divine will for women. “Deborah performs in this authoritative capacity normally and in all its complexity.”<sup>165</sup> There is intertextual evidence that Deborah as “judge” was in fact also an “elder” of Israel.<sup>166</sup> The leadership roles of women like Deborah in the covenant community, clearly accepted by society and given the blessing of God, reveal that such are not opposed to biblical patriarchy nor the divine will.

### **Women preachers during the time of David.**

Psalm 68:11—a verse inexplicably ignored in major treatments of women in the OT—embraces a most powerful affirmation of women as proclaimers of the word of the Lord: “The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those who proclaimed it”! The thrust of this verse is largely overlooked perhaps because the feminine gender of “company” is obscured in most modern translations. However, the NASB catches the import of the Hebrew: “The Lord gives the command; the women who proclaim the *good* tidings are a great host”! Here is a portrait of women preacher-evangelists—a great host of them! And there is no hint of them being in their “proper subordinate position” under the leadership of men.

**Wise women.** Women of wisdom recorded by the biblical narrator during the early period of the monarchy include samples from various parts of the land and beyond. The woman of Tekoah in the south (2 Sam 14:2–20), is specifically referred to by the narrator (v. 2) as a “wise woman” (*ishah kakmah*), and in her speech to David displays a perceptive understanding of the nature of justice and mercy and a grasp of exquisite literary

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techniques.<sup>167</sup> Note also that she speaks with a voice of authority, and men listen!<sup>168</sup> The wise woman of Abel in the far north of Israel (2 Sam 20:14–22) likewise speaks with an authoritative voice, utilizing poetic speech (proverb), and men listen and obey!<sup>169</sup> Her attributes include “sagacity, faithfulness, a commanding presence, and readily acknowledged influence with peers.”<sup>170</sup>

**Huldah.** Narratives from the time of the monarchy also spotlight one woman of special divine calling, Huldah the prophetess (2 Kgs 22:14–20). Against those who argue that God never calls women to an office which involves the authoritative teaching of men, note that when King Josiah commanded the priest and scribe to “Go, inquire of the Lord” (v. 13) regarding the discovery of the Book of the Law, they went to Huldah the female prophet for divine counsel, when the male prophets such as Jeremiah could have been consulted. A woman was chosen to authenticate that the scroll found in the temple was authoritative Scripture! According to 2 Kgs 22:14, Huldah lived in Jerusalem in the *mišneh*, which most versions translate as the “Second Quarter,” but the NJPS (Jewish translation) transliterates as “Mishneh” and the KJV translates as “college.” This latter translation may actually represent the best one, inasmuch as some scholars have suggested that this term has reference to an academy perhaps even headed up by Huldah. This was apparently the view of early Judaism, who held Huldah in such high regard that the gates at the southern entrance of the Temple were named after her.<sup>171</sup>

Despite the few examples of notable women (mostly) in private life during the monarchy, the institution of the monarchy, especially after its bureaucratization during the reign of Solomon, spelled the historical demise of any prominent place for (non-royal) women in public life.

**Esther.** The story of Esther indicates the

estimate of human worth God places upon woman, and the qualities of leadership demonstrated by a woman.<sup>172</sup> Not only is Esther a model character; she is also a woman of influence and leadership. Starting out as a docile figure,

her personality grows in the course of the biblical story, as she moves from obeying to commanding. It is she who commands the fast, develops a plan and implements it. Ultimately, she institutes the festival of Purim. Esther takes charge.<sup>173</sup>

Esther’s influence as a woman is also revealed by an emphasis upon her wisdom: the narrator makes use of intricate intertextual linkages between Esther and the Joseph narrative to present Esther as a wisdom heroine.<sup>174</sup> And finally, according to the epilogue of the book (9:16–32, esp. v. 32), Esther is “the one with the authority to codify and authenticate for later generations the celebratory practices begun by the Jewish populace at large.”<sup>175</sup>

**Women leaders in the time of Ezra-Nehemiah.** Tamara Eskenazi presents important evidence (from the Elephantine papyri and Ezra-Nehemiah) that after the Babylonian exile with the dissolution of the monarchy there was a trend back toward gender parity and women in leadership on the part of the postexilic Jews.<sup>176</sup> Eskenazi shows how women in the fifth-century B.C.E. Jewish community in Elephantine were able to divorce their husbands, buy and sell, inherit property even when there are sons, and even rise from slavery to an official temple role. Ezra-Nehemiah provides hints of a trend in this direction of gender parity and women of prominence in the contemporaneous community of Jerusalem: the probable mention of a female scribe (Ezra 2:55; Neh 7:57), a clan which appropriated the mother’s and not the father’s family name (Ezra 2:61;

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Neh 7:63), female as well as male singers (Ezra 2:65; Neh 7:67), descendants of a possible famed princess Shelomith (Ezra 8:10; 1 Chr 3:19); women as well as men who repaired the walls of the city (Neh 3:12), and a woman prophetess Noadiah (Neh 6:14).

**Summary.** In summary of this subsection, we may conclude that the pattern of Gen 1-3 is continued in the remainder of the OT: the husband servant-leadership model in the home is not broadened in order to bar women from positions of servant leadership in the covenant community. Despite a largely patriarchal society in OT times, and even despite the rise of the male hierarchical structures of the monarchy, one finds numerous examples of women in public ministry, including positions involving leadership in the covenant community.

During OT times, there were eight major different kinds or positions of leadership according to God's ideal: (1) priests; (2) prophets; (3) elders;<sup>177</sup> (4) judges; (5) military leaders; (6) sages; (7) musicians/worship leaders; and (8) preachers/proclaimers of the Word. (I am omitting the position of monarchy/kingship, inasmuch as this was not God's original plan; He warned of the dire results of choosing a king, Deut 17:14-20; 1 Sam 8, 9.) Note that all eight of these positions of leadership were open to, and filled by, women, during some period of OT history! Women were (1) priests (Eve, and all Israelite women according to God's original plan in Exod 19), (2) prophets (Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Noadiah), (3) elders (Deborah, and possibly some of the seventy elders), (4) judges (Deborah), (5) military leader (Deborah), (6) sages (the wise woman of Tekoah and of Abel, and Abigail), (7) musicians (Miriam and the musicians in the time of Ezra-Nehemiah), and (8) preachers (the great host of preachers in Ps 68:11). The only position of leadership not open to

women was that of monarch, an office which was not according to God's original will for Israel and which He warned would bring about an oppressive/hierarchical style of leadership. But note that in settings where a woman could be monarch, the wise foreign Queen of Sheba and the Jewish Queen Esther of Persia modeled sterling servant leadership.

There is no separation of the prophet, fulfilling a "non-headship" role, as opposed to or different from other positions of leadership where "headship" is apparent, as opponents of women's ordination often claim. All of the eight major positions of leadership in the OT approved by God were characterized by an inverse-hierarchical servant leadership style, and functioned (in God's original purpose) on the basis of Spirit-gifting. As women were called and gifted by the Spirit for these positions of leadership, they were recognized and accepted by the covenant community. At the same time the remedial provisions of patriarchy and male-dominated positions of leadership, and the hierarchical structures of the monarchy, prevented women from entering all the positions for which they might have been qualified, called, and Spirit-gifted. Thus the records of OT history indicate only a partial and imperfect return to God's original ideal for women in leadership.

### VII. Male-Female Relationships in the Eschatological Future

The OT prophets announce that in the eschatological Day of the Lord, in connection with the coming of the Messiah, there will be radical changes in the status quo. The patriarchal society, and other remedial provisions of OT times, will give way to a new social order which returns to the divine ideal for male-female relationships as in Eden before the Fall. Several startling predictions jolt us in this direction.

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### A. *Jeremiah 31:22*

Jeremiah makes an enigmatic but incredible statement about the eschatological Day of the Lord: "For the Lord has created a new thing in the earth—a woman shall encompass a man"! (Jer 31:22) The last clause literally reads: "female [*neqebah*] surrounds [Poel impf. of *sabab*] (strong) man/warrior [*geber*]." The noun *neqebah* "female," which is the generic term for all females used in Gen 1:27, is here "an inclusive and concluding referent" which "encompasses poetically all the specific female images of the poem . . . and it is other than all these images, for it is Yahweh's creation of a new thing in the land."<sup>178</sup> Kathleen M. O'Connor summarizes the possible interpretations and the profound implications:

Perhaps it refers to future sexual relationships in which women will be active agents in the procreation of a restored people. Perhaps it speaks of a society at peace so that women will be capable of protecting warriors. Or perhaps it anticipates role reversals of a different sort. What is clear is that the surprising new role of women symbolizes a changed order of relationships in a reconstituted and joyous society.<sup>179</sup>

Does this passage, by its terminological allusions to the creation narrative in Gen 1 (e.g., the use of key terms *neqebah* "female," *bara'* "create," and *erets* "earth," Gen 1:1, 27), perhaps envision the reversal of the "curse" of Gen 3:16 regarding the husband's "rule" over his wife, and announce the full return to the pre-Fall Edenic model in which there are no hierarchical relationships, and in which the female again takes a fully egalitarian position involving a reciprocal "encircling" the male with active protection and care, both in the home and in the covenant community (church)?<sup>180</sup>

Does the passage envision the reversal of

other remedial gender structures of society, put into place by God as less-than-ideal provisions for a fallen humanity, such as patriarchy, and male-dominated positions of leadership, and a return to full reciprocity of public ministry, as in Eden when both Adam and Eve were officiating priests in the Garden Sanctuary?

### B. *Isaiah 61:6 and 66:18-21*

Isaiah 61 is a powerful portrait of the coming Messiah, announcing His salvific mission. The first four verses were chosen by Jesus to announce His public ministry (Luke 4:16-22). In verse 6, Isaiah announces to the people of Zion (v. 3) that in the Messianic Kingdom, "you shall be named the Priests of the Lord." Here is the unmistakable and incredible announcement of "the hitherto unrealized ideal of Exodus 19:6."<sup>181</sup> God's plan for the eschatological future included not just a few male priests, but all Israel, male and female, as "priests of the Lord."

But there is more. In the closing chapter of his book, Isaiah describes the eschatological gathering of all nations (Isa 66:18) at the time when God makes "the new heavens and the new earth" (v. 22). God's glory will be revealed among the Gentiles (v. 19), and Gentiles will come to Jerusalem, to God's holy mountain (v. 20). Then comes the "shocker." God announces: "And I will also take some of them [Gentiles] for priests and Levites." No longer will the priesthood be limited to a single family of a single tribe of Israel. The priesthood will include Gentiles. And there is no indication that all of these Gentiles will be male. There is an inclusiveness that extends the priesthood far beyond the sons of Aaron, and far beyond all the people of Israel as "priests of the Lord" (Isa 61:6) Both Isa 61:6 and 66:18-21 "are anticipatory of the 'priesthood of all believers' in the New Testament."<sup>182</sup>



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The NT announces the fulfillment of these prophecies, in reestablishing the "priesthood of all believers," in which all the people of God, male and female, are considered "priests to our God" (Rev 5:10; cf. 1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 20:6).

### *C. Joel 2:28, 29 (Hebrew Bible, 3:1, 2)*

In the context of the eschatological Day of the Lord (Joel 2:11-27), God gives an amazing promise regarding His repentant people:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit (Joel 2:28, 29 ESV [HB 3:1, 2]).

This prophecy harks back to the incident of the Spirit resting upon the seventy elders of Israel, when they all prophesied as a sign of their having received the gift of the Spirit (Num 11:24-30). At that time, two of the seventy elders were not personally present but also received the gift of the Spirit. When Joshua, jealous for Moses' reputation, expressed his dismay at this development, Moses replied: "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit on them!" (v. 29). It seems that Joel envisioned the future outpouring of the Spirit as the fulfillment of Moses' prayer.<sup>83</sup>

Joel was not predicting that all Israel in the future would necessarily have the full-time role of a prophet, any more than the seventy elders at the time of Moses became full-time prophets. They received an initial signal evidence of their spiritual gift of leadership when "the Spirit [*ha-ruakh*] rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so

again" (Num 11:25). The same was true when at Pentecost Peter announced the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: all those in the upper room had the Spirit rest on them, and an initial signal evidence of the Spirit's outpouring was given: "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). The fact that Joel particularly has in mind the Spirit-gifting of the OT elders (Num 11), may indicate the special fulfillment application of this prophecy to the Spirit-gifting of the elders in NT times.

Likewise, the reference to sons/daughters prophesying, young men seeing visions, and old men dreaming dreams, does not limit those gifts only to the segment of society to which they are attributed in the poetic passage. "The meaning of this rhetorical individualizing, is simply that their sons, daughters, old persons, and youths, would receive the Spirit of God with all its gifts."<sup>184</sup>

The primary emphasis in this passage is upon the universal inclusiveness and democratizing of the gift of the Spirit: no one will be excluded on the basis of gender, age, or social status.

The major characteristic of the outpouring of the Spirit is its universality. All the people of God receive the Spirit. The text specifically erases the major social distinctions of the ancient world: gender, age, and economic status. In an era in which men (not women), the old (not the young), and the landowners (not slaves) ruled society, Joel explicitly rejected all such distinctions as criteria for receiving the Holy Spirit. For Paul the fulfillment of this text is that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, and neither slave nor free (Gal 3:28).<sup>185</sup>

In Joel 2:30 (HB 3:2), as in the previous verse, special emphasis is placed upon women as well as men: "It is perhaps noteworthy that Joel, in

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extending the promise of the Spirit to slaves, again asserts that both males and females will receive the gift. It is as though he wanted to insure that there be no possibility that a segment of society has been excluded."<sup>186</sup>

The reference to "all flesh" (*kol basar*) in v. 28 (HB 3:1) refers primarily to the covenant nation (cf. the reference to "your sons and your daughters. . . , your old men . . . your young men"), meaning that within the nation, limits of gender, age, and status are abolished. But note that the reference to "male and female servants" (v. 29 [HB 3:2]) does not contain the possessive pronoun "your" and may well have included non-Jews. In fact, in this entire passage "we must not restrict the expression 'all flesh' to the members of the covenant nation, as most of the commentators have done . . . since it cannot be proved that the specification in vv. 2 and 3 [Eng. 2:28] is intended to exhaust the idea of 'all flesh.'"<sup>179</sup> The climax of this passage, Joel 2:32 (HB 3:5), clearly includes believers from all nations within its purview, as recognized by the apostle Paul (Rom 10:13).

The radical character of this prophecy is highlighted by Raymond Dillard:

It is important that the modern reader not miss the radical character of what Joel announces. In the world of ancient Israel, the free, older Jewish male stood at the top of the social structure: most of Israel's prophets had belonged to this group. Joel envisages a sociological overhaul: the distinctions between old and young ("your old men . . . your young men"), slave and free ("slaves and slave girls"), and male and female ("your sons and daughters," "slaves [masc.] and slave girls") are swept aside. This statement from Joel must be contrasted with the ancient daybreak prayer of the Jewish male: "I thank you God that I was not born a Gentile, a slave, or a woman."<sup>188</sup>

Hans Wolff speaks of this prophesied outpouring of the Spirit as introducing "an element of social revolution." He refers specifically to the Spirit gifting of male and female slaves. Not a single case appears in the OT where a slave receives the gift of prophecy. But

In the coming age they shall be incorporated fully into the community of the free, by being deigned worthy of the highest distinction along with all the rest. . . . Yahweh by his power wants to establish life in full community among those who are rootless and feeble. . . . Before the wealth of such an outpouring, all distinctions of sex and age recede completely, indeed even the contrasts of social position. Such is the future towards which Israel moves."<sup>189</sup>

The portrait is one of inverted hierarchy. "The new people of God no longer recognize privileged individuals."<sup>190</sup> The Messianic Age will introduce the quality of servant leadership that God had intended from the beginning, and the Messiah himself will rule as the Servant/Slave of the Lord (Isa 42-53)! All His followers will experience that inverted hierarchy, where power and privilege and position give way to servanthood. Such is the experience that Jesus and the NT apostles and prophets announced was to be fulfilled in the NT covenant community!

### Conclusions

The following major conclusions have emerged from our look at the OT materials:

1. Genesis 1-3 is foundational for understanding God's original and ideal plan for man-woman relationships.
2. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, equal "in all things," including constitution, relationship, and function, without hierarchical

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- gender role distinctions, but rather displaying mutual submission to one another. Male headship was not part of the Creation order.
3. Adam and Eve's relationship before the Fall modeled the mutual submission of the Godhead in Their intra-divine deliberation among Equals to create humans.
  4. The nature of human dominion/authority over the animals before the Fall was one of "inverted hierarchy," or servant leadership, modeling the Godhead's submission in entrusting His authority over the earth to humans, and in giving humans freedom of choice.
  5. The hierarchical relationship with asymmetrical submission on the part of Eve to Adam came only *after the Fall*. (This is in direct contradiction to the hierarchicalist interpretation of 1 Tim 2:12, which views Gen 3:16 as reaffirming the pre-Fall hierarchical headship of Gen 1 and 2.)
  6. This hierarchical relationship depicted in Gen 3:16 was a temporary remedial/redemptive measure, provided by God to Adam and Eve and succeeding generations so that marital union could be maintained and harmony preserved.
  7. The hierarchical remedial arrangement of Gen 3:16 was limited to the marriage (husband-wife) relation, and not extended to general men-women relationships in the church.
  8. The subjection of the wife to her husband was part of the divine judgment/curse; and the "plan of redemption" gives the race an opportunity and encouragement to reverse the "curse" and return to the original egalitarian plan for marriage whenever possible.
  9. Throughout the OT the Gen 3:16 pattern for husband-wife relations, with the husband as servant leader in the home, is not rejected, but in practice among God's people there is a trend (with many bumps along the way) toward gender parity in the marriage as in Eden before the Fall, as set forth in Gen 2:24.
  10. The Song of Songs is the pivotal OT inspired commentary on Gen 1 and 2. This book highlights the divine call to return as far as possible to the original plan for egalitarian marriage, as in Eden, showing that such egalitarian relationship can be truly experienced after the Fall, through the divine empowering from "the Flame of Yahweh."
  11. Adam and Eve were assigned by God the role of priesthood both before and after the Fall, without any hint of hierarchy of one over the other, thus implying that servant leadership is equally available to both men and women in the church.
  12. The OT witness regarding male-female relations in the covenant community indicates that despite the patriarchal culture and divine condescension to the hardness of human hearts, the way back to the Edenic ideal for equality in gender relations was upheld in that all the various kinds or positions of leadership according to God's ideal were open to, and filled by, women: (1) priest, (2) prophet, (3) elder, (4) judge, (5) military leader, (6) sage, (7) musician/worship leader, and (8) preacher/proclaimer of the Word. Only the position of monarch was not open to women in Israel, but this was the one position not part of God's original plan, and concerning which He warned would bring about an

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oppressive, hierarchical style of leadership. Outside of Israel, however, women such as the Queen of Sheba and Esther ably filled the royal role.

13. The “return to Eden” movement in Scripture regarding gender relations is parallel to many other remedial provisions given by God for the hardness of human hearts in OT times, such as laws concerning clean and unclean foods, divorce, and slavery. The divine design of vegetarianism, permanence in marriage, and racial equality, given at the original Creation, is the ultimate norm, with subsequent laws/practices prescribed or affirmed or tolerated by God as part of His redemptive program leading humanity back toward the Edenic paradigm. This “back to the beginning” principle, affirmed by Jesus Himself (Matt 19:8), does not allow culture to drive the church to unbiblical positions, but simply puts back into place what was God’s will from the beginning. This is in radical contrast to homosexual practice, which was already rejected as part of the divine plan in Eden (Gen 2:24), and was condemned univocally throughout the entire OT and NT witness, with no “back to the beginning” principle in operation.
14. The OT points forward to the eschatological future, when in the context of the coming of the Messiah, there will be radical changes in the status quo. The patriarchal society, and other remedial provisions of OT times, will give way to a new social order which returns to the divine ideal for male-female relationships as in Eden before the Fall. The “curse” of Gen 3:16 will be totally reversed; all will become priests, including women and Gentiles; the Spirit will

gift “all flesh,” and limits of gender, age, and status will be abolished. All God’s followers will experience the inverted hierarchy where power and privilege and position give way to servanthood.

The NT announces and describes the initial realization of this inspired OT vision of social revolution “back to the beginning” with the coming of Jesus and during the time of the NT church. Will the Seventh-day Adventist Church in these last days allow God to complete this upside-down revolution in our midst by recognizing and affirming, yes, ordaining, all those—including women—gifted by the Spirit for positions of leadership?

### Endnotes:

1. John Rankin, “Power and Gender at the Divinity School,” in *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians*, ed. Kelly Monroe (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 203.
2. Phyllis A. Bird, “Bone of My Bone and Flesh of My Flesh,” *ThTo* 50 (1994): 525, 527.
3. Deborah F. Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible* (London: Routledge, 2002), 29.
4. Represented in Christian evangelicalism esp. by the organization Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE), founded in 1987. A comprehensive presentation of this position is given by Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, eds., *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004); see also dozens of individually authored books reviewed in chronological order in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 58–75. Seventh-day Adventist publications supporting this view include, e.g., Patricia A. Habada and Rebecca F. Brillhart, eds., *The Welcome Table: Setting a Place for Ordained Women* (Langley Park, MD: TEAM Press, 1995); and Nancy Vyhmeister, ed., *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998); Martin Hanna and Cindy Tutsch, eds., *Questions and Answers About Women’s Ordination* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2014).

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5. Represented in Christian evangelicalism by the organization Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW), also founded in 1987. Its rationale, goals, and affirmations are found in the *Danvers Statement*, drawn up by some twenty-four Council members (including, e.g., James Borland, W. Robert Gundry, Wayne Grudem, Mary Kassian, George W. Knight, III, Raymond C. Ortlund, and John Piper); this statement was finalized in Danvers, MA, in December 1987, made public in November 1988, and published in *Christianity Today* (January 13, 1989). A comprehensive presentation of this position is given by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991); Wayne Grudem, ed., *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002); Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than One Hundred Disputed Questions* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004); and Robert L. Saucy and Judith K. TenElshof, eds., *Women and Men in Ministry: A Complementary Perspective* (Chicago: Moody, 2001). Seventh-day Adventist publications supporting this view include, e.g., C. Raymond Holmes, *The Tip of an Iceberg: Biblical Authority, Biblical Interpretation, and the Ordination of Women in Ministry* (Wakefield, MI: Adventists Affirm and Pointer, 1994); and Mercedes H. Dyer, ed., *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2000). In the discussion that follows I intentionally focus upon evangelicals who hold these positions and generally avoid citing Adventist authors. In doing so, I wish to emphasize that I am concerned about issues, not individuals. I do not wish to appear as attacking my brothers and sisters in the SDA Church with whose views I disagree.
6. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 57.
7. See Richard M. Davidson, "The Nature of the Human Being from the Beginning: Genesis 1-11," in the forthcoming *Biblical Anthropology* volume (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute).
8. For a recognition that *tselem* emphasizes more something concrete and *demut* something abstract, see, e.g., Porteous, "Image of God," 684, 685; von Rad, *Genesis*, 57, 58; and W. Randall Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism*, CHANE 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 117-176.
9. Helmut Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 7.
10. Gerhard Hasel, "The Meaning of 'Let Us' in Gen 1:26," *AUSS* 13 (1975): 58-66; the quotation is from 64.
11. Jiří Moskala, "Toward Trinitarian Thinking in the Hebrew Scriptures," *JATS* 21 (2010): 258; see his critique of the various other views, 249-259.
12. Hasel, "The Meaning of 'Let Us,'" 65.
13. Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *The Feminist Bogeywoman: Questions and Answers about Evangelical Feminism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 27.
14. Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 97, 98.
15. See *DCH* 1:123-129, which defines 'adam' as "human being, humanity, people, individual person, humans," but avoids the term "man" except for reference to the first human, Adam. Cf. the discussion and bibliography in Victor P. Hamilton, "'adam,'" *NIDOTTE* 1:262-266.
16. See esp. Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 145-155, for numerous examples throughout church history illustrating this dominant "traditional" view since shortly after NT times.
17. This view, making a clear distinction between Gen 1 and 2, was popular among "first wave" feminists of the late nineteenth century. It is also a common view among contemporary liberal feminists, who regard Gen. 1 as egalitarian and Gen 2 as hierarchical. Many conservative hierarchicalists/subordinationists also emphasize the difference between what they term "ontological" equality in Gen. 1 and "functional" hierarchy in Gen. 2. See, e.g., Aubrey Malphurs, *Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: Understanding Masculinity and Femininity from God's Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1996), 21-62.
18. Carl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch: Three Volumes in One*, trans. James Martin, vol. 1 of *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* (repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 3:89.

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19. For discussion of this construction, see esp. James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 9, 10; cf. Phyllis Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," *JAAR* 41 (1973): 36.
20. Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 9.
21. Trevor Dennis, *Sarah Laughed: Women's Voices in the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994), 13. Genesis 2:7 and 2:21b-22 contain sixteen Hebrew words describing the creation of man and woman, respectively.
22. This is recognized already by John L. McKenzie, "The Literary Characteristics of Genesis 2-3," *TS* 15 (1954): 559: "the creation of woman is the climax toward which the whole preceding narrative tends. . . . The narrative treats woman as an equal and a partner of man. This feature does not appear in any ancient Near Eastern story."
23. See Richard M. Davidson, "Corporate Solidarity in the Old Testament" (unpublished paper, revised December 2004), available upon request from davidson@andrews.edu.
24. This is the phrase coined by Sakae Kubo, *Theology and Ethics of Sex* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 19.
25. Cf. Joy Elasky Fleming, *Man and Woman in Biblical Unity: Theology from Genesis 2-3* (Old Tappan, NJ: Christians for Biblical Equality, 1993), 6: "Clearly the man needed to know the rules of the game during the interval before the woman's arrival. . . . This need not imply any superiority on his part; only that he needed to hear the command as soon as he was present in Eden."
26. Exodus 18:4; Deut 33:7, 26, 29; Ps 20:3 [Eng. v. 2]; 33:20; 70:6 [Eng. v. 5]; 89:20 [Eng. v. 19]; 115:9, 10, 11; 121:1, 2; 124:8; 146:5; Hos 13:9.
27. Isaiah 30:5; Ezek 12:14; Dan 11:34.
28. Mary Corona, "Woman in Creation Story," *Jeev* 21 (1991): 99.
29. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 118.
30. BDB, 617.
31. Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961-1964), 1:128.
32. Cf. Judy L. Brown, *Women Ministers According to Scripture* (Minneapolis, MN: Christians for Biblical Equality, 1996), 19: "If Adam is better than Eve by virtue of supplying a bone, then the ground is better than Adam by virtue of supplying the dust. The dust and bone were simply raw materials in the hands of the true source of life, the one from whom both Adam and Eve were given their existence."
33. Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, OBT (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 101.
34. Samuel Terrien, "Toward a Biblical Theology of Womanhood," in *Male and Female: Christian Approaches to Sexuality*, ed. Ruth T. Barnhouse and Urban T. Holmes, III (New York: Seabury, 1976), 18; cf. idem, *Till the Heart Sings: A Biblical Theology of Manhood and Womanhood* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 12: "the use of the verb 'to build' for the woman implies an intellectual and aesthetic appreciation of her body, the equilibrium of her forms, and the volumes and proportions of her figure."
35. Paul's argument that "man is not from woman, but woman from man" (1 Cor 11:8) does not contradict the interpretation set forth here. See the study by Teresa Reeve, in chap. 9, following.
36. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1974), 230.
37. Raymond F. Collins, "The Bible and Sexuality," *BTB* 7 (1977): 153. It may be that the Sumerian language retains the memory of the close relationship between "rib" and "life," for the same Sumerian sign *ti* signifies both "life" and "rib."
38. Trible, "Depatriarchalizing," 37. Cf. Mary Phil Korsak, "Hebrew Word Patterns Retained in English in Genesis 2:4b-3:24," *ACEBT* 15 (1996): 16: "'Side' expresses man/woman equality."
39. Walter Brueggemann, "Of the Same Flesh and Bone (Gen. 2:23a)," *CBQ* 32.4 (1970): 540. For biblical examples of this usage, see esp. Gen 29:14; Judg 9:2-3; 2 Sam 5:1; 19:13; cf. Job 2:5; and Ps 102:5.
40. See, e.g., Thomas R. Schreiner, "Women in Ministry," in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 206-209.
41. Biblical examples usually cited in support of the oriental view of naming as the demonstration of one's exercise of a sovereign right over a person, include such passages as 2 Kgs 23:34; 24:17; Dan 1:7. Cf. R. Abba, "Name," *IDB* 3:502. This thesis has been challenged in a penetrating article by George W. Ramsey, "Is Name-Giving an Act of Domination in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere?"

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- CBQ 50.1 (1988): 24–35. Ramsey examines the major texts where it is claimed that bestowal of a name indicates control or authority over the person named and shows that “instead of thinking of name-giving as a *determiner* of an entity’s essence, the Hebrews regarded naming as commonly *determined* by circumstances. The naming *results from* events which have occurred” (34, emphasis his). For example, the non-Israelite kings’ change of individuals’ names cannot be normative for Hebrew thinking (and these do not have the typical naming formula/terminology). Very significant is the fact that Hagar names God (Gen 16:13) using the typical naming formula! Certainly this does not imply her control/dominion over divinity! Again, in Gen 26:17–21, Isaac names the wells even as he relinquishes authority over them. In Gen 2, when the man names the animals, here again “it is more appropriate to understand this as an act of his *discerning* something about these creatures—an essence which had already been established by God” (Ibid., 34, 35). For a similar assessment of the evidence, see also Rick R. Marrs, “In the Beginning: Male and Female (Gen. 1–3),” in *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Carroll D. Osburn, 2 vols. (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), 2:17, 18.
42. Ramsey, “Name-Giving,” 34 (emphasis his). For further discussion, see Ibid., 32–34.
  43. J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis*, 2nd ed., BibSem 12 (Sheffield, UK: JSOTSup, 1991), 37.
  44. Richard S. Hess, “Equality with and without Innocence: Genesis 1–3,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 89.
  45. Ibid., 87.
  46. Paul Borgman, *Genesis: The Story We Haven’t Heard* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 26.
  47. Jacques B. Doukhan, *The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story* (Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 5; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978), 47, points to “the use of the passive (*niphal*, *pual*) which conveys the idea of an intervention from outside; hence, God, who is still the only ‘other’ (for the biblical usage of the passive as referring to God, see Lev 13:7; Luke 5:20).” For further discussion of the divine passive in the Scripture, see Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 1:247, 248, 261, 262. For other lines of evidence disaffirming man’s authoritative naming of woman in Gen. 2:23 in contrast to his authoritative naming of the animals in Gen 2:19, 20, see esp. Gerhard Hasel, “Equality from the Start: Woman in the Creation Story,” *Spectrum* 7 (1975): 23, 24.
  48. See Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Creation*, trans. J. W. Edwards et al., 4 books, vol. 3 of *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), 2:291; Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 100.
  49. See Ramsey, “Name-Giving,” 35, n. 38, who points out that in Gen 3:20 the narrator makes clear that Adam is not trying to determine Eve’s destiny (i.e., exercise authority over her), or he would have said “She will be the mother of all living.” Instead, the narrator reports again what Adam discerns already to be true: “she was [*hay-tah*] the mother of all living.”
  50. I have collected over fifty major scholarly studies which come to this conclusion. For a representative bibliography, see Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 34, 35, n. 81.
  51. For an overview, see esp. Gerhard Hasel, “The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology,” *EvQ* 46 (1974): 81–102; cf. Cassuto, *Genesis*, 1:7–177, passim; and Edward Noort, “The Creation of Man and Woman in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Traditions,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 8–10.
  52. Some may find this juxtaposition of terms, “egalitarian complementarity” to be an oxymoron. But I am unwilling to surrender the word “complementarian” to those who use it to describe male leadership and female submission roles as a Creation ordinance. What I understand as the biblical view of egalitarian husband-wife role relations is also just as “complementarian”—recognizing differences between the sexes in general and between individual marriage partners, without positing a Creation leadership/submission role relationship between man and woman. For recent support and elaboration of the terminology of “complementarity without hierarchy,” see

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- esp. Pierce and Groothuis, "Introduction," 16, 17 (and the entire book *Discovering Biblical Equality*).
53. Contra a main focus of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, represented esp. by Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*; Piper and Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*; and Saucy and TenElshof, eds., *Women and Men in Ministry*. For a critique (both from Scripture and the social sciences) of the attempt to establish fixed roles for men and women from Gen 1 and 2 and the rest of Scripture, see esp., Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, *Gender and Grace: Love, Work & Parenting in a Changing World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990); and idem, *My Brother's Keeper: What the Social Sciences Do (and Don't) Tell Us About Masculinity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002). What can be stated with certainty is that in these opening chapters of the Bible there is no gender status differentiation that gives the man the leadership authority over woman.
  54. George W. Knight, III, *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977).
  55. Giles, *Trinity and Subordinationism*, 181.
  56. Paul B. Petersen, "Trinitarian Equality and 'Eternal Subordination of the Son': A Revival of an Anti-Trinitarian Heresy?" Unpublished paper, May, 2013, 10, 11.
  57. *Ibid.*, 190, 191.
  58. Some have tried to stretch this subordination back to the time when Christ took up His role of mediating between infinity and finitude at Creation, based in part upon my study of Prov. 8:30, 31: "Proverbs 8 and the Place of Christ in the Trinity," *JATS* 17.1 (2006): 33–54. However, in that article I make clear that the mediatorial role of the pre-incarnate Christ was not one of being subordinate to the Father. This is made evident, e.g., when Christ appears to humans as the "Angel of the Lord" throughout the OT; He does not announce Himself as being sent by the Father but speaks fully on His own authority. Even though the pre-incarnate Christ seems to have taken the form (not the nature) of an angel in order to reveal the "Immanuel principle" of "God with us," that is, the immanence of the Godhead—while the one we call the Father represented the transcendence, and the Spirit represented the omnipresence, of the Godhead—
- all three Persons of the Godhead remained fully equal, none being subordinated to another.
59. The majority of biblical commentators throughout the centuries have taken this verse as referring to the institution of marriage. A recent study by Bernard F. Batto, "The Institution of Marriage in Genesis 2 and in *Atrahasis*," *CBQ* 62.4 (2000): 621–631, argues forcefully that "This debate over the question whether the author of Gen 2:18–25 envisions the institution of marriage or not can now be settled in the affirmative on the basis of comparative evidence, hitherto overlooked, from the Mesopotamian myth of *Atrahasis*" (623). Batto reviews the now-widely-recognized evidence that while there are significant differences between the Gen 2 account and the *Atrahasis* Epic, nonetheless the basic structural flow of the two accounts is parallel. He then shows how in the structurally parallel equivalent to Gen 2:18–24 in the *Atrahasis* Epic, there is reference to "regulations for humankind" specifically focusing upon the institution of marriage. Thus, Batto concludes, the narrator of Gen 2:18–24 surely intended v. 24 as the equivalent of "regulations for humankind" in *Atrahasis*, "that is, as a universal law regulating the normative behavior of the sexes within a community of marriage" (629); and as in *Atrahasis*, the Gen 2 narrator is "positing that the institution of marriage is grounded in the very design of creation itself" (631).
  60. Robert B. Lawton, "Genesis 2:24: Trite or Tragic?" *JBL* 105.1 (1986): 98. See *Ibid.*, 97, 98, for additional evidence supporting this conclusion. See also Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible*, 24: "The first couple provide the blueprint for normative citizenship in the theocracy proposed in the Bible's first story." Cf. Marrs, "In the Beginning," 22.
  61. Terrien, *Till the Heart Sings*, 14, 15, rightly points out that "in the ancient Near East and most other cultures, patriarchal lineage prevailed in such a way that the primary bond of solidarity was the duty of a man toward his ancestors in general and to his progenitors in particular. To honor one's father and mother was the most sacred obligation of social responsibility (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16). By dramatic contrast," Terrien continues, the author of Gen 2 "scandalously upsets, even shockingly reverses, this deep-rooted principle of tribal morality. Against the cultures of his environment," the Hebrew author "declares unambiguously that man's first loyalty is to his woman."



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62. See, e.g., Deut 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; Josh 22:5; 23:8; 2 Sam 20:3; 2 Kgs 18:6.
63. I express indebtedness to one of my graduate students, Kenneth Bergland, for his suggested use of the terms “symmetrical” and “asymmetrical” and “inverse hierarchy” in this context, and for his helpful insights into the mutual submission implied in such terms as “cleave” in Gen 2:24. See his unpublished paper, “Rereading Gender in Eden with the Language of Fallen Humanity,” April 28, 2013.
64. The term for “sanctuary” (Heb. *miqdash*) is used in the OT to describe the heavenly sanctuary even before the entrance of sin (Jer 17:12; Ezek 28:18), and also is used to describe the worship function of the heavenly sanctuary after the rise of sin (Ps 96:6; 150:1), while the NT word *skēnē* (“tabernacle, tent sanctuary”) describes the “tabernacle of God” after the solution of the sin problem (Rev 21:3). Likewise, the Hebrew term for “temple” (*heikal*) is employed to describe the worship function of the heavenly sanctuary (Ps 29:9), and the Greek equivalent (*naos*) describes the temple of God after the end of the sin problem (Rev 7:15). Ellen White also uses the terms “sanctuary in heaven” and “temple in heaven” equivalently (see the alternation between these two expressions to describe the same entity in PP 343, 356–7, GC 414–5, 4SP 261–262; cf. DA 166; CET 84; CC 234; CW 30; FLB 194, 202; SDABC 4:1139; LS 95). She also clearly uses the term “heavenly sanctuary” to describe the dwelling-place of God even before the rise of sin. See, for example, LLM 540: “Now Satan has the advantage in many things. He can quote those glories that he had in *the heavenly sanctuary* just as though they belonged to him, and he will quote these things. He is working upon human minds and he will bring in all the sophistries that he can bring in, and mix it in with some of his wonderful learning and agency that he had in *the heavenly courts*.” Likewise, Ellen White uses the term “sanctuary” for the place of worship for the redeemed in the new earth after the end of sin (Ms 24, 1898; 6T 368; FLB 37; AG 76) and for the place of worship of Adam and Eve in Eden before the rise of sin on earth (DA 290).
65. For a summary of some forty lines of intertextual evidence for this conclusion, see Richard M. Davidson, “Earth’s First Sanctuary: Genesis 1–3 and Parallel Creation Accounts,” *AUSS* 53.1 (2015): 65–89; cf. idem, “Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium,” *JATS* 11.1 & 2 (2000): 108–111; and idem, *Song for the Sanctuary: SDA Graduate Textbook* (Biblical Research Institute, forthcoming), chap. 6. For a representative list of other scholars who have provided evidence for this conclusion, see the following: T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008), 20–31; Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991), 68–103; G. K. Beale, “The Final Vision of the Apocalypse and its Implications for a Biblical Theology of the Temple,” in *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*, ed. T. D. Alexander and S. Gathercole (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2004), 197–199; idem, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 66–80; idem, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” *JETS* 48.1 (2005): 7–10; Eric Bolger, “The Compositional Role of the Eden Narrative in the Pentateuch” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1993); William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning* (Homebush, New South Wales: Lancer, 1985), 35–76; Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 12–13; Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (South Hampton, MA: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1989), 31–32, 54–56; Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press, 1985), 142–145; idem, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 78–99; S. Dean McBride Jr., “Divine Protocol: Genesis 1:1–2:3 as Prologue to the Pentateuch,” in *God Who Creates*, ed. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2000), 11–15; Roberto Ouro, *Old Testament Theology: The Canonical Key*, vol. 1, *Pentateuch/Torah* (Zaragoza, Spain: Lusa, 2008), 38–61; Donald W. Parry, “Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary,” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret, 1994), 126–151; Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2006), 77–108; Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature*, CBET 25 (Leuven, Belgium:

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- Peeters, 2000), 111–138; John H. Walton, “Eden, Garden of,” in T. D. Alexander and D. W. Baker, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 202–207; idem, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 178–192; Moshe Weinfeld, “Sabbath, Temple, and the Enthronement of the Lord: The Problem of the Sitz im Leben of Genesis 1.1–2.3,” in *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l’honneur de M. Henri Cazelles*, ed. A. Caquot and M. Delcor, AOAT 212 (Kevelaer, Germany: Butzon & Bercker / Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 501–512; Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 9 (1986): 19–25; repr. in “*I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood*”: *Ancient Near Eastern, Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11*, ed. Richard S. Hess and David T. Tsumara (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399–404; and Ross E. Winkle, “Creation and Tabernacle, Sabbath and Glory,” (paper presented at the Sabbath in Text, Tradition, and Theology Consultation, Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting, Boston, MA, Nov 24, 2008), 1–16.
66. See Jose M. Bertoluci, “The Son of the Morning and the Guardian Cherub in the Context of the Controversy between Good and Evil” (Th.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1985); cf. Richard M. Davidson, “Satan’s Celestial Slander,” *Perspective Digest* 1.1 (1996): 31–34; idem, “The Chiastic Literary Structure of the Book of Ezekiel,” in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, ed. David Merling (Berrien Springs, MI: The Institute of Archaeology/Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum, 1997), 71–93 (esp. 87–89); and idem, “Ezekiel 28:11–19 and the Rise of the Cosmic Conflict,” in a memorial volume (*Festschrift*), ed. Gerhard Pfandl (forthcoming).
67. Ross, in his book on worship (*Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 104), points out that “All ancient temples and sanctuaries had images of the deities that had dominion over them. Likewise the garden sanctuary of the Lord had images, but they were very different from what the pagan world later developed. . . . These images were made by God, not by people, for humans themselves were the image of God—living, breathing, thinking human beings.”
68. For further discussion of Gen 2:15 and its implications for Adam and Eve as priests in the Eden sanctuary, see esp. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 104–108; and Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 22–27; and Richard M. Davidson *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 47–48.
69. See Davidson, “Proverbs 8 and the Place of Christ in the Trinity,” 33–54.
70. Genesis 3:21 indicates that Adam and Eve were also both inaugurated as priests in the Post-Fall world. Jacques Doukhan writes: “The rare occasions where God clothes humans in the OT always concerned the dressing of priests. . . . Adam and Eve were, indeed, dressed as priests.” Jacques B. Doukhan, “Women Priests in Israel: A Case for Their Absence,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 36. The unmistakable and consistent linkage within the Hebrew Bible of this pair of terms—“to clothe” (*labash*, *hiph’il*) and “tunics/coats” (*kotnot*)—with the clothing of Israel’s priests, viewed in the larger setting of the Garden of Eden as a sanctuary, clearly points to Adam and Eve’s inauguration as priests in the post-Fall world. By highlighting God’s clothing of Adam and Eve with the skins of sacrificial animals (instead of the fine linen of the later priests), the final canonical form of the text further emphasizes the divine confirmation that Adam and Eve are to be identified as priests, for the skin of the sacrificial animals belonged exclusively to the priests in the Mosaic cultus (Lev 7:8). As Doukhan summarizes, “By bestowing on Adam and Eve the skin of the sin offering, a gift strictly reserved to priests, the Genesis story implicitly recognizes Eve as priest alongside Adam” (*ibid.*, 37). For further discussion of the biblical evidence of this conclusion, see *ibid.*, 29–43; and Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 57–58.
71. Hamilton, *Genesis*, 171.
72. Humans before the Fall were also given the role of “guarding” the Garden (presumably in light of the fact that Satan, the fallen heavenly cherub was lurking in the Garden); but after the Fall they lose this role, and it is transferred to the “guardian cherubim” at the gate of the Garden (Gen 3:24).
73. Claus Westermann, *Creation* (London: SPCK, 1974), 96. See also, Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, IBC 1 (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 49: “The scene [Gen. 3:8–24] becomes a trial.” Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 117, likewise comments on this scene: “God becomes the

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- prosecutor in a court of law." Cf. Marrs, "In the Beginning," 27, 28, who describes Gen 3:8–13 as a "trial" and "verdict" followed by a "judgment" in Gen 3:14–19; and Malphurs, *Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 99, who summarizes the scene of vv. 14–19 thus: "God as the prosecuting attorney probed the two defendants who reluctantly admitted some guilt but shifted the blame to others. Now God moves from the role of prosecutor to judge and pronounces final judgment."
74. For details of these positions and representatives holding these views, see R. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 60–64.
  75. Tribble perhaps exaggerates when she elaborates: "Theologian, ethicist, hermeneut, rabbi, she speaks with clarity and authority" (*God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 110). But her main point is on the mark.
  76. Hess, "Equality with and without Innocence," 88.
  77. The Hebrew clause in Gen 3:6 "she also gave to her husband *with her* [*immah*]" does not imply that Adam was right by her side at the tree; note the clarification for this preposition in Adam's reply to God (Gen 3:12): "The woman whom You gave to be with me [*immadi*]"—showing that it refers to their partnership, and not to their proximity of location at any one given time. This interpretation seems to be implied in the last half of 3:12: "she gave me of the tree, and I ate." If Adam had been present and listened to the whole conversation between Eve and the serpent, he would have implicated the serpent as well as the woman in his defense. Similarly, the woman's testimony in 3:13 ("The serpent deceived me") would also have applied to Adam as well (he also would have been deceived) if he had been personally present at the tree next to Eve. See also Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 56.
  78. Marrs, "In the Beginning," 32.
  79. *Ibid.*, 34, n. 90.
  80. Afolarin Ojowole, "The Seed in Genesis 3:15: An Exegetical and Intertextual Study" (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 2002), 98.
  81. Hess, "Equality with and without Innocence," 89, 90. For the gist of the arguments in this paragraph, I am particularly indebted to Hess (*Ibid.*) and Brown, *Women Ministers*, 45, 46.
  82. Borgman, *Genesis*, 27. What is lost, Borgman continues, is clarified in v. 16: "The wife, now, must submit to the ruling husband. This is part of the 'curse.'" The interpretation of this verse is explored below.
  83. Westermann, *Creation*, 96.
  84. See the discussion in Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 99.
  85. Beverly J. Stratton, *Out of Eden: Reading, Rhetoric, and Ideology in Genesis 2–3*, JSOTSup 208 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 208, has aptly observed: "the generic names 'man' and 'woman' used throughout the text suggest that the punishment in 3:16 applies to all women. The narrator tells the story as if this verse describes God's current, if not original, intent for women as a group."
  86. Recent attempts by some scholars (see view six above) to translate *mashal* as "to be like" instead of "to rule" face insurmountable lexical/grammatical/contextual obstacles. It is true that (following BDB nomenclature) the root *mashal*<sup>I</sup> in the *nipal* stem does signify "to be like, similar," but in Gen. 3:16 the root *mashal* is in the *qal*. Both *mashal*<sup>I</sup> "to use a proverb" and *mashal*<sup>III</sup> "to rule" occur in the *qal*, but the context of Gen. 3:16 seems to clearly preclude the idea of "use a proverb" (*mashal*<sup>I</sup>). That *mashal*<sup>III</sup> "to rule" is intended in this passage is confirmed by the use of the accompanying preposition *be*, the normal proposition following *mashal*<sup>III</sup> (cf. BDB, 605), and other Hebrew words of ruling, governing, restraining (*malak*, *radah*, *shala*, *aar*, etc), and never used with *mahal*<sup>I</sup> or *mashal*<sup>I</sup>. Dennis' suggested translation of "to be irresistible" is not defensible as a meaning for *mashal* (*Sarah Laughed*, 25), in light of comparative lexical evidence.
  87. Skinner, *Genesis*, 53.
  88. See, e.g., 2 Sam 23:3; Prov 17:2; Isa 40:10; 63:19; Zech 6:13. See Robert D. Culver, "*mashal* III, rule, have dominion, reign," *TWOT* 1:534: "*mashal* usually receives the translation 'to rule,' but the precise nature of the rule is as various as the real situations in which the action or state so designated occur." Specific examples follow to support this statement. Note, e.g., that the first usage of *mashal* in Scripture is in reference to the two great lights created by God (Gen 1:16)—they were to "dominate" (*Tanach*; New Jewish Version) the day and night. For further discussion of *mashal* in the positive sense here in Gen 3:16 as well as elsewhere in the OT, see Othmar Keel, "Die Stellung der Frau in der Erzählung

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- von Schöpfung und Sündenfall," *Orientierung* 39 (1975): 75.
89. See, e.g., Judg 8:23; Isa 40:10; Mic 5:1; Zech 6:13; 9:10.
  90. Hurley (*Man and Woman*, 216–219) has perceptively recognized how in each of the divine judgments in this chapter there is a blessing as well as a curse. Many from conservative Christian traditions (including SDAs) maintain that amid the curse upon the serpent appears a veiled blessing in the *Protoevangelium* (first Gospel promise) of Gen 3:15: "the warfare between Satan and the woman's seed comes to its climax in the death of Christ" (Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 217; cf. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978], 35–37, and Ojewole, "The Seed in Genesis 3:15," *passim*. Note the biblical evidence in favor of this traditional interpretation in contrast to the modern critical tendency to see here only an aetiological reference.) Likewise, in the curse of the ground and the "toil" that is the punishment of Adam, there is at the same time a blessing in that God promises the ground will continue to yield its fruit and man will still be able to eat of it. Furthermore, the term *ba'bur* employed in Gen 3:17 probably means "for the sake of" (KJV) and not "because of" (RSV) inasmuch as the meaning of "because" is already expressed by *ki* earlier in the verse. The ground is cursed "for his [Adam's] sake"—that is, the curse is for Adam's benefit. Though it did result from Adam's sin, it also is to be regarded as a discipline rendered needful by his sin, to place a check upon the indulgence of appetite and passion, to develop habits of self-control. According to the biblical text, it was a part of God's great plan for man's recovery from the ruin and degradation of sin.
  91. Cassuto, *Genesis*, 1:163.
  92. Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 63, 64.
  93. John H. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed: The Status of Women in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 155.
  94. See BDB, 1003; Victor P. Hamilton, "teshuqah," *TWOT* 2:913; David Talley, "teshuqah," *NI-DOTTE* 4:341, 342.
  95. Contra earlier (first wave) feminist arguments, represented by, e.g., Katherine C. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women* (London: Women's Correspondence Bible Class, 1912; repr., Mossville, IL: God's Word to Women Publishers, 1990), lessons 16–19 (no pages), who followed the translation of most ancient versions (LXX, Theodotian, Syriac Peshitta, Samaritan Pentateuch, Old Latin, Sahidic, Bohairic, Coptic, Ethiopic). It seems clear that these ancient versions are reading *teshubah* ("turning") instead of *teshuqah* in these passages. There is no good reason to abandon the MT for a misunderstanding of the Hebrew text on the part of the ancient versions.
  96. Busenitz ("Genesis 3:16 Reconsidered," 208–212) gives strong reasons why Song 7:11 [10, ET], and not Gen 4:7 (where the other occurrence of *teshuqah* appears), should be the prevailing passage in providing illumination for the sense of *teshuqah* in Gen 3:16. One must recognize an entirely different context between Gen 3:16 and 4:7, and acknowledge the obscurity of meaning of the latter passage. Busenitz summarizes (211): "To grant Gen 4:7 in its obscurity a determinative role in the interpretation of Gen 3:16 without permitting the clarity of Cant 7:10 [11, ET] to permeate the exegetical process is to abandon hermeneutical discernment and propriety." At the same time, contrary to the claims of those who see a negative connotation of *teshuqah* in Gen 4:7, I have argued in a recent article for an interpretation of this latter passage in which the use of *teshuqah* is positive, thus in basic harmony with its usage in Gen 3:16 (although the sexual connotation is not found in the "desire" of Gen 4:7 as in the other two passages where it refers specifically to man-woman relationships). See Richard M. Davidson, "Shame and Honor in the Beginning: A Study of Genesis 4, in *Shame and Honor: Presenting Biblical Themes in Shame and Honor Contexts* (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2014), 43–76.
  97. In parallel with the usage in the Song of Songs (which actually constitutes a commentary on the Genesis passage; see below), depicting Solomon's desire for the Shulamite, *teshuqah* no doubt includes a sexual desire. In addition, along the lines of Gen 4:7 (which is grammatically parallel with Gen 3:16), which I argue refers to Abel's "desire" for his elder (first-born) brother Cain, it may involve a sense of dependence and respect. The main point is that *teshuqah* in Gen 3:16 most probably has a positive and not negative connotation, just as in Song 7:11 (10, ET) (and probably also as in Gen 4:7, the only other occurrences of this term in the Hebrew Bible).

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98. Linda L. Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 106.
99. See, e.g., NASB and RSV/NRSV.
100. Note that the woman's "desire" is for her husband, not for children, as some would interpret this verse.
101. I find useful the terminology of "remedial hierarchy" utilized by Gilbert Bilezikian with regard to a temporary mode of local church structure for new church plants "as they attempt to establish their corporate identity under the guidance of directive leadership" (*Community 101: Reclaiming the Local Church as Community of Oneness* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997], 181). But in Gen 3:16 God is providing this "remedial hierarchy" for the home situation to facilitate harmony and unity, while all the time aiming toward the pre-Fall Edenic ideal of egalitarianism.
102. The redemptive hermeneutic model is set forth in the opening chapter of this book, by Jifí Moskala, Th.D., Ph.D., Professor of Old Testament Exegesis and Theology Dean, SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University.
103. Hasel, "Equality from the Start," 26.
104. Throughout the OT, it is apparent in the description of male-female relationships that there are equally shared roles of work done by both men and women, such as serving as shepherds, cooking (cf. Jacob, Esau, and Abraham preparing food), etc. For development of this crucial point from both Gen 1-3 and beyond and from the social sciences, see esp. Van Leeuwen, *Gender & Grace*, and idem, *My Brother's Keeper*, passim.
105. See, e.g., White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, 4 vols. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2009) 4:322; SDABC 7:475, 974; White, *Selected Messages*, 3 vols. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2006), 1:341.
106. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed*, 72. Cf. Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Yahweh the Patriarch: Ancient Images of God and Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), passim; and Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, *Woman and History* 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), passim.
107. See the discussion of these areas of concern in Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 33-42. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed*, 32-37, 143-146, shows that in each of these areas the whole family is involved, though the father as functioning leader of the family had formal responsibility.
108. See Ellen White's evaluation of patriarchy: "In early times the father was the ruler and priest of his own family, and he exercised authority over his children, even after they had families of their own. His descendants were taught to look up to him as their head, in both religious and secular matters. This patriarchal system of government Abraham endeavored to perpetuate, as it tended to preserve the knowledge of God. . . . It was a wise arrangement, which God Himself had made, to cut off His people, so far as possible, from connection with the heathen, making them a people dwelling alone, and not reckoned among the nations." (PP 141, 142).
109. As a verb: Gen 20:3; Deut 21:13; 22:22; 24:1; Isa 54:1, 5; 62:4, 5; Jer 3:15; 31:32. As a noun, Gen 20:3; Exod 21:3, 22; Deut 22:24; 24:4; 2 Sam 11:26; Joel 1:8; Prov 12:4; 31:11, 23, 28; Esth 1:17, 20.
110. See esp. the discussion in Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed*, 78, 145.
111. For the full range of evidence, see especially Jo Ann Davidson, "Genesis Matriarchs Engage Feminism," *AUSS* 40.2 (2002): 169-178; and R. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 226-235.
112. See chapter 7.
113. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1961), 40.
114. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed*, 111, 112.
115. On gender inclusiveness in legal terminology in the Torah, see esp., Frank Crüsemann, *The Torah: Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law*, trans. Allan W. Mahnke (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 249-252. Numbers 6:2-21 and Deut 29:18-20 make this clear by using both masculine and feminine grammatical forms in the introductory verse and then only masculine in the verses that follow, while definitely implying both genders throughout.
116. Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 39.
117. *Ibid.*, 39. Klawans summarizes the evidence with regard to ritual impurity (*Ibid.*, 40): "In the final analysis, one cannot build a very strong case in defense of the argument that the biblical ritual impurity laws were legislated for the purpose of subjugating women."

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118. For discussion of Pentateuchal legislation that purportedly treats women/wives as inferior, see R. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 244–253.
119. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed*, 76. The parallel in Deut. 5:21 makes the distinction unmistakable by placing the wife in a separate clause.
120. De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 26, 27.
121. See Carol Meyers, “The Roots of Restriction: Women in Early Israel,” *BA* 41.3 (1978): 98.
122. De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 26, 27. De Vaux argues that the father was entitled to the interest accruing to the “wedding present” but the capital itself reverted back to the daughter when her father died, or earlier if her husband died. Hence Leah and Rachel refer to it as “our money” (Gen 31:15).
123. See, e.g., the critique of vicarious punishment in ancient Babylonia by Elisabeth Meier Tetlow, *Women, Crime, and Punishment in Ancient Law and Society*, vol. 1., *The Ancient Near East* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 71: “Vicarious punishment was tolerated in a society that regarded men as full persons and citizens and relegated wives and daughters to the category of the property of men.”
124. MAL §59 (COS 2.132:360; cf. *ANET*, 185).
125. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed*, 100.
126. Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 44, 45.
127. For discussion of these passages (in light of ancient Near Eastern backgrounds), see esp. Gerlinde Baumann, “A Figure with Many Facets: The Literary and Theological Functions of Personified Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9,” in *Wisdom and Psalms*. ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine, FCB 2/2 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 44–78; Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*. Bible and Literature Series 11 (Sheffield, UK: Almond Press, 1985).
128. For theological studies of this passage, see the bibliography in R. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 283–284, n. 297.
129. See McCreech, “Proverbs 31:10–31,” 31–36; M. H. Lichtenstein, “Chiasm and Symmetry in Proverbs 31,” *CBQ* 44.2 (1982): 202–211; Bruce K. Waltke, “The Role of the ‘Valiant Wife’ in the Marketplace,” *Crux* 35.3 (1999): 25–29.
130. Wolters, among many others, argues convincingly that the term *‘eshet khayil* in this context should probably be understood as the female counterpart of the *‘eshet gibbor* (the title given to “mighty men of valor” in the time of David), and should be translated as “mighty woman of valor” (*The Song of the Valiant Woman*, 9).
131. Hawkins, “Proverbs 31:10–31,” 19.
132. For evidence of Solomonic authorship, the unity of the Song of Songs, Solomon’s 20-plus years of monogamous marriage, and his writing of the Song during this period, see R. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 556–569.
133. See Nicholas Ayo, *Sacred Marriage: The Wisdom of the Song of Songs*, illus. Meinrad Craighead (New York: Continuum, 1997), 37–53; Francis Landy, “The Song of Songs and the Garden of Eden,” *JBL* 98.4 (1979): 513–528; idem, *Paradoxes of Paradise: Identity and Difference in the Song of Songs* (Sheffield, UK: Almond Press, 1983), esp. ch. 4, “Two Versions of Paradise” (183–265); William E. Phipps, *Genesis and Gender: Biblical Myths of Sexuality and Their Cultural Impact* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 90–95; Tribble, “Depatriarchalizing,” 42–47; and idem, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 145–165.
134. *Ibid.*, 144.
135. Idem, “Depatriarchalizing,” 47.
136. *Ibid.*, 48.
137. Alicia Ostriker, “A Holy of Holies: The Song of Songs as Countertext,” in *The Song of Songs*, FCB 2/6 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 49, 50.
138. Swidler, *Affirmations of Women*, 92.
139. Othmar Keel, *The Song of Songs: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), 32.
140. Phipps, *Genesis and Gender*, 94 (see *Ibid.*, 94, 95, for a rich discussion of the equality/mutuality theme in the Song). See also David M. Carr, *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 134: “This bond, however is not one of the male claiming power over his wife’s reproduction. Instead, this is a mutual passion between a man and a woman who are as equal as they can be in their social context.”
141. André LaCocque, *Romance She Wrote: A Hermeneutical Essay on Song of Songs* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 37.
142. Ariel Bloch and Chana Bloch, *The Song of Songs: A New Translation with an Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Random House, 1995), 207.

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143. Daniel Grossberg, "Two Kinds of Sexual Relations in the Hebrew Bible," *HS* 34 (1994): 12, 15. See Nicholas Ayo, *Sacred Marriage: The Wisdom of the Song of Songs*, illus. Meinrad Craighead (New York: Continuum, 1997), 40, for a similar assessment.
144. Dorsey, *Literary Structure of the OT*, 213 (see his discussion in 200–213).
145. Bloch and Bloch (*Song of Songs*, 207) write: "Song 7:11 reads almost like a deliberate reversal of Gen. 3:16, turning it upside down by making the woman the object of desire." Cf. Tribble, "Depatriarchalizing," 46; idem, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 159, 160.
146. John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 51–59.
147. Ángel M. Rodríguez, "Sanctuary Theology in the Book of Exodus," *AUSS* 24.2 (1986): 131–137.
148. See further discussion and evidence in R. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 251–253.
149. See Roy Gane, *God's Faulty Heroes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996), 50, who interprets Num 3:38 and 18:7 as indicating that "priests had a kind of military function as guards of the sanctuary," and suggests this as at least a partial rationale for God's setting up of an all-male priesthood.
150. Phyllis Bird, "The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr., et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 406. The exception would be women without families (widows, virgins, or women separated from family by a vow) (*Ibid.*, 407).
151. Otwell, *Sarah Laughed*, 18, cogently argues that the normal structure of Hebrew parallelism is followed here in that Gen 3:16*a* and *b* are in parallel and 3:16*c* and *d* are likewise in parallel. As the first two parallel members of this verse duplicate content with regard to childbearing, so "we may expect . . . that 'he shall rule over you' parallels 'your desire shall be for your husband.'" Otwell's argument is strengthened by the use of the conjunctive *waw* which serves to unite v. 16*a–b* with *c–d*, and is best translated by "yet" (RSV).
152. See Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 97–99.
153. Marsman (*Women in Ugarit and Israel*, 544, 545) shows that while in Egypt and Mesopotamia numerous women were functioning in the role of priestess in the third and first half of the second millennium B.C.E., by the middle of the second millennium women to a large extent had disappeared from the priesthood, and during the period matching the period of Israelite history only women of high birth remained active in cultic functions as priestesses. These women "had a kind of marital relationship with the main deity. They were a wife of the god, whether the interpretation of this function was sexual or not, that is, whether their 'sacred' marriage was a carnally or a symbolically performed rite" (*Ibid.*, 545).
154. Doukhan, "Women Priests in Israel," 30–33.
155. Doukhan offers another rationale beyond the polemic concerns against the fertility cults; he suggests that it "may well reflect a Hebrew attitude toward women, who were, from Eve on, traditionally associated with the giving of life. [fn. 33: See Gen 3:20]. And since the woman stands for life, she should be exempt from the act of sacrificing that stands for death. . . . Because of her physiological nature as a provider of life, the woman could not be involved in the cultic act of taking life implied in the ritual of sacrifice" (*Ibid.*, 33, 34).
156. Robert Van Kooten, "The Song of Miriam," *Kerux* 16.3 (2001): 38.
157. Robarts ("Deborah," 76) rightly observes: "Among the major judges, she escapes unscathed as a spiritual leader." See also Daniel I. Block, "Why Deborah's Different," *BR* 17.3 (2001): 40, who makes this same point: "Not only was she the sole woman in this man's world, with exception of Othniel she was also the only 'judge' with a stainless personal reputation."
158. Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 209.
159. Jo Ann Hackett, "In the Days of Jael: Reclaiming the History of Women in Ancient Israel," in *Immaculate and Powerful: The Female in Sacred Image and Social Reality*, ed. Clarissa W. Atkinson, Constance H. Buchanan, and Margaret R. Miles (Boston: Beacon, 1985), 22.
160. Although, as Gane rightly observes, she was not a military general, for a very practical reason: "Generals were combat soldiers who led their armies into battles. Physical size and upper body strength, the main natural advantages possessed by males, were essential for effectiveness in ancient combat. Therefore, women were not used

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- as soldiers and, consequently, they could not be military commanders" (*God's Faulty Heroes*, 50). Frymer-Kensky points out that "Like Moses, Deborah is not a battle commander. Her role is to inspire, predict, and celebrate in song. Her weapon is the word, and her very name is an anagram of 'she spoke' (*deborah*)" (*Reading the Women of the Bible*, 49).
161. Contra, e.g., Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than One Hundred Disputed Questions* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 135, who mistakenly seeks to make a distinction between the use of the word *judge* with regard to Deborah and its usage with the other (male) judges. Deborah, Grudem claims (*Ibid.*), never "ruled over God's people or taught them publicly or led them militarily." But such attempt to circumscribe Deborah's "judging" to the private sphere with no public leadership over men simply does not square with the full context of the narrative and subsequent poem.
  162. E.g., Grudem (*Ibid.*), 137.
  163. *Ibid.* Grudem fails to satisfactorily answer his own question: "Why then could women prophecy but not teach the people? We may not be able to understand all the reasons, but it is clear that the two roles were distinct, and that God allowed women to be prophets but not teachers" (*Ibid.*). Such clear distinction of roles is not found in Scripture!
  164. W. Kennedy Brown, *Gunethics or the Ethical Status of Woman* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1887), 36, cited in Gale A. Yee, "By the Hand of a Woman: The Metaphor of the Woman Warrior in Judges 4," *Semeia* 61 (1993):119.
  165. Gale A. Yee, "By the Hand of a Woman: The Metaphor of the Woman Warrior in Judges 4," *Semeia* 61 (1993): 110.
  166. Deuteronomy 1, which melds together Exod 18 (the appointment of judges) with Num 11 (the appointment of the 70 elders) seems to imply that the two chapters are referring to the same office.
  167. See discussion of the profound understanding of the nature of justice and mercy displayed in her speech (esp. v. 9) by Roy Gane, *Altar Call* (Berrien Springs, MI: Diadem, 1999), 232–237.
  168. See Claudia V. Camp, "The Wise Women of 2 Samuel: A Role Model for Women in Early Israel?" *CBQ* 43.1 (1981): 17–20, for the elaboration of this point.
  169. See discussion in *Ibid.*, 14–29.
  170. *Ibid.* 26.
  171. For further discussion and characterization of Huldah, see, e.g., Arlene Swidler, "In Search of Huldah," *TBT* 98 (1978): 1780–1785.
  172. For the plethora of studies dealing with the characterization of Esther (and Vashti), see the bibliography in R. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 278, 279, n. 275. The fact that some of these studies were conducted by feminist scholars does not detract from the profound insights that have been uncovered through the eyes of female biblical researchers!
  173. Leah Bronner, "Esther Revisited: an Aggadic Approach," in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith, and Susanna*, ed. Athalya Brenner, FCB 7 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 194.
  174. For the intertextual linkages and implications, see esp. Klara Butting, "Esther: A New Interpretation of the Joseph Story in the Fight against Anti-Semitism and Sexism," in *Ruth and Esther* ed. Athalya Brenner, FCB 2/3 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 239–248.
  175. Claudia V. Camp, "Female Voice, Written Word: Women and Authority in Hebrew Scripture," in *Embodied Love: Sensuality and Relationship as Feminist Values*, ed. Paula M. Cooney, et al. (San Francisco: Harper, 1987), 106 (see the discussion, 105–107).
  176. Tamara C. Eskenazi, "Out from the Shadows: Biblical Women in the Postexilic Era," *JOSOT* 54 (1992): 25–43. Cf. Joan E. Cook, "Women in Ezra and Nehemiah," *TBT* 37 (1999): 212–216, who also points out "egalitarian roles" (216) of the women mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah.
  177. Note that elders in the OT period were typically "traditional but unofficial leaders of tribal communities or professional groups," in Israel appearing mainly as "national elders" and "the elders of the city" (Timothy M. Willis, "Elders in the OT," *NIDB* 2:233). This designation was probably similar to surrounding cultures. The seventy elders mentioned in Exod 24:1, 9 were an ad hoc group of leaders chosen to ascend the mountain in place of the congregation which refused ascend because of fear (Exod 19:13–16; Deut 5:5). The appointment of 70 elders recorded in Num 11 was not God's original plan, but were provided as a help to Moses because of his lack of faith (see PP 380: "They [the 70 elders] would never have been chosen had Moses manifested



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- faith corresponding to the evidences he had witnessed of God's power and goodness").
178. Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 48, 50.
  179. Kathleen M. O'Connor, "Jeremiah," in *The Woman's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (London: SPCK, 1992), 176. Cf. the summary of interpretations by Bauer, *Gender in the Book of Jeremiah*, 138-145.
  180. See Deborah F. Sawyer, "Gender-Play and Sacred Text: A Scene from Jeremiah," *JSOT* 83 (1999): 99-111, who points out the many intertextual linkages between this section of Jeremiah and Gen 1-3, and moves in the direction of my suggestion (albeit with a postmodern deconstructionist approach which I reject). See also William L. Holladay, "Jeremiah XXXI 22b Reconsidered: 'The Woman Encompasses the Man,'" *VT* 16 (1966): 236-239.
  181. J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 502. For evidence that this passage refers to the Messiah, see *Ibid.*, 489-505.
  182. *Ibid.*
  183. For discussion of key intertextual parallels between Joel 2 and Num 11, see especially Raymond B. Dillard, "Joel," in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, vol. 1, ed. Thomas E. McComiskey (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 294, 295.
  184. C. F. Keil, "Joel," in *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, vol. 10 (2 vols. in one): *The Minor Prophets*, by C. F. Keil, (repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 1:211.
  185. Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, *The American Commentary*, 19a (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 369.
  186. *Ibid.*
  187. Keil, "Joel," 211.
  188. Dillard, "Joel," 295.
  189. Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, *Hermeneia* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 67.
  190. *Ibid.*

## SHOULD WOMEN BE ORDAINED AS PASTORS? NEW TESTAMENT CONSIDERATIONS

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HOW SHALL WE AS a global Seventh-day Adventist Church, seeking to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ, read the New Testament in order to understand God's will concerning the ordination of women as pastors in the Seventh-day Adventist Church? The ideal would be to discover a "Thus saith the Lord" explicitly addressing this question. Because there is no such declaration, it is necessary both to consider carefully those passages that appear to relate most closely to this specific issue and to explore the larger picture of the NT in its Old Testament context. Care and humility is required of every individual approaching this topic. The complexity and breadth of the issue and of the related literature make it challenging and time-consuming to evaluate fully all sides, to identify accurately the intended

meaning of related Scriptural passages, and to put the results together into an unbiased whole.

Our human minds naturally grasp and build on those points that intuitively make sense from one's own point of view. No one is exempt from personal and cultural bias on this issue. We are, every one of us, pulled in one direction by the trends of post-modern culture, and in the opposite direction by the soothing assurance of tradition and "the way it has always been" in Christian history and in the various cultures and institutions of which we are a part. Despite our best human efforts to the contrary, the direction each of us goes is influenced much more than we would like to admit by our own personal upbringing, temperament, and experience, and by the resulting construction of reality we carry within us. The opposing temptations to bow to tradition or to the culture around us have been a challenge throughout earth's history. Even as we find in Scripture stories of God's people straying from Him by following the surrounding culture into pagan practices, we also find stories of Jesus' struggle with religious leaders who were so sure of their own cultural understanding of Scripture and God's law that they rejected Him, God's own Son, when He did not conform to their traditional expectations.

These human tendencies have left us facing a deep divide concerning potential answers to our question. Yet we have reason for optimism, for we have the promise of the Holy Spirit's guidance as we humbly seek to take Scripture alone, in its entirety, as our highest rule of faith and practice. Through the work of the Spirit we can learn to set aside our cultural biases and our distrust and work closely together to discover God's answer to our common dilemma.

This chapter explores the reasons for believing that the NT supports—in cultures

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where it would enhance rather than hinder the mission of the gospel—the ordination of appropriately gifted and godly women for pastoral leadership in the church. The paper will begin by seeking a clear understanding of the larger concepts of *ministry*, *authority*, *ordination*, and *women*, before moving on to consider specific passages that have been suggested to have a particular bearing on the question.

### What Does the New Testament Tell Us about Ministry, Authority, and Ordination?

The New Testament leaves no room for doubt regarding the nature of the church and its mission. As often stated, the church is not primarily a building or an administrative structure but people—a community of believers, repentant and redeemed, who call God ‘Savior and Lord.’ The stated task of this community is to participate together, under God, in His mission to reconcile humanity to Himself through Jesus Christ, a mission to be completed in the full restoration of His kingdom when He comes (Luke 12:8, 9; 2 Cor 5:17–20). Every believer is to be a part of the church’s work of proclaiming this good news in word and deed, making disciples of those who believe by nurturing their relationship with, and obedience to, Him (Matt 24:14; 28:18–20; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 14:6–12). Thus we see Jesus, after initially sending twelve (Luke 6:13; 9:1, 2), sending seventy more (Luke 10:1, 9); and the Holy Spirit, after being poured out on all believers with power for witness (Acts 1:8; Acts 2:38), leading them to follow Jesus’ pattern in advancing God’s mission through loving service and praise to Him (e.g. Acts 4:31; 9:36; 11:19, 20; 18:24–26).

The NT epistles describe further the ways in which God empowers the entire church for ministry. Through the Holy Spirit every believer is provided with divinely endowed

abilities known as spiritual gifts (*charismata*), which He has chosen for them to employ in sharing God’s good news with the world and in edifying and serving the believing community (Rom 12:6–8; 1 Cor 12:4–11, 28; Eph 4:7, 11–13; 1 Pet 4:10, 11). Several overlapping lists of gifts are found in the epistles, none of them exhaustive. The gifts are not described in detail but allow us to observe the breadth of the Spirit’s gifting.

With the giving of these gifts comes the responsibility to make use of them (Matt 5:14–16; 1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4:11, 12) in the most effective possible way (Matt 25:14–30; 1 Cor 9:19–23; 10:31–33) in order to win and disciple to Jesus Christ the people among whom believers live and work. No gift is presented consistently as standing at the top of a “hierarchy of gifts.” Indeed, no differentiation of honor or care is to be made between those holding the various gifts and ministries (1 Cor 12:22–25).<sup>1</sup> And in none of the lists are any of the gifts said to be restricted according to gender.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the tasks we associate today with pastoring are included among these divinely assigned spiritual gifts and ministry functions. In addition to concretely oriented gifts such as “helps” (1 Cor 12:28), and intellectually oriented ones such as “knowledge” (1 Cor 12:8), the Holy Spirit also bestows a number of socially oriented gifts relating to leadership.<sup>3</sup> Romans 12:8 speaks of a gift of *leading* (*proistēmi*).<sup>4</sup> This Greek word is used to express a variety of actions from caring for someone, to guiding, to ruling.<sup>5</sup> In the NT *proistēmi* is used in a variety of ways, including to indicate: individuals who labor among the believers (1 Thess 5:12); the ability to deal with a household in such a manner that the children are submissive (1 Tim 3:4, 5, 12); and the valued work of the elders (1 Tim 5:17).

*Administrative abilities* (*kubernēsis*), a gift mentioned in 1 Cor 12:28, refers literally to

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the skill with which a pilot guides a ship. In the NT it is used only here but, in the Greek "Old" Testament (the LXX) used by the New Testament church it is used several times in Proverbs to speak of counsel, or guidance, from (a plurality of) others, which Proverbs proclaims it wise to receive (1:5; 11:14; 24:6).<sup>6</sup> In Greek literature it is used in reference to managing a household and also to leadership in general.

In addition to the gifts, in these lists, are what might be spoken of as ministry functions (e.g. 1 Cor 12:4, 5) including apostle, evangelist, pastor, and teacher. Like the gifts, these ministry functions are said to be assigned by the Holy Spirit. The church's selection of individuals for such roles through ordination or appointment to be simply the recognition of what the Spirit has already indicated (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). The divinely appointed ministry function of *apostle* (*apostolos*) refers literally to one who is "sent out" as a representative or emissary on behalf of another. It is primarily associated in the NT with the Twelve directly appointed by Jesus to represent Him. Paul's reference to himself as an apostle "untimely born" (1 Cor 15:8) suggests that he saw himself as the last of the apostles in this original sense.<sup>7</sup> However it was also infrequently used to refer to others (Acts 14:4, 14; Gal 1:19; Rom 16:7), who were recognized by NT writers as being gifted and sent in a representative role. Paul never spoke of himself as having appointed apostles, and the use of the term faded away in the early church, possibly because of its special association with those appointed by Jesus Himself. The function of *evangelist* (*euangelistēs*; Eph 4:11) might be exemplified by the work of "Philip the evangelist" (Acts 21:8), who communicated the gospel (*euangelion*) to people who had not yet had the opportunity to hear or accept it (Acts 8:4-8).<sup>8</sup>

Included in the list of ministry functions given by the Spirit to whom He wills, is the

function generally translated as *pastor* (Eph 4:11). The word in Greek (*poimēn*) literally means *shepherd*.<sup>9</sup> This is the only NT use of the noun *poimēn* (pastor-shepherd) to refer to any individual other than Jesus, although both Paul and Peter call on elders to the action of shepherding God's flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2).<sup>10</sup> Ideal characteristics of the shepherd that Jesus identifies with are his intimate knowing of his sheep, his deep love and concern for them, and his commitment to guide and protect them—in fact Jesus, as Shepherd, is even willing to lay down His life for His sheep (John 10:11-15; cf. Matt 2:6; 9:36; 26:31; Rev 7:17). Peter warned the elders against the temptation to believe that their role of shepherding/pastoring (*poimainō*) granted them a ruling and controlling authority over others. Peter instead called for the use of an authority based on influence, stating, "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:2, 3).<sup>11</sup> (Within two or three decades powerful overseer-bishops, such as Ignatius of Antioch, demonstrated the necessity of this instruction. They set themselves over the other elders and began to rule the church like monarchs, insisting that all should submit to their will.)

The role of teacher (*didaskalos*) is closely tied to that of pastor in Eph 4:11. Where each of the other ministry functions in the list are distinguished from each other in the Greek by being preceded by the article (*ho*), pastor and teacher are grouped together following a single article. *Didaskalos* is regularly used in the NT for teacher and is employed with reference to both Jesus (Matt 8:19) and Paul (2 Tim 1:11). Timothy is instructed to teach (*didaskō*) and to empower others to teach (1 Tim 4:11, 13; 2 Tim 2:2), and believers were instructed

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to teach one another (Col 3:16). The task of the teacher is to explain the Scripture and he or she stands under its authority (Isa 8:20).

Again, neither these more leadership-oriented functions, nor any of the other gifts, are ever spoken of with restrictions as to gender.<sup>12</sup> Rather, the NT indicates that it is God who, according to His own sovereign choice, gives to every believer a divinely defined and unique contribution to make, and holds them and the church accountable for its wise use.

### Formally Appointed Ministry Roles in the New Testament

In addition to each believer's exercise of the gifts of the Spirit under the leading and authorization of God, the NT testifies that, to help the church remain true to God and carry out its mission effectively, some task organization is necessary (Acts 6:1; 1 Cor 14:40).<sup>13</sup> This organization includes the formal appointment of individuals entrusted by the Church to carry out particular ministry functions (Titus 1:5).<sup>14</sup>

#### *Apostles, Deacons, and Elders*

Jesus appointed twelve *apostles* early in His ministry for the stated purpose of being with Him and being sent out to preach (Mark 3:14). The authority given them was authority (*exousia*) to cast out demons and to heal diseases (Matt 10:1; Luke 9:1).<sup>15</sup> This authority was soon given also to seventy others (Luke 10:1, 9, 17), in a prefiguring of the gifts the Spirit was later to distribute among the whole church of God. Any special authority the twelve apostles are said by Scripture to carry in relation to humans was in being appointed by the Lord to act as eyewitnesses to His life and teachings (Acts 1:21, 22; cf. Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:2, 8; 2:42). As time passed, the authoritative witness of the Twelve was recorded in writings which came to be accepted as NT Scripture and which continue to bear their eyewitness authority.

Although Scripture does not record specific instruction given by Jesus regarding formal roles of ministry in the church, not long after His return to heaven, two formal roles had been inaugurated (Phil 1:1).<sup>16</sup> Very early, seven individuals were selected to take over the "daily ministry (*diakonia*)" (Acts 6:1), of "serving (*diakoneō*) tables" (6:2) so that the apostles could concentrate more fully upon "prayer and the ministry (*diakonia*) of the word" (6:4; cf. 2:42).<sup>17</sup> These seven eventually point came to be spoken of as *deacons* (cf. Phil 1:1). While the specified task of the seven was to take charge of the daily distribution to those in need, there was not a rigid distinction between the roles of the deacon and the apostle, for the deacons Stephen and Philip also engaged in preaching and teaching (6:9-53; 8:5-13; cf. 21:8).<sup>18</sup> Paul described certain qualities one should exhibit before being appointed as deacon (1 Tim 3:8-13). The inclusion, in this list, of qualities especially addressed to women evidences the presence of female as well as male deacons (3:11). The biblical mandate for female deacons is recognized by the Adventist Church, which has been ordaining deacons of both genders since the early days.

The other ministry role to which individuals were appointed by the church in the NT was that of *elder* (*prebyteros*), also spoken of as *overseer* (*episkopos*, sometimes translated in English as *bishop*; Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Phil 1:1). The role of elder finds its precedent in the elders of the OT and early Judaism (e.g., Gen 50:7; Exod 3:16; cf. 18:13-28). These were older individuals among the tribe and village who were respected for their experience, moral character, and wisdom, and to whom the community looked for leadership. Old Testament elders worked together as a group to give counsel and provide judgments regarding the day-to-day business of village or town in regard to both religious and civil matters.<sup>19</sup>

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Generally, elders during this time appear to have been male, although the work of Deborah, as judge, involved the duties of an elder.<sup>20</sup>

Like the OT elders, the NT role of elder was without exception a function held by a group of individuals within a local community of believers, never by a single individual.<sup>21</sup> The elders' task is described in the NT as shepherding and protecting the flock (Acts 20:2–31; 1 Pet 5:1–4 and Jas 5:14).<sup>22</sup> Other work associated with NT elders includes dealing with contributions for those in need (Acts 11:28–30), teaching (1 Tim 3:2; cf. 5:17) and leading, with others, in the process of decision-making (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 21:18–25).<sup>23</sup> As we have seen in our exploration of the spiritual gifts, each of these tasks require gifts God has given to both men and women according to His sovereign choice.<sup>24</sup>

### *Qualifications for Formal Appointment by the Church*

The examples and instructions in the NT testify that formal appointments were generally done on the basis of evidence of the Holy Spirit's working (providing the power and appropriate gifts for ministry; e.g., Acts 6:7; 13:2; cf. 1 Cor 12:8) and of the spiritual maturity to use these gifts to represent God and the church appropriately (Acts 6:3; 1 Tim 3:1–13; Titus 1:1–11). Such recognition by the church functions as a testing of the spirits (1 John 4:1) and adds to one already authorized by God a more tangible, humanly-delegated authority, indicating the church's trust and affirmation.

The qualification lists of 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1 describe in some detail the Christian character Paul viewed as necessarily prerequisite to the office of deacon and elder. These qualifications may be understood as gender neutral for several reasons. First, the opening words of Paul's list of qualifications in the Greek of 1 Tim 3:1 actually begins with the statement, "If *anyone* (*tis*, which can be masculine or feminine)

aspires (*to be an*) overseer (*episkopos*)," not "If a *man* (*anēr*) aspires. . ." as some translations supply. The same is the case in Titus 1:6, which begins, in Greek, "If anyone (*tis*, not *anēr*) is above reproach . . ."

Second, in Hebrew and Greek—as in many languages and societies throughout history—gendered (usually male) word forms are used any time one wishes to refer to both men and women together.<sup>25</sup> Although an issue has often arisen with regard to the criterion that the elder or deacon be "the husband of one wife" (1 Tim 3:2), such qualifications framed in the masculine gender do not necessarily exclude women from serving in these ministries and offices any more than does the use of the masculine gender in the Ten Commandments and other OT laws exclude women from keeping them. For example, in Exod 20:17 the Israelites are told "Thou shalt not covet your neighbor's wife" with no mention of the coveting of a husband. Yet no one would argue that this commandment allows a woman to covet her neighbor's husband. Since ancient Greek had no word for "spouse," the use of "husband" in 1 Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:6 may thus simply represent both genders by using the word most expected in that cultural context.

Third, in literal Greek, 1 Tim 3:2 calls for "a one-woman man," placing the idea of marital faithfulness to one's wife in the first, or emphatic position, according to Greek syntax. In a list where all of the remaining qualifications focus on character and reputation it would seem logical to believe that Paul's concern was with the character issue of sexual purity rather than a concern with gender, especially within a prevalent pagan cultural context of male sexual freedom and temple prostitution.

Fourth, both the elder and the deacon are called to be literally, "a one-woman man" (1 Tim 3:2, 12; Titus 1:5, 6). Yet Adventists have

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recognized from the early years that women may serve in the role of deacon, as suggested in 1 Tim 1:11.

Fifth, the counsel in 1 Tim 5:9 regarding qualifications for widows to be “enrolled” requires that she must correspondingly be “a one-man woman.” It would seem rather unnecessary to insist that a female widow needs to be a woman, which suggests that for the widows, as for the elders, the point is marital purity. In brief, Paul uses gendered (male and female) language here, as in a number of other specific situations we have considered, in order to communicate principles that are relevant for men and women in leadership ministries.<sup>26</sup>

### *Gender and Formal Roles in the NT*

The fact that Jesus’ original twelve apostles were all males, together with the apostle’s use of *anēr* in selecting a replacement for Judas and the Seven, has been thought by some to be the continuation of an OT precedent of male-only priesthood and spiritual leadership, which they consider universally valid (Acts 1:21–22; 6:3). The theory of the ongoing validity of a male-only priesthood will be discussed later in this chapter. However, it is appropriate to point out here several factors that should give pause to the assumption that women should on this basis be universally barred from pastoral ministry in the church.

The initial appointments of the apostles, as well as the deacons, are in story form, describing specific situations at the very beginning of the church’s organization, and cannot be assumed, without further evidence, to be prescriptive in all their details for the whole church for all time.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Jesus and the church in Jerusalem appointed only Jews, yet no one argues that certain roles of leadership in the church should be given only to Jews.

Rather than legislating male-only leadership in the church for all time, evidence suggests a

main reason for the choice of twelve males to be apostles was to allude to the twelve (male) patriarchs who were the fathers of God’s people in the Old Testament, and whose twelve tribes received God’s promises of a Messiah. In the New Testament those who accepted the fulfillment of these promises in Jesus Christ, including both Jew and Gentile, were spoken of as the twelve tribes (Jas 1:1; Rev 7:4–8).<sup>28</sup> Indeed, in Revelation’s portrayal of the New Jerusalem the names of the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles are portrayed together, with the names of the twelve patriarchs on the gates of the city and the twelve apostles on its foundations (Rev 21:12–14.) This paired symbolism is an important part of the NT message that God’s OT promises to Israel did not fail but were fulfilled for a remnant of the Jews who, together with an in-gathering of believing Gentiles, became God’s NT people (Acts 3:22–26; Rom 9–11).

In fact, the call for the selection of men (*anēr*) in Acts 1:21, 22 and 6:3, is not as exclusively male as is sometimes suggested. The term *anēr* is used numerous times in Scripture in a representative way to make a point about both genders, as is evidenced in instances such as Acts 2:14, where Peter addresses the crowd as “*anēr*” despite the reality that there would no doubt also have been women on the streets of Jerusalem that day. Martin Hanna has researched this and other examples in chapter 14 of this present volume entitled: “Men and Women in Church Order: A Study of Paul’s Use of Representative Statements.”<sup>29</sup>

The reality is that male leadership in public places remained the overriding expectation in NT times, just as it had for millennia, even though the rare urban upper-class woman was able to independently hold or gain wealth and even take a position of influence. To prominently appoint women to places of leadership for which a man was prepared would at that

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time have brought discredit to the Gospel and turned souls away from God's invitation. Even as God was patient with Israel for many years in their divorce practices (Matt 19:8), and with the church in the practice of slavery, time was needed for development in their understanding of women's roles.

### *The Pastor*

The NT speaks of *pastor/shepherd* (*poimēn*) as a divinely endowed ministry function rather than as a role or office formally appointed by the church (Eph 4:7, 11; cf. 1 Pet 5:1). Even in the early church following the NT, pastoring was not a separate office of its own but a ministry carried out by elders or bishops. As far as we know, it was not until the Reformation, in correcting the abuses of doctrine and power brought in by the traditional system of bishops and priests, that the term *pastor* became the title of a role formally identified and appointed by the church.

In one sense Acts 13:1–3 may be viewed as the first pastoral ordination and thus evidence of a formally appointed NT role of pastor.<sup>30</sup> It is certainly appropriate to see the work Paul and Barnabas were being sent out to do as being a ministry of shepherding that overlapped with what we would see today as “pastoral” activities and to find in their work inspiration and example for pastors and other gospel workers. Valid lessons from the story which may be applied to the work of the pastor today include the importance of the church following God's leading in publicly setting apart spiritually mature, experienced, Spirit-gifted individuals for the carrying out of certain tasks and leadership roles. Further, the pastoral role in the Adventist Church today brings together, in varying ways, roles of evangelism, nurture, and leadership carried out by Paul and Barnabas.

The selection and ministry of Paul and

Barnabas, however, differs in several respects from that of today's pastor. Their selection, like Paul's call, was directed audibly by God (in the Spirit), giving to their ministry an unusually powerful divine imperative. In addition, the title given them in Acts, following this laying on of hands, was *apostle*, not *pastor* (14:14). For Barnabas, this seems to have been an apostleship similar to that of others spoken of as apostles in the later NT. However, Paul, to whom Christ Himself had appeared and given his call (9:1–20), understood his apostleship as equivalent to that of the Twelve, speaking of himself as the “last-born” of the apostles (1 Cor 15:7) and explaining that like them, his gospel had been communicated to him directly by Christ (Gal 1:11, 12). The ministry actually practiced by Paul and Barnabas was an itinerant one more akin to the specialized role of missionary or evangelist today than that of the average pastor. They never settled long in one place but were always moving on to new unreached areas in order to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, as God had directed (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17).

The development of a church-appointed role of pastor is nevertheless in keeping with the precedent and principles God provided for the gradual growth and development of the church as outlined above. The Adventist Church today evidences numerous offices that have developed over time and to which spiritually mature and gifted individuals, both male and female, have been appointed by the Church to enhance gospel order through efficient organization and effective ministry.<sup>31</sup>

The office of pastor, as it has developed to the present day, carries within its title the reminder of the nurturing gift of shepherding, of caring for and protecting the people of God. At the same time, it also makes use of many other abilities and gifts of the Spirit—as anyone knows who has recently seen or experienced



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the work of a pastor. These gifts vary to some degree from pastor to pastor, but the church generally expects gifting in areas such as evangelist, leadership, and administration. Like formally appointed roles in the NT, the selection of a pastor grows out of evidence of a godly character and of selection by the Spirit through appropriate gifting. While we recall that in the NT special respect and consideration is appropriately given to those who labor and lead, (Matt 10:9, 10; 1 Cor 9:3–14) not always so well remembered is Christ's teaching that ministry is about humble service to others rather than about taking power over another to rule and control.

There is nothing in the role of pastor—when practiced in accordance with these NT principles—that women are unable to carry out with distinction. In fact, it might be argued that women are often ideally suited for the nurturing task of shepherding, lending toward a more collaborative style of leadership that effectively complements the typically male approaches to leadership. As we have seen, gifts of leadership, administration, pastoring, and so on are given as the Spirit wills. The Spirit-led ministry of women today has demonstrated clearly that the past questioning of a woman's ability to carry out these roles to the glory of God is based on devastatingly false assumptions. The next section of this chapter will turn to the question of whether the role of pastor necessarily entails some kind of authority that is inappropriate for a woman to exercise. First, though, it will be of value to review the relation of ordination to pastoral ministry in the church.

### *Ordination in the New Testament*

There is no single Greek words that underlie the English terms, *ordain* or *ordination*. Rather, the term *ordain* has been used to translate a variety of Greek words related to

the selection of persons, as well as of actions and things. As we have seen, the Holy Spirit later led the church to endorse formally qualified individuals to certain appointed roles of ministry, entrusting them to act on behalf of God and of the church.<sup>32</sup> To such public enactments the church has given the English term, *ordination*.

Other NT events, such as Jesus formally naming and appointing the twelve apostles for the work of preaching the good news, have also been understood as ordinations. As stated above, in the NT such an enactments are recognitions of a prior selection and gifting by God. While ordination in the NT church involved prayer on behalf of the individual and their assigned ministry, the NT makes no suggestion that the act of ordination itself bestowed on them any sacred quality. Neither does the NT suggest that ordination grants an individual the right to act as a ruler over other human beings. Ordination simply indicates to the individuals themselves and to the people whom they serve, that these individuals will go about their work having the full confidence and support of the church.<sup>33</sup> Their authority is a representative authority; that is, the authority to represent the Lord and the church in the tasks of communicating the gospel and doing the work assigned by the Lord through the church body. It is not a personally held authority, but is dependent on the authority of Scripture, rightly understood.

In keeping with the idea of ordination as a choosing, and with the NT precedent of formally appointing people for selected ministries, ordination has been properly defined "as the action of the church in publicly recognizing those whom the Lord has called and equipped for local and global church ministry." In addition it has been noted that "In the act of ordination the church confers representative authority upon individuals for

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the specific work of ministry to which they are appointed (Acts 6:1–3; 13:1–3; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 2:15).<sup>34</sup>

How does this understanding of ordination impact our question of whether or not to ordain women to pastoral ministry? Since ordination is simply a formal recognition of God's gifting of a person for a particular ministry and of their trustworthiness as a church representative, the implications of ordination itself should present no impediment to ordaining women as pastors.

Some, however, question whether the authority implied in the church's endorsement of the individual being ordained would make it inappropriate to ordain a woman as a pastor. This is the issue we turn to next, first by investigating the meaning of authority and its use as presented in the NT, and later by examining the passages that some believe bar women from any exercise of authority over men.

### Ministry and Authority

Jesus repeatedly taught that aspiring leaders should think and act as servants. Mark 9:35 records, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant (*diakonos*) of all." The basic idea of *diakonos* and its related word family is that of service rendered to another. It is this same word-family, with its root idea of service, that is often translated as "ministry" and used by the NT to speak of the ministry of Paul and others (Col 1:7, 4:7, 12; Eph 6:21).<sup>35</sup> The NT does not use two separate words, one for service and another for ministry. Rather, service and ministry are the same thing. First Peter 4:10 uses the verbal form, *diakoneō*, to call on all believers, whether leaders or otherwise, to serve one another, stating:

As each one has received a gift, minister to (*diakoneō*) one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God: whoever speaks, *do it* as speaking the

utterances of God; whoever serves (*diakoneō*) *do it* as from the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen (1 Pet 4:10, 11).

### *The Meaning and Extent of Authority in the NT*

Jesus insisted that any authority exercised within the community of believers in the pursuit of the church's mission was not to involve "ruling" or "lording it over" others (*kurieuō*) but rather serving them (e.g., Mark 9:33–36; Luke 22:25–27).<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Christ's followers are instructed to eschew any sort of role or title such as rabbi, leader, or father which would draw one into assuming such autonomous authority (Matt 23:8–12). This reflects an understanding of ministry and authority that is based on service, self-sacrifice, and humility, not on higher rank and power over others. In this way, the character of authority exercised by Christian believers and ministers is fundamentally different from that seen in the world at large (1 Pet 5:1–4). Such a ministry was modeled by Christ Himself, who "emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant" (Phil 2:7).

It would be of value here to pause for a moment and consider what *exousia*, the main NT word for authority, means before delving further into the way the NT understands the concept. A common and mistakenly narrow understanding of authority defines it simply as *the right to rule others and to expect obedience*. Yet we speak of priests having the authority, for example, to enter a restricted area such as the Holy Place of the temple; or of individuals as speaking with authority regarding their particular field of expertise. In these examples authority does not have to do with ruling others but with the acknowledged right to act or

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speak in a particular way. The NT evidences just such a broad understanding of *exousia* in John 1:12, where it is promised that "as many as received Him, to them He gave the *exousia* to become children of God." Here, we do not find an authority to rule over others, but a God-bestowed right live as His children. A more complete definition of authority/*exousia* that makes room for the various ways it is used in the NT, is *the ascribed or acknowledged right to act and/or to influence the actions of others*.<sup>37</sup> Authority does not exist unless it is recognized or granted by another, whether by other human beings or by God Himself.

Every ministry or gift granted by God and recognized by people entails some degree of authority. Near the end of Jesus' sermon about readiness for His coming, Mark records a parable about a master who went on a journey, "giving to His servants authority (*exousia*), to each their work," and commanding the doorkeeper to watch (Mark 13:34). Thus, as they awaited the master's coming, each of the servants held authority to do the work he had left for them. This authority given by the master is not about *authority over others* to control or rule them, but *authority to accomplish a task*.<sup>38</sup> For example, one with the gift of administering (1 Cor 12:28) exercises authority in the management of the church's affairs. This authority is subject to the policies agreed upon by the body as a whole. An individual with the gift of giving (Rom 12:8) exercises authority over the distribution and use of the resources placed in their hands. The authority of such a giver is expected to be bounded by the principles in Scripture and the counsel of fellow believers. One with the gift of exhortation (*paraklēsis*) exercises authority to build others up, as they are willing to accept it (Rom 12:8; cf. 2 Cor 10:8-9; 13:10, 11).

Whether one is acting in a traditional leadership role or not, every exercise of the gifts of

the Spirit by a man or a woman involves a use of God-given authority. Some authority may be the authority of expertise related to knowledge or skill in a particular area, some may be the authority of influence based in a wise and godly character, and some may hold a formally granted authority to represent the church. All authority is constrained by the needs and the input of the community of believers under the guidance of Scripture and the Holy Spirit. Never does the NT grant believers a *carte blanche* authority over people to enforce their own will. Even the prophetic gift, which carries special authority in speaking inspired messages of God, is not excluded from being tested by believers (Isa 8:20; 1 Cor 2:15; 1 John 4:1; cf. 1 Cor 14:29-32). It is inaccurate to claim, therefore, that women can exercise authority only when they have the gift of prophecy, as Ellen White did. As we have indicated, all gifts carry some authority from God.

In the NT, Christ alone is identified as head of the church (Eph 1:22, 23; 4:14-16; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19).<sup>39</sup> Under Christ, authority in the Christian church is always subject to the body of believers as a whole. Jesus, the Head, explicitly gave to the church as a whole, not simply to any individual leader or office, the authority to arbitrate and to discipline, to bind and to loose (Matt 18:15-20; cf. 16:19). Neither in the Gospels and Acts nor in the Epistles is any individual human given ultimate authority over another, for a fundamental principle of God's government and of Christian behavior is respect for free will (e.g., Josh 24:15; Phlm 8, 9, 17).

### *The Practice of Authority in the NT Church*

The book of Acts shows the apostles exercising vital leadership, yet never acting as rulers, or dictators, over the rest of the apostles or the church. Peter was the one to

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whom the initial authority to bind and to loose was spoken (compare Matt 16:19). Yet he recognized Jesus' later counsel in Matt 18:18 that it is in reality the whole church together that holds this authority. Peter worked in concert with the Twelve and brought his ideas to the body of believers for consideration (Acts 1:21–26; 6:2, 5; 15:6–13, 19). Likewise, James, a key leader in the Jerusalem church after Peter's departure (12:17), did not make a significant decision without participation from others (Acts 15:4, 13, 19, 22; 21:18, 23).

Paul certainly provides the biggest challenge to the idea that no individual in the church has ultimate authority over others. There are passages in his epistles where he does not hold back from using the language of authority in an undeniably bold way. For example, in Phlm 21, Paul states, "Having confidence in your obedience (*hupakoē*), I write to you," and in 2 Thess 3:4, "we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command (*parangellō*)."<sup>40</sup> Several factors may be considered in seeking to understand such statements in light of the teachings of Jesus and the rest of the NT.

First, even the strong-minded Paul recognized the superior authority, not only of Jesus Christ but also of his family in Christ—the church as a whole. He submitted his understanding of the gospel to those of repute in Jerusalem (Gal 2:2). He accepted the authority of the church in Antioch and later of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem together with the church regarding the issue of circumcision (Acts 15:2, 4, 22, 23).<sup>41</sup> He also followed the instructions of James and the elders to sacrifice in the temple upon his return to Jerusalem (Acts 21:18–26). He made no attempt to exercise control over everyone who preached the word of God but accepted and applauded the work of Apollos and others (1 Cor 3:5; 1:10–13; 3:4–7; 16:12; Phil 1:15–18).<sup>42</sup>

Second, Paul's authority was grounded, not in his own status or position, humanly speaking, but in his identity as an apostle who, like the Twelve, had been personally and audibly called by Jesus Himself to proclaim the gospel they had experienced (1 Cor 15:7–9).<sup>43</sup> For the Twelve this authority of expertise involved their experience as eyewitnesses, but Paul made clear that he too had received his message as a prophet from Jesus himself (1 Cor 7:10; 2 Cor 12:7; Gal 1:11, 12; cf. Acts 13:1; 2 Pet 1:20, 21; 3:15, 16). Paul's calls to obedience are then based not on his own authority but are calls to obedience of Christ's own instruction, given to him as a prophet of God. For this reason, together with his constant pointing to (Old Testament) Scripture, he could accurately say, "we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:5; cf. 1 Thess 2:13). Paul's instruction, together with that of the apostolic eyewitnesses, has since been preserved in the NT Scriptures, which is where this authority now resides.

Third, Paul was usually gentle in the use of this prophetic authority, preferring to suggest and urge. He states this approach explicitly to Philemon, writing: "Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you" (Phlm 8, 9), and to the Corinthians: "I am not speaking *this* as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also" (2 Cor 8:8). Indeed, in 1 Thess 2:7, 8, he portrayed himself as a gentle mother.

Fourth, a closer investigation of the use and meaning of the main authority words used by Paul reveal a more nuanced view than is apparent from just a cursory reading. For example, an examination of Paul's use of the words *obedience* (*hupakouō*) and *obedient* (*hupakoē*), reveals that Paul is in reality calling people to an obedience not to himself

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personally but to the principles of the gospel and of the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, in Rom 6:17 he states, "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient (*hupakouō*) from the heart to that form of teaching (*didachē*) to which you were committed." In 2 Cor 10:5 he says, "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (see also Rom 1:5; 2 Thess 1:7, 8; cf. 1 Pet 1:22).<sup>44</sup>

Much of the language used by Paul that is generally thought of as "authority language," is used elsewhere in the NT to refer to actions to be carried out by all believers. For example, Paul tells Titus, "These things speak and exhort and reprove (*elenkō*) with all authority" (Titus 2:15) and counsels that overseers/elders are to "give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke (*elenkō*) those who contradict it." Yet he also tells the Ephesian believers, "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them (*elenkō*)" (5:11), just as Jesus told His disciples "If your brother sins [against you], go and show him his fault (*elenkō*) in private" (Matt 18:15). Likewise, while Paul says of himself in Col 1:28, "Him we proclaim, warning (*noutheteō*) everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ," he also tells the believers in 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing (*noutheteō*) one another."

Perhaps the most challenging authority terminology used by Paul is the word *parangellō*, along with its cognate noun *parangelia*. The lexical meaning of *parangellō* is "to make an announcement about something that must be done, give orders, command, instruct, direct."<sup>45</sup> This is a broad range of meaning that necessitates thinking

carefully about the author's intention in each usage, based on the context of the passage and the NT as a whole. The word group is used in the NT of the instructions of God and Christ and of official leaders in the world outside the church. Paul also occasionally uses it in instruction given to his addressees.

Paul's strongly worded instructions to Timothy and Titus to speak with authority (e.g., 1 Tim 4:11—"These things direct [*parangellō*] and teach")—may be understood as related to these same factors. The way in which this is to be done can be seen in 1 Tim 5:1, 2, "Do not sharply rebuke (*epiplēssō*) an older man, but *rather* appeal to *him* as a father, *to* the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, *and* the younger women as sisters, in all purity" (NASB). It should also be considered that whatever other role these two played in the church, the NT makes clear that they acted as assistants of Paul (Acts 16:1-3; 2 Cor 8:16, 17; 2 Thess 1:1) and thus were his representatives communicating his apostolic and prophetic message to the churches he had founded.<sup>46</sup> This is illustrated by Paul's use of the first-person singular pronoun in telling Timothy, "I do not allow . . ." (1 Tim 2:12).

In 1 Corinthians 16:15, 16, Paul calls on believers to submit (*hypotassō*) to those who have devoted themselves to work and toil (double emphasis) among them. This is the single NT instruction calling for believers to submit (*hypotassō*) to leaders (plural) in the church. The basis on which Paul called for such submission is not the standard worldly qualifications for receiving authority, such as power or impressive resumes, but rather devotion to serving God and His people (*diakonia*). Certainly this would not apply to those who work hard sowing seeds of dissension or untruth, but rather to those who come as servants and who have been recognized and accepted as fellow-workers in the same cause.

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Another passage, Heb 13:17 states, "Obey (*peithō*) your leaders (*hēgeomai*) and submit (*hupeikō*) to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account" (NASB). Again, studying the verse closely is necessary, for this is not a reference to a single ultimate "leader" but to a plurality. In this verse *peithō* is not the normal word for obedience (*hupakouō*); rather, its meaning in this present passive is more specifically "to be won over as the result of persuasion."<sup>47</sup>

Paul and the rest of the NT writers do, here and elsewhere, evidence a place for NT-defined authority and leadership in the church. But his authority, rather than being about a unilateral hierarchical "authority over people" is a shared and reasoned authority. It is founded in the word of God and might best be described as "authority to serve" in the areas of God's gifting and leading.

In light of the *tota scriptura* principle of comparing scripture with scripture, it is appropriate to understand that other uses of authority language were governed by the factors outlined above within the particular situations in which they were applied. In an overall reading, the authority of NT leaders, rather than being about a *carte blanche* authority over people, focuses on authority to accomplish a task together under the overall authority of the church as a whole, based in Scripture and governed by the Head, who is Christ.<sup>48</sup>

In the first century strongly authoritarian behavior was the norm and was in fact socially insisted upon in many situations. The guidelines of shared servant leadership described by Christ and evidenced in the NT turn this traditional understanding of authority upside-down and reinstitute God's picture of authority and of how it is appropriately practiced. This NT understanding does not negate authority but provides directions

for a biblically appropriate understanding of authority and authoritative action. Unfortunately, the church still struggles at times to recognize and implement this biblical view of leadership, at the same time that wiser minds in the world are now seeing its value and attempting to put it into practice.

### Ministry and Authority in Today's Church

Biblical principles for exercising authority present a challenge to every human culture in one way or another. Some common perversions of biblically defined authority that have crept into today's church in various places around the world include: dictatorial leadership styles; the creation of status and power hierarchies; failure to exercise legitimate authority due to political pressure; competition for position and honor; refusal to acknowledge and support legitimate biblical authority; and granting or withholding authority on the basis of ethnicity, disability, and social class. Is it possible that the practice of barring women from ordination to pastoral ministry, on the basis of Scripture, is also a cultural distinction that distorts Scriptural teaching on authority? While every culture contains elements that are both good and evil, all too often cultural views and perspectives, rather than biblical principles, have been allowed to define who can be ordained and how ordained persons should exercise their authority.

To summarize, ultimate authority within the church was never delegated to human beings. Any authority exercised within the church by Christ, its Head, is exercised under the authority of the body of believers for the purpose of accomplishing the tasks given them by God. In the Adventist Church today, although important servant authority is vested in the pastor, he or she is not the highest authority, for he or she is supervised by the

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authority of the conference committee, and so on, with the full General Conference in session holding the highest authority under Christ.

### The Place of Women in the Life and Teaching of the First-Century Church

The Gospels evidence a respect for women and a level of inclusion remarkable from a first-century viewpoint, despite appearing very moderate and limited today. It would be inaccurate to claim that all women were kept completely out of sight in the Palestinian Judaism of the intertestamental period. We find evidence of some limited participation by women in the synagogue and of heroes like Judith in Jewish literature of the time. Nevertheless, cultural convention still strongly held that women were, for example, weaker in judgment, and restricted them to the private sphere of the household.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, Jesus used a female image of a mother hen in charge of her brood to portray Himself in His care for His people (Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34).

Even the institution of baptism evidences a new era for women among the people of God. While the Old Testament rite of initiation into God's people was the male-only rite of circumcision, baptism, as practiced by John the Baptist and Jesus, became the initiation rite for the NT people of God. This rite of baptism was to be engaged in by both men and women.

In the opening days of the NT church a series of events occurred that was indicative of the increasing place women were to take in the ministry of the first-century church and in the end of days. After Jesus' return to heaven, His apostles, "with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus" were "continually devoting themselves to prayer" (1:13, 14). Upon the arrival of the Spirit, tongues of fire "rested upon each one of them," men and women alike (2:1-3). Peter's speech explaining this event

to the skeptical crowd makes clear that it was not happenstance, nor was the inclusion of women insignificant. Rather, this had all been part of the plan of God from long ago.<sup>50</sup> Peter's speech in Acts 2:17-20 begins with a quote from the prophet Joel:

"And it shall be in the last days," God says, "that I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even on my bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy. And I will grant wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come."<sup>51</sup>

In Acts 2:17 it is stated that the Spirit would be poured out on "all mankind," and in verse 18 this is further clarified as referring to all of God's servants, both men and women. Richard Davidson has pointed out the close connections between this prophecy of Joel and the earlier coming of the Spirit upon the seventy elders of Israel when they were chosen for leadership roles as the people of Israel were coming out of Egypt.<sup>52</sup> These elders, as a result of the coming of the Spirit, had all prophesied (Num 11), just as in Acts 2 a similarly miraculous sign came when all spoke in tongues. Only this time the sign clearly came to both men and women.

A puzzling point about Peter's quoting of Joel 2 is that no one at Pentecost was said to be prophesying, rather they were speaking in tongues—a very different gift. In fact, very few prophecies, dreams, and visions are described anywhere in Acts. How could Joel's prediction about sons and daughters prophesying be fulfilled by a group of people speaking in

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tongues? Could it be that prophecy is not being viewed by Peter as the only expected effect of the coming of the Spirit? Prophecy can be seen instead as a particularly apt example (hearkening back to Num 11) of the many miraculous ways the Holy Spirit would work through His people to accomplish His purpose of empowering the church to share God's message (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).<sup>53</sup> A focus on prophecy is particularly apt here because it is centered on communicating the messages of God, just as the church was at this time beginning to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ. Peter's use of Joel's prophecy reveals that the full (and shocking) participation of women in the tongues-speaking was not inappropriate or scandalous, as observers would certainly have been tempted to think, but simply the fulfillment of God's plan.

### Individual Women Leaders in the New Testament

#### *Women in the Gospels*

In John, the Samaritan "woman at the well" was likely the first "evangelist" of the Messiah's ministry (John 4:28–30, 39), just as Mary was the first commissioned to tell the good news of his resurrection (John 20:17; cf. Matt 28:10).<sup>54</sup> Luke, sometimes called the gospel of the "underdog," deliberately uses a number of paired stories—one featuring a man and the other a woman—to showcase the value given to the faith and ministry of women in the plan of God. This is first seen in the paired stories of Zacharias and of Mary, and then of Simeon and Anna in the temple, but the pattern is repeated also in later parts of the book.<sup>55</sup>

Luke does not portray only male disciples accompanying Jesus and learning from Him during His ministry, as would have been normal for a rabbi of that time. Jesus also traveled with women disciples, including Mary,

Joanna, and Susanna. For Jesus to allow these women to travel with Him would have been considered extraordinary and even shameful.<sup>56</sup> Yet these, in response to being healed by Jesus, accompanied Him and provided for (*diakoneō*) Him out of their own resources (Luke 8:1–3; cf. 24:1, 6, 8). This kindness would have gained these women honor in that society as benefactors, had they not disgraced themselves by stepping outside of the expected roles for women by also traveling with Him.<sup>57</sup>

The endings of all four of the Gospels are particularly striking in their portrayal of women. Women are portrayed as being present with Jesus at the crucifixion (Matt 27:55, 56) when nearly all the male disciples had fled (Matt 26:56; Mark 14:50–52; cf. Luke 22:54). And women visited His tomb (Mark 16:1; cf. John 20:1) while the male apostles were cowering in an upper room with the door barred (John 20:19).

#### *Priscilla and the Women of Acts*

Several mentions of the ministry of Priscilla (Prisca) and Aquila occur in the NT record. Priscilla is recorded as demonstrating traditionally female gifts such as hospitality (Acts 18:2, 3), as well as more public roles such as teacher (Acts 18:26) and co-worker with Paul (Rom 16:3). These latter actions were not generally expected or accepted of a woman in ancient society. While the wife's name is seldom mentioned in ancient narratives—and where it is mentioned, it is placed second—Priscilla's name is most often placed first in the pairing. Acts introduces Aquila first, as would be expected, in first introducing them, but in the other two mentions Priscilla's name comes first.<sup>58</sup> This is particularly interesting in the latter case, because the activity they were engaged in was teaching a man. Indeed, the man whom Priscilla and Aquila taught was not simply an inexperienced new believer, but



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Apollos, the brilliant and eloquent preacher who was already “mighty in the Scriptures.” Although Apollos is said to have already known much about Christ, he was in need of some correction and additional learning which Priscilla took part in providing (Acts 18:24–28).

Such an activity of teaching and correction is one considered a typical and important function of today’s pastor.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, Priscilla is referred to along with Aquila in Romans 16:3 as a *synergos*, or co-worker, the same term Paul used of himself (1 Cor 3:9) and others, including Luke (Phlm 24) and Timothy (1 Thess 3:2).<sup>60</sup> Note that Acts gives no hint of any need to justify or declare an exception for Priscilla as a female, acting in the role of teacher.

Priscilla’s ministry is only one in a long line of females in ministry in Acts. Along with Priscilla, we see Dorcas’ ministry to the widows (Acts 10:36–39) and Philip’s daughters, who were prophets (21:8, 9). In addition, Lydia acted on her own discretion to offer hospitality to Paul and his ministry team and to act as their benefactor (16:13–16, 40).

### Phoebe

In Romans 16:1 Paul says of Phoebe, “I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a *diakonos* (minister, or servant) of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a *prostatis* of many and of myself also” (Rom 16:1, 2). Unfortunately, many English versions of this passage tend to translate these Greek words based on their assumption that since it is about a woman, she couldn’t possibly have been a leader. However, it is significant that Paul has chosen the masculine form of *diakonos*, which would indicate that she is not being referred to simply as a woman who serves, but as filling a

formal role with a standardized title. This fits with the statement that she was a *diakonos* of a particular church. She may have been one of those who took leadership particularly in the physical needs of the church (as in Acts 6), or acted as an appointed agent ministering on behalf of the church in Cenchrae.

Phoebe’s leadership role is even more strongly attested by a further descriptor identifying her as a *prostatis*. The term *prostatis* is related to the spiritual gift of leading (*proistēmi* in Rom 12:8), although the noun form is not found elsewhere in the NT. Other Greek writings of the time, both in the Jewish and Greco-Roman world, use it regularly of various kinds of official leaders.<sup>61</sup> The noun’s feminine usage can be found in inscriptions praising wealthy women who acted as patrons, which would also involve some authority in relation to others. According to the custom of the time the patron provided financial assistance to a group and its members in return for public honor and the authority to expect services of the clients she assisted. Phoebe, however, as a believer in Christ, is spoken of as acting on an equal level as a sister.<sup>62</sup>

### Junia and Others

In addition to Phoebe, eight other women are named in Romans 16, including a woman named Junia who, like Phoebe and Priscilla, appears to have had a leadership role in the church.<sup>63</sup> Of this individual, Paul says, “Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me” (Rom 16:7 NKJV).<sup>64</sup> The initial challenge that causes many to doubt the accuracy of understanding Junia as a female apostle is that many modern versions translate the name as “Junias” (a male name) rather than “Junia” (always female). However, that is not how the ancients understood it. Despite arguments to

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the contrary based on external literary texts, inscriptions indicate that Junia was a common woman's name in the first century, while the masculine Junias appears nowhere during this period.<sup>65</sup> Tellingly, while 37 of 38 Greek editions of the NT printed between 1516 and 1920 used the name Junia, between 1927 and 1994 this was replaced in Greek editions with the masculine name, Junias. This is even despite the fact that the tendencies of the culture and church of earlier times strongly discounted women in leadership.<sup>66</sup>

Some have used another tack, arguing, based on the Greek preposition *en*, that the verse must be translated "...noted *by* the apostles" rather than "notable *among* the apostles." However, the evidence doesn't corroborate that *en* must be used in this way; in fact, Belleville has discovered an almost exact parallel from the same time period which only makes sense as "among."<sup>67</sup>

This is not to claim for Junia the exact ministry given to the Twelve and to Paul but to say that Junia, like other individuals given this title in the NT church, (e.g. James in Gal 1:19 and Barnabas in Acts 15:2), acted in a position of leadership as a representative of Jesus Christ.

Elsewhere in the NT, we find Euodia and Syntyche also praised as "fellow workers" (*synergos*) who have contended by Paul's side in the cause of the gospel (Phil 4:2, 3). *Synergos*, here, is the same term used elsewhere of the male leaders who assisted Paul. Although traditional scholarship has often dismissed the idea, women's leadership in the Christian church may possibly be evidenced also in 2 John. In verse 1 of this short epistle, the "chosen lady" addressed may well be the patron and leader of a house church in the province of Asia (now part of western Turkey).

Although some of these instances of women's leadership are not indisputable when viewed separately, when considered together

a definite pattern emerges. One wonders why terms such as *apostle*, *coworker*, *deacon*, and *leader* are assumed to be leadership language when referring to men but are automatically discounted when applied to women.

### *Women in the House Churches*

The women mentioned above represent some of the most outstanding and well-known women in the first-century church. NT writers could not write about all the women involved in the earliest church or give details on their activities, any more than all the male leaders and their actions in the churches across the Mediterranean world were represented.

A further valuable avenue for understanding the experience of women and their place in ministry in the first-century house churches is to explore what can be known of women's work and authority within the home.<sup>68</sup> While the absolute power of the *pater familias* (male head of household) was still a Roman ideal, within her own household, the woman held a considerable amount of authority. She generally had autonomy in dealing with such things as provisioning, care and supervision of everyone in the household, the purchase and working of fields, and the sale of produce while the husband busied himself with civic and public affairs.<sup>69</sup> Although for married women this was officially under the oversight of the husband, men seldom concerned themselves with household affairs. While widows still tended to be dependent on their families, an increasing number of these, in addition to some never-married women, were able to be financially independent and fully govern their own affairs. Therefore a church meeting in a home such as that of John Mark's mother (Acts 12:12), of Nympha (Col 4:15), or of Priscilla, would have brought the public gathering of the church from the usual male sphere outside the home into a place where women

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often exercised *de facto* and sometimes full autonomy and authority. Such a reality places the clear-cut assumptions about authority in the New Testament church in need of further consideration.

### Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male and female (*arsen kai thēlu*); for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28).

Galatians 3:28 has been called everything from a text devoid of social implications to the "*Magna Carta* of humanity."<sup>70</sup> The passage does not speak directly to the issue of women in ministry, yet it does communicate an important message not only about soteriology but also about ecclesiology and how the church organizes itself.<sup>71</sup> A primary concern of the epistle is the question of who constitutes the people of God—who are the heirs who will be rescued from this evil age (1:4). In Gal 1 through 2a, Paul argues that it was God Himself who gave him the gospel to preach to the Gentiles. As an illustration of the validity of this gospel, Paul vividly describes a rebuke he gave to Peter for timidly renouncing table fellowship with the Gentiles (2:11–14). Chapters 2b through 3 respond to such attitudes by demonstrating that no one could fully meet the requirements of the law. On this basis Paul could declare that both Jews and Gentiles are a part of God's people by the same means. The position of believers as heirs of the promises to Abraham is derived alone through the death of Christ.

Galatians 3:26–29 is marked off from the previous material by the use of the first person "we" in place of the second person plural "you" used earlier. In this passage, Paul spells out several realities that are true "now that faith has come" (3:25).<sup>72</sup> He begins with a theological assertion, stating that his audience

(male and female) are all sons (*huios*) of God through faith. This is affirmed to be true, not on the basis of circumcision, but on the basis of their baptism into Christ by which they have clothed themselves with Him. Most of 3:26–29 focuses on this vertical relationship with God.

The words *you are all one* in verse 28 point however toward one's horizontal relationship with fellow believers. In this verse Paul responds to the relational problem evidenced by Peter's actions in 2:11–14. He argues that in the new union which Christ has formed, distinctions of Jew vs. Gentile, as well as slave vs. free and male vs. female are no longer of import in church affairs. Rather, all are one in Him. Relationships between fellow believers are not just a side point a central issue as evidenced in Paul's vexation with Peter's actions. In 2:11–14 Paul had taken the opportunity to explain to the Galatians the reason he had opposed Peter's behavior. He stated that Peter had not been "straightforward about the truth of the gospel" (2:14). Thus, Paul made clear that his concern was not only about salvation but also about how that gift of salvation should affect relationships and inclusion in the various aspects of the Christian community.<sup>73</sup> To have a theology of oneness in Christ is meaningless without accompanying changes in the way we treat and involve others within the body. Such an error was judged by Paul to be worthy of rebuke.

Paul's inclusion of not only Jew and Greek, but also slave and free and male and female, would have been rather surprising, since Paul has been speaking thus far only about Jew and Gentile. Their inclusion here suggests that Paul wishes to bring out a larger principle. Obviously, the point cannot have been to abolish all differences between the pairs. While those between Jew and Greek and between slave and free are a result of human history, those

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between male and female were fundamental differences traced in their physical bodies at Creation. A common denominator among these three pairs that better suggests how the three pairs are linked is that each pair is the basis of a set of fundamental social roles by which everything in ancient society was organized and structured. Although the verse generally does not raise eyebrows today, in the first century it would have been significantly against the grain of normal thinking. The social organization and day-to-day life of both Jew and Gentile were dependent on these very distinctions, determining, for example, what work you did, where you did and did not belong, to whom you spoke, and how people responded to you.<sup>74</sup> The traditional cultural expectations involved in one of these distinctions were the very reason Peter was so reluctant to join with the Gentiles at table.

Paul underlines the special basis of the differentiation between male and female by using language from the original Creation story. The rare phrase “*arsen kai thēlu*” (male and female) used in Gal 3:28 in place of the normal ἀνὴρ (man) and γυνή (woman), is found elsewhere in the Greek Bible only in, or in reference to, the stories of Creation and the Flood (un-creation). They harken back to the original statement in Gen 1:27: “So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female (*arsen kai thēlu*) He created them” (Gen 1:27; cf. 5:2; Matt 19:4; Mark 10:6).<sup>75</sup>

In Paul’s theology, those who believe are now part of a new creation, begun in Christ (Col 1:15), the second Adam (Rom 5:12–17), and experienced by every believer (2 Cor 5:17).<sup>76</sup> Paul summarizes his argument with the Galatians by referring to this very concept, stating, “For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation” (Gal 6:14, 15).<sup>77</sup> As Adventists invite people to return

to the original plant-based Eden diet so Paul invites believers to return to the original relationships of equality that Adam and Eve enjoyed before the Fall.

Thus, Paul’s point in Gal 3:26–29 cannot be reduced to only the vertical dimension of forensic justification by faith in Christ, as joyful as that message is. Such an argument is based in a dualistic understanding which separates soul from body and sees salvation as pertaining only to right standing before God in a legal sense, rather than to the life of the whole person. This idea would have been foreign to Paul as a Jew, and is foreign to the NT as a whole. As Paul demonstrated in his report of the conflict with Peter, he expects that the salvation Christ provides will make a profound difference in how we view and treat each other within the life of the church. Participation, thus, is no longer conditional on circumcision or ancestry (Rom 9:6, 7), but on a personal response to God’s revelation in Christ and a spiritual circumcision of the heart (Deut 30:6; Rom 2:29; Col 2:11, 13).

### The Priesthood of All Believers

Another paradigm of the church, which the NT takes very seriously, is the believers’ identity as a royal priesthood. This concept grows out of God’s declaration, given at Sinai before His people begged not to hear any longer the fearsome voice of the Lord. At that time God stated that Israel was to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod 19:6; cf. 20:19; Deut 5:5, 25–31; cf. Deut 18:15, 16). Many years later, God promised through Isaiah that in the future His people would indeed be looked upon as “priests of the Lord” and “ministers of our God” (Isa 61:6). Although, due to human free will, this prophecy in Isaiah 61 was not fulfilled in just the way Isaiah anticipated, Jesus applied its opening verses to His own ministry, declaring, “Today this Scripture

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has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:18–21; Isa 61:1, 2). Jesus' reading of Isa 61:1, 2 as being fulfilled in His ministry suggests that Isa 61:6—"you shall be named the priests of the LORD, They shall call you the servants of our God" (NKJV)—might also be fulfilled in a special way as a consequence of His ministry. First Peter 2 indicates that this is indeed the case, for he declares that believers in Christ are even now "being built up like living stones as a spiritual house[hold], into a holy priesthood" (1 Pet 2:5). Therefore, they are together a reconstituted "holy nation," constituting "a royal priesthood" who would at last proclaim God's praises (2:9).<sup>78</sup> The ministry and gifts given to all believers attest that, in fulfillment of the Old Testament promise, each believer has a role to play in the priestly ministry of representing God before the world. John, in Rev 1:5, 6, after reviewing Christ's completed work on our behalf in "washing us from our sins by his blood," states that God already "has made us [past tense] a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (Rev 1:6). This pairing of Christ's ministry and our royal priesthood is so important to John that He returns to it in 5:9, 10, depicting the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders praising Christ in song:

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.<sup>10</sup> You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth" (Rev 5:9, 10, ESV).

These passages together strongly attest that a fulfillment of God's intention for His whole people to function as a royal priesthood has been enacted with the completion of Jesus' earthly work.

It has been argued that women cannot hold leading positions in the church because the

Levitical priesthood was wholly made up of males. This is thought to demonstrate a universal principle of male headship and spiritual authority in religious contexts. Such an imperative is never stated in Scripture, however. In fact, Scripture gives strong reasons to believe that this is not so. Richard Davidson has demonstrated from the Old Testament perspective some of the possible factors in the male nature of the Levitical priesthood. These include: 1) the priestly function of Adam and Eve in the garden; 2) the idolatrous temple practices of the pagans, in contrast to which God created a differentiation through establishing a male-only priesthood; 3) physiological differences between the man and the woman, including physical strength for performing the priestly functions as well as concerns of monthly ritual purity; 4) a woman's family responsibilities as the mother of children; and 5) the reality that women actually did perform two of the three functions of priesthood and were absent only from the cultic (likely for one or more of the reasons above).<sup>79</sup>

The NT gives even more definite evidence that the male nature of the Levitical priesthood was not a model for all spiritual authority for all time. The whole book of Hebrews, and especially chapters 5–10, demonstrates as part of its central argument that the Levitical priesthood was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, a priest from the order of Melchizedek, and is no longer valid for Christians (e.g., Heb 7:11–19; 10:8, 9). Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross, all believers (male and female) may now enter with boldness into the Holy Place—a place formerly reserved for the male Levite priests alone (Heb 10:19). The NT never speaks of any individual other than Jesus Christ in priestly language, other than a metaphorical reference by Paul speaking of himself as being poured out as a drink offering. This reference is doubly unusual, since it is also the

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case that only Christ is truly symbolized by the Levitical offerings. For the NT as a whole, it is the community of believers, the royal priesthood (of which Paul is a part), that are called upon to “offer up spiritual sacrifices” by praising God, by doing good, and by sharing what they have (1 Pet 2:5; Phil 4:18; Heb 13:15, 16).

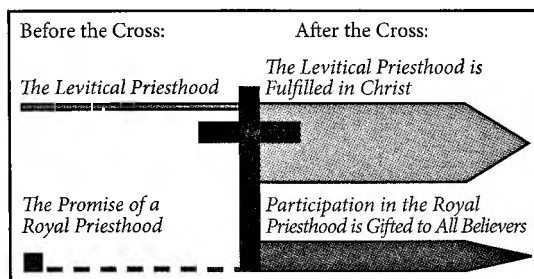
The passage of Rom 12:1–8 is of particular interest to our discussion of inclusive ministry. It opens with the exhortation, “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship” (Rom 12:1), calling on believers to act in the role of both priest and sacrifice. Verses 1 and 2 make a contrast between the call to present your bodies as a holy and acceptable sacrifice and the alternative: being “conformed to the world.” Verses 3 through 5 spell out an important aspect of sacrificing oneself: instead of conforming to the world’s way of approaching things, believers are to show humble-minded respect for the function of each member in the body of Christ. Verses 6–8 climax this brief interpretation of the believer’s priestly sacrifice by encouraging each and every member to use to the utmost the gifts God has given:

So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness (Rom 12:5–8).

Here is laid out a beautiful picture of the sacrifice, or “priestly work,” God has in mind for His “royal priesthood.” While respecting the functions of the other members of Christ’s

body, believers, both male and female, are to use faithfully, humbly, and actively the spiritual gifts they have received. This is possible through the transformation of their minds (Rom 12:2).

Below is a simple diagram of the priesthood patterns depicted in the OT and NT. As demonstrated above, the earthly Levitical priesthood, so important in the Old Testament as a prefiguring of Christ, is ended when Jesus takes over the role of High Priest and fulfills its symbolism in His sacrifice and in His work in the heavenly sanctuary. The royal priesthood, planned by God and remembered in the OT, comes into a new reality in the NT, taking the Levitical priesthood’s place as God’s representatives before the world.



### Then What Do We Do with Paul’s Statements That Don’t Seem to Fit?

This chapter has sketched an overall picture of ministry and ordination in the first-century church, finding no reason in the NT portrayal thus far to believe that women should be excluded from either. Rather, the NT suggests that all believers are called to engage in the work of ministry and mission in accordance with the gifts given by the Holy Spirit and the principles of servant leadership taught by Jesus. Nonetheless, any informed student of the Bible is aware that there are several passages in Paul that have traditionally been interpreted as directly prohibiting women from leadership in pastoral ministry. On the

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surface it would appear that these texts may militate against the reading of the New Testament described above. Yet we as Adventists know well that there are other passages of Scripture whose meaning has long been obscured by the cultural and religious traditions of centuries. There is not space to deal with these Pauline passages in depth in this chapter. Rather, a brief overview of each passage is provided below, suggesting a way of reading the passage that may be more true to the original intent. A more detailed exploration of the two main passages can be found in chapters 12 and 15 of this book.

### 1 Corinthians 11:2-16<sup>80</sup>

But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved . . . But if one is inclined to be contentious we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God. (1 Cor 11:3-5, 6)

In the chapters preceding 1 Cor 11:2-16, Paul has dealt with the issue of eating food offered to idols, ending his counsel by urging these believers to consider not only their own rights but how their choices might affect others. In doing so, he insists, "whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God" (10:28, 29). The passage of 1 Cor 11-14 continues this concern of bringing glory to God through our actions, this time addressing issues related to the church's worship gatherings. This new section begins in chapter 11 urging the Corinthian believers to consider how the head coverings

they chose to wear in their worship gatherings could cast dispersion upon both God and others.<sup>81</sup> The key problem Paul addresses in this passage was that, although pious women of the Greco-Roman world were expected to cover their heads in public, some believers were being tempted to take advantage of their new freedom in Christ and abandon this tradition.<sup>82</sup> This caused their husbands and their God to be shamed in the eyes of others. In a culture where honor was a crucial value, such disgrace was among the most terrible things that could happen to a person.

Although 1 Corinthians 11:3 is often quoted as a proof-text against the ordination of women, this verse does not address church leadership issues at all. In fact, the immediately following verses, 4-6, describe male and female believers as engaging in exactly the same activities of worship and leadership.

To understand what Paul was doing in 1 Cor 11:3, it is helpful to recognize that he is using the word *head* (*kefalē*) metaphorically and to explore how he goes on to interpret this metaphor. Several symbolic meanings of the word *head* (*kefalē*) are utilized in verses 4-16 to persuade the offending Corinthians to dress appropriately with reference to head coverings. By improperly covering one's anatomical *head* (*kefalē*), Paul argues in verses 4-6, it was not only their own anatomical *heads* that were being shamed but the metaphorical "*heads*" spoken of in verse 3.<sup>83</sup>

In verses 7-9 Paul builds on this argument by reference to Gen 1 and 2. While Paul and his audience were aware that both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, in verse 7 only the man is directly stated to be in the image of God. By speaking of the woman as the glory (also) of the man, Paul then places the woman in a special place of honor which should be carefully guarded and not changed into a source of shame by her choices regarding head

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coverings. In verses 8 and 9 Paul plays on a Greek symbolic use of the word *head* (*kefalē*) to represent the idea of being *first*, or *source* (as in the head of a river), arguing that since Adam was created first and Eve was created from Adam as his helpmate (Heb. *ezer*), it is appropriate to avoid shaming him.<sup>84</sup> Paul himself use the word in this way in Eph 4:15, 16 and Col 2:18, 19. None of the points Paul makes uses the symbolism of *head* to focus on the idea of rulership that modern readers so often assume for the term *head*.<sup>85</sup>

Verse 10, in literal translation, begins "Because of this a woman ought to have authority upon or over (Gr. *epi*) the head." Although several words are commonly inserted into the text by translators, when read as part of Paul's argument about head-coverings, the clause makes complete sense without adding words to Scripture. The initial words "because of this" can be understood to refer to the problems caused by dishonorable fashions, and the Corinthian women are then urged to use their authority to appropriately cover their heads.<sup>86</sup> In verses 11 and 12, Paul steps back from his argument regarding head-coverings to make clear that, while it was true that the man Adam was created *first* and was thus the source of Eve, ever since then it is the female who is *first* and the *source* of the males to whom she gives birth. The passage ends, in verses 13–16, by returning to the initial concern with cultural expectations, calling the Corinthian believers to conform to general practice and avoid wearing on their heads things that were considered dishonorable by the people around them.

When one reads verse 3 in this context, it is evident that the verse symbolically describes three specific relationships that point men and women toward concern for how their choices reflect upon those to whom they should bring respect. The use of the *head* (*kefalē*) as a symbol to represent one who was *first* or *source*, as Paul

used it later in the passage (and in Eph 4:15, 16 and Col 2:18, 19) makes good sense also in verse 3. Read this way it reminds believers that Christ is the Source (at Creation) of every man, the man (Adam) is the source of the woman (Eve and all who came after her), and God is the Source of Christ (the Messiah whom He sent to earth. The Greek word *Christ* is a translation of the Hebrew word *Messiah*). This reading solves two problems that arise when *head* is read in this verse as *ruler*. It allows the apparently odd ordering of the three relationships to be read simply in chronological sequence; and it avoids placing Christ as eternally subordinate to the rulership of God.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16, then can be seen as using several different rationales to call on believers, particularly women, to cease dressing in a way that was considered shameful by society and would thus bring shame on their God and their husband. There is virtually unanimous recognition in the Adventist Church today that the prescription that a women cover her head in public worship is culturally influenced and that it is the principle of modest and honorable dress that is to govern the believer's choices in this area. The passage does not address the place of women in church organization at all, although one might appropriately suggest that women who minister in the church should dress in a modest and appropriate manner that would reflect well on her husband and her God. Instead, it would encourage the believing woman, while acting as a full human being with a conscience, a will, and gifts of her own, to at the same time give honor and respect to her husband.

### 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35

As in all the churches of the saints, let your women keep silent in [your] churches, for it is not permitted for them to speak; but they should be submissive, as



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the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church (1 Cor 14:33b-35).

First Corinthians 14:33b-35 falls near the end of the section of 1 Corinthians focusing on public worship. The focus of the larger passage is on disorderly behavior in the worship service. The concern of the previous verses (26-33a) was to bring order to a service that was disrupted and chaotic, ending with the reasoning, "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (v. 33a).

The next words, "As in all the churches of the saints..." (v. 33b), would be a strange addition to a universal statement about God's nature. They do, however, make perfect sense when they are understood as introducing the brief counsel of vv. 34 and 35 regarding women keeping silence in the churches. Indeed, this is where it is placed in most recent Greek and English versions. The brief counsel concerning women is thus prefaced by founding it not in universal principle but in a customary practice among the churches. The words, "for it is shameful," in verse 35 affirm that the underlying rationale for this custom is based in cultural expectations, pointing, as in chapter 11, to the concern for shame and honor that was especially valued in the culture of the contemporary Greco-Roman society.

Several times in the chapter, Paul has advised particular groups to be silent for particular reasons. "If anyone speaks in a tongue . . . if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent (*sigāō*)" (14:27-28); and, "Let . . . prophets speak . . . but if anything is revealed to another . . . let the first keep silent (*sigāō*)" (14:29, 30).<sup>87</sup> In 14:34, 35, evidence suggests that there are two related reasons for this counsel to women. One is related to what is shameful in the culture. At that time, a woman who spoke in public could still be considered dishonorable, and speaking to males who were not her husband suggested that

she was flirtatious or worse.<sup>88</sup> The other reason for this counsel is related to speaking out in church to ask questions of those who were teaching. Since Paul has already, in 1 Cor 11:5, made room for women praying and prophesying in public, and since his concern in chapter 14 is order in the worship service, his counsel in 14:34, 35 is apparently directed at a specific situation in which women were disruptively questioning teachers in the course of a worship service.

The two positive commands, "keep silent" and "be submissive" (*hypotassō*) are given together as a specific prescription in a chaotic situation. As a matter of fact, all believers are instructed, just a little later in the letter (1 Cor 16:15, 16), to submit (*hypotassō*) to leaders who devote themselves to service (*diakonia*).<sup>89</sup> If the subsequent statement in 14:36 is also addressed to these disruptive women, it provides further evidence of the combativeness of their questioning. In this verse Paul asks "was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?" Such behavior would fit the picture of the self-proclaimed wise ones and liberty graspers addressed in the earlier part of this letter. That peace and order is a primary concern of the entire chapter is evidenced by Paul's return to this point at the end of the chapter with the statement, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (14:40).

Interestingly, few Adventists have trouble recognizing the culturally and contextually conditioned nature of this passage. With reference to the question of ordaining women pastors, the church which is comfortable today allowing women to speak in church has no reason to be concerned, based on this passage, that a female pastor's public speech is any more inappropriate than that of a Sabbath School teacher or superintendent.

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### 1 Timothy 2:11–15<sup>90</sup>

A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint (1 Tim 2:11–15).

In 1 Timothy Paul is dealing with a problem of false teaching by individuals within the church in Ephesus including some of its leaders. These were evidencing prideful and arrogant behavior and stirring up strife in the church. In chapter 2, immediately after mentioning by name some of these who had “suffered shipwreck” of their faith, Paul reveals his concern that all believers pray so that they may “lead a tranquil and quiet (or orderly, *ēsuchos*) life” (1 Tim 2:2). The male believers seemed to be falling short in this, for Paul immediately goes on to counsel them to pray “without wrath or dissension” (2:8). This counsel is certainly not appropriate for men alone, but it was apparently especially needed by the men in this troubled community of churches.

Paul then goes on to speak also to the women about a related aspect of godliness with which they were having particular challenges. These women were asserting their own importance through the wearing of expensive and attention-grabbing adornments (2:9, 10) and also by disrupting the teaching of the word (2:11). In response, Paul repeats once again the importance of the peaceful, quiet manner of life he had directed prayer for in verse 2 and had instructed the men toward in verse 8. To the women he emphasized that they

must learn in quietness (or orderliness, *ēsuchia*; 2:11, 12). In the context of Paul’s clearly stated concerns thus far, as well of the closing of this letter, it seems likely that the women too were influenced by the false teachers. Indeed, historical evidence reveals emerging teachings about women in some corners of Ephesus, which may have tempted them to be disruptive, to assert themselves in inappropriate ways and even to advocate for false teachings they found attractive. Paul combats these problems by calling on women to worship in a spirit of peacefulness and quietness.

As noted above, the counsel to women to learn with submission (*hupotagē*; 2:11) is not an expectation restricted to women, for Paul uses the verbal form of the same Greek root to call all believers to submit to their leaders (1 Cor 16:15, 16). In verse 12 in his description of his own practice, Paul is translated by many versions as declaring that he does not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over (*authentēō*) a man. The word *authentēō*, however, is not the normal word for exercising authority. Rather, it is a rare word used nowhere else in Scripture. It is part of a word family used in the literature of Paul’s time to refer to objectionably aggressive control over another.<sup>91</sup> For Paul to choose this word in place of the word family normally used elsewhere in Scripture suggests he had in mind a particularly problematic sort of authority-grasping which might best be translated “to domineer” or, as the KJV has it, “to usurp authority over” a man. It would not be appropriate for a woman, or for a man, to teach if they were doing so in a domineering manner, especially if their teaching was not well-grounded in truth. The New Testament makes it clear that women did teach in other instances, however, for Priscilla taught the gifted Apollos (Acts 18:26) and Paul speaks of women acting in a teaching role in numerous places (1 Cor 11:5; Phil 4:2, 3; 1 Tim 2:3, 4).

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When one recognizes the disruptive and overbearing behavior revealed in Paul's counsel regarding the women in Ephesus, it can be seen that his reference to Creation is best understood as an explanation as to why a woman should not be allowed to domineer men in a teaching role. These verses demonstrate that women have no claim to superiority over men. In fact, they are reminded to be cautious so that they do not repeat the error of Eve and bring about the tragic results of falling into the deception of false teachers. Paul also assures women that it is not necessary to be a teacher or leader in order to be a fully contributing member of the body of believers. A woman can "work out" the salvation God has provided (Phil 2:12, 13) through bearing and raising faithful children as much as she could by preaching and teaching the word of God.

As with 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, there is no imperative in this passage that bars women through all time from pastoral leadership and ordination. The passage reminds believers today that a quiet and orderly spirit is God's desire, and that a domineering spirit is inappropriate for women, as for anyone, in a leadership role.

### Conclusions

The proposal of this chapter is that the NT witness regarding church leadership and ordination provides no impediment to the ordination of suitably qualified women to serve in the role of pastor. The basis for selection of individuals for formally appointed roles in the NT, such as those of elder or deacon, was spiritual maturity, evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence, and appropriate gifting. Today's office of pastor, although not fleshed out in detail in the NT, must be understood to carry the same basic qualifications.

All ministries, whether gifted by God or appointed by humans, carry some type of

authority. The pastoral ministry is no different. In each case the authority supported by the NT is authority for a task, not authority to domineer or control individuals. Appropriate authority is always exercised under Christ, and under the authority of the Scriptures and the body of believers which He has instituted. The pastors' primary tasks of preaching the Word and nurturing the body of Christ are enacted under these higher authorities. Specifically, in the Adventist Church today, these higher authorities include, for example, the administration of the conference committee which is governed by the policies enacted by the whole body of believers in General Conference session. The ordination of a pastor is thus not about placing an individual at the top of a power or status hierarchy, with ultimate authority over people. Rather, it is about affirming the presence of the authority God has already given that individual in order to do the tasks for which He has called and equipped them. This preponderance of NT evidence insists that we reconsider the readings of Paul that we have assumed from Christian tradition.

The priority of seeing God's universe as a place of order and organization is valid and important. The question is, "According to what principles does God order His universe?" The sketch of ministry, authority, and gifting in this chapter suggests that the preponderance of NT evidence does not support an ordering based in an arbitrary subordination of half of His human creation. Rather, the New Testament repeatedly portrays an ordering guided by the Spirit through the endowment of spiritual gifts recognized by the church under His leading through the avenues of Scripture and experience of His workings.

While many cultures see the use of a non-authoritarian-type of authority as unworkable, other cultures have become comfortable and

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even come to prefer this sort of authority that works by means of cooperation, nurture, and agreed-upon guidelines. In such cultures women pastors with their special qualities of nurture and compassion would thrive and should not be blocked from ministry. Such qualities, in fact, are central to the core pastoral task of shepherding. Is it not time to consider that in the role of pastoring there may be a place, in some parts of the world, for “mothers in Israel” who can use their qualities and gifts in a way that is complementary to the male pastors in our midst?

In Acts 15, the church listened carefully to the voices of those who had experienced the Holy Spirit’s leading. Many evidences were given of the Holy Spirit’s working in the lives of the individuals involved. James then appropriately turned the attention of the gathering to the Scriptures to ensure that they were understanding the will of God correctly in this matter. Significantly, Amos 9:11, 12, which he quoted, is not an explicit “Thus saith the Lord” calling for an end to circumcision after the coming of Christ, but the statement of a general principle regarding God’s intent for the Gentiles. On the basis of the intent of God expressed in this Scriptural passage (no doubt also along with consideration of other similar passages of Scripture), the church took the huge step of not requiring circumcision, even though they lacked an explicit Scriptural command to do so. Instead of insisting on such a declaration, they looked to what God was doing in human lives, in their day, in the context of the history and teaching recorded in Scripture. This model is one that we would do well to consider more closely.

Near the end of His ministry Jesus spoke at length of His Second Coming and repeatedly called on His disciples to be ready when He comes. As He finished telling the parable of the ten virgins who awaited the bridegroom,

(a parable much loved by us as Adventists) He warned that one must “be on the alert, therefore, because you know neither the day nor the hour” (Matt 25:13). Building on this warning, He immediately moved into a second parable, stating, “For it is just like a man going on a journey who called His bondservants and handed over his belongings to them. And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, then he went on his journey” (Matt 25:14, 15). As the well-known story goes, the servants who used what the master had given them were rewarded, while the one who hid his talent was punished. In the context today of Jesus’ soon coming, do we dare to insist that a God-given talent or gift not be used to its full potential to complete the work of spreading the gospel to all the world? With many societies today welcoming the leadership of women and respecting the non-authoritarian participatory style of leadership taught in the NT—a style of authority often practiced quite naturally by women—shall we move out of God’s way as we “pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” to finish His work (Matt 9:38)?

### Endnotes:

1. A similar point is made by Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief 14: *Unity in the Body of Christ*: “The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, 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. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children (Rom 12:4, 5; 1 Cor 12:12–14; Matt 28:19, 20; Ps 133:1; 2 Cor 5:16,

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- 17; Acts 17:26, 27; Gal 3:27, 29; Col 3:10–15; Eph 4:14–16; 4:1–6; John 17:20–23).”
2. Because all nouns must have a gender in Greek, the use of the masculine ending is the normal usage for designating a mixed group. These masculine endings are used of all the gifts in these lists. Since none of us would restrict gifts such as faith or prophecy to men alone, it would be inconsistent to insist that the endings related to the leadership gifts should be so understood.
  3. Leadership might be best understood as the ability to act in a manner that influences others. See, for example, John C. Maxwell’s oft-quoted maxim, “Leadership is influence: nothing more, nothing less.” Accessed Mar. 31, 2014 at <http://www.buildingchurchleaders.com/articles/2005/090905.html>.
  4. In this chapter, Greek words are cited in lexical form for the sake of the readers who do not know Greek.
  5. The idea of ruling is not primary in *proistēmi*, as illustrated in the first-century Jewish writings of Josephus, who quotes Julius Caesar as stating of a certain high priest, “that his children shall rule over (*archō*) the Jewish nation . . . and the high priest, as the head of the Jews (*ethmarchēs*), shall be the protector (*proistēmi*) of those Jews who are unjustly treated” (*Antiquities of the Jews* 14.196). Noted in Walter L. Liefeld. “The Nature of Authority in the New Testament,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 259–261.
  6. A cognate noun, *kubernētēs*, is used in the LXX and NT to refer exclusively to the pilot of a ship (4 Macc 7:1; Prov 23:34; Ezek 27:8, 27, 28; Acts 27:11; Rev 18:17).
  7. The term is also used of other types of appointed representatives, such as individuals sent out by individual churches (2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25); cf. Heb 3:1.
  8. The evangelist is not mentioned in any of the other spiritual gift lists and only three times in the NT. In 2 Tim 4:5, Timothy is instructed both to do the work of a *euangelistēs* and fulfill his *diakonia* (ministry, or service).
  9. The English word *pastor* is derived from the Latin *pastorem*, meaning “shepherd.”
  10. The act of shepherding is expressed in Greek with the verb form, *poimainō*. Paul uses the example of shepherding to argue for the right to be supported financially in one’s work of ministry (1 Cor 9:7).
  11. Unless otherwise noted, Scriptural quotations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible* (©Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 196, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988, 1995. Used by permission.)
  12. As Ellen White notes, “It is not always men who are best adapted to the successful management of a church” (*Pastoral Ministry* [Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2005], 36).
  13. This is Ellen White’s heartfelt concern in calling for “Gospel Order,” as can be seen for example in the chapter entitled “Gospel Order” in White, *Early Writings* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 97–104.
  14. These functional roles are today often spoken of as *offices*. However, the use of this term should not be confused with the implications of status and power that became associated with it over subsequent centuries.
  15. Indeed, the reason Jesus’ disciples had to exercise authority over demons was that the demons, led by Satan, had themselves sought to usurp undue authority.
  16. The term *NT church* is used here to refer to the church portrayed in the NT. This is the best term I have found for this specific focus, since the broader term “early church” is regularly used to refer to both NT times and to the several subsequent centuries.
  17. Cf. Luke 10:40. See also 1 Cor 12:5, which is probably the earliest use of *diakonia* in the NT. This selection by the church of individuals to share in church responsibilities is spoken of by Ellen White as “the model for the organization of the church in every other place.” The apostles in their “general oversight of the church” were not to lord it over God’s heritage” and that the deacons, chosen on the basis of reputation and Spirit-gifting, would “have a uniting influence upon the entire flock” (White, *Acts of the Apostles* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005], 91).
  18. The report of Stephen’s speech in Acts 7 evidences the authority with which he engaged in ministry of the word.
  19. James Tunstead Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church: Public Services and Offices in the Earliest*

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- Christian Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 228–233; Benjamin L. Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church*. ed. Gossai (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 23–39; cf. R. Alastair Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity*, ed. Riches (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 21–23.
20. Richard M. Davidson, “Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations,” (Theology of Ordination Study Committee, 2013), 60. It is feasible that other unnamed women also held this role at times. The Adventist Church today officially recognizes that the office of elder is open to both men and women, based on an understanding that the masculine-gendered language of “one woman man” identifies a moral qualification that is also fulfilled by “a one-man woman.” Thus the current General Conference policy on ordination of women in the *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook* states: “By action of the Annual Council of 1975, reaffirmed at the 1984 Annual Council, both men and women are eligible to serve as elders and receive ordination to this position of service in the church.” (Silver Spring, MD: The Ministerial Association of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2009).
  21. The implementation of traditional role of elder in the NT Church contrasts sharply with the church’s avoidance of implementing other OT positions, such as the ruler, with its encroachment upon the singular authority of God (1 Sam 8:4–19), and the priest, whose work was fulfilled in Christ (Heb 7:11–19; 10:8, 9).
  22. Ellen White comments on this challenge: “I saw that in the apostles’ day the church was in danger of being deceived and imposed upon by false teachers. Therefore the brethren chose men who had given good evidence that they were capable of ruling well their own house and preserving order in their own families, and who could enlighten those who were in darkness. Inquiry was made of God concerning these, and then, according to the mind of the church and the Holy Ghost, they were set apart by the laying on of hands. Having received their commission from God and having the approbation of the church, they went forth baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and administering the ordinances of the Lord’s house, often waiting upon the saints by presenting them the emblems of the broken body and spilt blood of the crucified Saviour, to keep fresh in the memory of God’s beloved children His sufferings and death” (EW 100).
  23. The role of the elder was never mixed with that of the apostle in the NT (See, for example, Acts 15:2).
  24. Some have suggested that Paul’s counsel regarding widows in 1 Tim 5:1–16 points to a developing formal role played by older widows who no longer had the heavy burden of household management for husband and family (5:5, 10). In verse 2, these widows are referred to using the word *presbyteros* (with the appropriate feminine ending), the term generally used to designate formally appointed elders. Verse 9 speaks of women being “selected” (*katalegō*), but unfortunately, Paul nowhere clarifies what they are being selected, or enrolled for. It may be that this was a sort of early church “welfare list,” but it is interesting that these widows should be expected to measure up to a list of qualifications similar to the qualifications earlier given for the deacon and elder, including being “a one-man woman,” being of good reputation, demonstrating hospitality, and devoting oneself to good works. An additional concern for monetary aid is also present, possibly because the dependent nature of women’s lives in ancient times often left widowed women without resources for survival. That the section on the service of widows ends by returning to the topic of elders (*presbuteros*) in general suggests the possibility this discussion of female *presbuteros* in 5:2 is something more than a generic reference to older women. Unfortunately, the available evidence does not allow for certainty on this issue. There is historical evidence that there were women elders for centuries after the writing of Paul’s letters. It was not until the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 364) that women elders were officially abolished.
  25. Vern. S. Poythress, “Male Meaning in Generic Masculines in Koine Greek,” *WTJ* 66.2 (2004): 325–336.
  26. Centuries later, Ellen White also used male-gendered language appropriate to her day to speak of functions that in other writings she more deliberately assigns to both sexes. For example, she remarks, “Those who profess to be the ministers of Jesus should be *men* of experience and deep piety, and then at all times and in all places they can shed a holy influence” (EW 102); but also, “The experience thus gained [in the canvassing work] will be of the greatest value to those who

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- are fitting themselves for the ministry. It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God” (White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948], 6:322).
27. If the exclusion of women from leadership was in fact an essential cornerstone of Gospel order and the organization of God’s government, it is odd that we have no record of Jesus instructing His apostles directly on this point. Ellen White ascribes the term *minister* to both male and female, writing: “Make no mistake in neglecting to correct the error of giving ministers less than they should receive. . . . The tith should go to those [ministers] who labor in word and doctrine [5:17], be they men or women” (1MR 263).
  28. Ellen White states, “As in the Old Testament the twelve patriarchs stand as representatives of Israel, so the twelve apostles were to stand as representatives of the gospel church” (White, *Desire of Ages* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2006], 291).
  29. Matt 7:24, where Jesus says, “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise [anēr] who built his house on the rock.”
  30. White in *Acts of the Apostles* identifies this experience as an ordination to ministry, stating, “God had abundantly blessed the labors of Paul and Barnabas during the year they remained with the believers in Antioch. But neither of them had as yet been formally ordained to the gospel ministry. They had now reached a point in their Christian experience when God was about to entrust them with the carrying forward of a difficult missionary enterprise, in the prosecution of which they would need every advantage that could be obtained through the agency of the church” (160).
  31. Ellen White states, “Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers had been formed into churches, the organization of the church was further perfected, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained” (AA 91). John Reeve has shown, in chapter 3 of this book, the results that happen when church organization is not in harmony with the witness of His will in Scripture.
  32. Ellen White states that, “Paul regarded the occasion of his formal ordination as marking the beginning of a new and important epoch in his lifework. It was from this time that he afterward dated the beginning of his apostleship in the Christian church” (AA 164).
  33. See also White, AA 161–164.
  34. “Consensus Statement on a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Ordination,” voted July 23, 2013 by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC). Available at [www.archives.adventistreview.org/article/6497](http://www.archives.adventistreview.org/article/6497).
  35. The *diakonos* word family carries the idea of service, or ministry, rendered to another. This is in contrast to the *doulos* word family, which is also used of servants in the NT. *Doulos* refers not simply to one who performs a service (whether servant or slave or other individual) but specifically to “a relationship of dependence and subordination.” See Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *EDNT* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990).
  36. Ellen White warned against “kingly power” and authority and stood against both individuals and groups seeking to take this kind of power. (*General Conference Bulletin*, Apr. 3, 1901, par. 34; “Selections from the *Testimonies for the Church* for the Study of Those Attending the General Conference in Oakland, CA, Mar. 27, 1903”, 54.3; 55.2; *Bible Training School*, May 1, 1903, par. 5; *Testimonies for the Church Containing Letters to Physicians and Ministers Instruction to Seventh-Day Adventists* [SpTB02] 45.1 [1904]).
  37. Authority may be distinguished from *power*, which is the ability to actually carry out the intended action. In the NT the concepts of *exousia* and *dunamis* (power) often overlap, especially where it is the God of all power who is the One granting authority (*exousia*).
  38. In related parables in Matthew and Luke, a servant is said to have been “put in charge of” the other servants. The authority given this servant is described, not as authority to control or take power over, but authority to give the other servants their food at the proper time, that is, to accomplish the given task of serving and caring for their needs.
  39. In a later section of the chapter, and elsewhere in this book, attention is given to 1 Cor 11:3, 4 and Eph 5:23, 24 and the “headship principles” regarding man and woman found there.
  40. Paul also rebuked Peter (Gal 2:11) and acts to interpret the Acts 15 decision (Rom 14:13–23; 1 Cor 8). Even in the letter to the Roman church, which he had not established nor even visited, Paul speaks with authority.

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41. Paul's teachings in Rom 14:1–15:13 and 1 Cor 8 can be understood as preventing misuse of the decision of the council.
42. Indeed, like Jesus (Luke 9:49, 50), Paul rejoiced that even in the preaching of those with less than pure motives "in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed" (Phil 1:12–18).
43. Paul began almost every letter by identifying himself as one called to be an apostle (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1), or as an apostle by the will of God (e.g., 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1). This claim is defended at various times by pointing out that, like the Twelve (2 Cor 11:5), he: 1) saw Jesus and was thus a witness to His resurrection (1 Cor 9:1; 15:7–9); 2) received his call and his gospel directly from Him (Gal 1:11–2:9); 3) performed signs and wonders through Him (1 Cor 2:4, 5; 12:11, 12); and 4) won others to His name (1 Cor 9:2). George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 566, 567.
44. The words "and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete," which follow immediately after 2 Cor 10:5, should also be noted. Note the plural "we" that is used here, which may suggest a larger group than Paul alone. This would be in keeping with Christ's instructions in Matt 18:12–20.
45. BDAG 760.
46. Ellen White spoke of Timothy as a beloved son of Paul, whom he carefully trained as a gospel minister and teacher. Citing Paul's counsel to him "Preach the word, be ready in season and out of season" (2 Tim 4:2 NKJV), she shows how Paul points Timothy to Scripture for the source of his authority: "Fearing that Timothy's mild, yielding disposition might lead him to shun an essential part of his work, Paul exhorted him to be faithful in reproving sin and even to rebuke with sharpness those who were guilty of gross evils. Yet he was to do this 'with all long-suffering and doctrine.' He was to reveal the patience and love of Christ, explaining and enforcing his reproofs by the truths of the word" (AA 503).
47. BDAG 791, 792; Note that the Greek word for submit is also a different word than the regular *hupotassō* and suggests the idea to yield, or give way to.
48. Walter L. Liefeld, "The Nature of Authority in the New Testament," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 258–261.
49. Philo, *On the Special Laws* 3.169, 170; *Embassy to Gaius* 40.319; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 4.219. See Bernadette J. Broonen, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue*, 36 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982); Amy-Jill Levine, "Second Temple Judaism, Jesus and Women: Yeast of Eden," *BibInt* 2 (1994). It is all too easy to judge the freedoms and responsibilities of women in the church at the beginning by modern standards, rather than to take the time to recognize accurately the challenges and accommodations made to advance the gospel in that society. Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: a Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 335.
50. C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1 (London: T & T Clark, 1994), 135.
51. The NASB renders most of this quote in capital letters to indicate that Peter quotes from Joel 2:28, 29. On the basis of Luke 24:44, 45, it may have been Jesus Himself who pointed out this passage to Peter and the other disciples before His departure.
52. Richard M. Davidson, "Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations," paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), July 2013, 62. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
53. David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 142. For information on the Greco-Roman attitudes of the time, see John W. Reeve, "Trajectories of Women's Ordination in History," paper presented at TOSC, July 2013. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>. A revised version of this study may be found in this volume as ch. 3.
54. Ellen White noted, "It was Mary that first preached a risen Jesus. In fulfillment of the divine plan, the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. If this work was not beneath the dignity of the world's Redeemer, the Creator of worlds, should it be considered too humiliating for sinful mortals? If Christ taught, and if he wrestled in earnest prayer to his Father in behalf of those he came to save, we should engage in the same work. . . . If there were twenty women where now there is one, who would make this holy mission their cherished work, we should see many more converted to the truth. The refining, softening influence of Christian



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- women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth" (RH [Jan. 2, 1879]).
55. Here in Luke both Zacharias and Mary are visited by Gabriel who tells each not to fear and promises each a son. Yet the responses differ markedly for while Zacharias is rebuked for his lack of faith (Luke 1:18), Mary's question receives no rebuke but instead a strong reassurance (1:34–37). The faithfulness of a woman can also be seen in the stories of Simeon and Anna, who greet Jesus in the temple (2:25–39). In addition, the only son of the widow of Nain is raised from the dead (7:11–17), and so is the only daughter of Jairus (8:40–56). The parable of the mustard seed, which features a man planting his garden, is followed by the parable of the yeast, which portrays a woman baking bread (13:18–21). The parable of the lost sheep, which focuses attention on the shepherd (15:3–7), is succeeded by the parable of the woman who lost a coin in her home (15:8–10).
  56. Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 93–105; Ben Witherington III, "On the Road with Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and Other Disciples—Luke 8:1–3," *ZNW* 70 (1979): 243–248.
  57. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 317–321.
  58. It has been argued that Priscilla in doing this was subject to and under the supervision of Aquila, but the deliberate moving of her name to the front of the pair questions this argument.
  59. In considering the kind of authority involved here, we can see that it was the Scriptures which held the central authority, in the instruction given by Priscilla and Aquila to Apollos as humble servant leaders.
  60. By inviting Paul to her home, apparently acting on her own authority, Lydia would have been seen as Paul's benefactor, or patron, giving her some degree of "moral authority" in the eyes of that society.
  61. Darius Jankiewicz, "Phoebe: Was She an Early Church Leader?" *Ministry* (April 2013): 10–13, a revised version of this study may be found in this volume as ch. 10. Elizabeth A. McCabe, "A Reevaluation of Phoebe in Romans 16:1, 2 as a *Diakonos* and *Prostatis*: Exposing the Inaccuracies of English Translations," in *Women in the Biblical World* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009).
  62. Greg Perry, "Phoebe of Cenchreae and "Women" of Ephesus: "Deacons" in the Earliest Churches," *Presbyterian* 36.1 (2010): 15.
  63. Ben Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, SNTSMS 59 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 116: "The overall impression one gets from Romans 16 is that not only were a wide variety of women involved in the work of the church, but also that they were doing a wide variety of things including missionary work, carrying letters, serving in charitable tasks as deaconesses, providing aid or shelter for traveling apostles, etc. . . . we see here a picture of a vibrant, multi-faceted church using the gifts and graces of both men and women to spread the gospel." Cf. Nancy Vhymeister, "Junia the apostle," *Ministry* (July 2013): 6–9, a revised version of this study may be found in this volume as ch. 11.
  64. Some have suggested that Junia and Andronicus, having been "in Christ" even before Paul, may be the Joanna and Chuza mentioned in Luke 8:3, but this remains a conjecture.
  65. Junia appears at least 250 times in inscriptions and other Roman writing during that period. There is no evidence in the literature of the time for the argument that the name Junias could be a shortened form of the more common name, Junianos. Eldon Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 26–28.
  66. Eldon J. Epp and others have demonstrated that, even though the form of Junia and Junias would have looked the same in the ancient Greek style used in writing Romans, the distinguishing accents later added to the manuscripts never indicated the masculine form of the name. (A few manuscripts use the female name *Julia* in place of *Junia*.) *Ibid.*, 45, 62, 63.
  67. In favor of "noted by" is Michael H. Burer and Daniel B. Wallace, "Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re-examination of Rom 16.7," *NTS* 47.1 (2001): 76–91. Linda Belleville discusses almost an exact parallel in, "Iounian . . . `ēpīsemoi `en tois `apostólois: A Re-examination of Romans 16.7 in Light of Primary Source Materials," *NTS* 51.2 (2005): 246.
  68. This exploration has been excellently initiated by Osiek and MacDonald in *A Woman's Place: House Churches and Earliest Christianity*, especially pp. 144–163, on which this paragraph is based.
  69. For example, Xenophon, a classical Greek writer still important in Roman times, spoke of the husband and wife acting as partners in

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- the household with the husband bringing in resources and the wife having the authority to manage and disperse them (*Oeconomicus* 3.14–16). Her work in the household (as a result of the training of the teenage wife by the older husband) is compared by him to that of a queen bee, a military commander and a city councilor (7.36–43; 9.15).
70. Paul King Jewett, *Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975).
  71. Gordon D. Fee. "Male and Female in the New Creation: Galatians 3:26–29," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 174–176.
  72. William G. Johnsson. "Galatians 3:38, 39—Its Significance for the Role of Women in the Church" (paper presented at the Role of Women Commission, 1987), 6. ([www.adventistarchives.org/galatians-3.28,-29.pdf](http://www.adventistarchives.org/galatians-3.28,-29.pdf))
  73. *Ibid.*, 8.
  74. This is evidenced to be true across centuries in both the Greek and Jewish cultures. See, for example, the similar statements attributed to the philosopher Socrates and that in the Jewish Mishnah which express gratefulness for not having been born a "brute creature," a barbarian (Socrates)/Gentile (Mishnah), or a woman. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 1.33 (LCL); Menahot 43b; gfl79180.
  75. Paul's linking of *arsen* and *thelo* with *kai*, rather than the "nor" (*oude*) used between the other two pairs, may underline the special relationship between the man and the woman.
  76. James Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 317–319; Thomas Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 158; Payne, *One in Christ*, 79. Paul's theology of a new creation is grounded in the new exodus theology of Isaiah, whose fulfillment begins in Jesus Christ (e.g., Isa 43:18–21). Fee, *The New Creation*, 177–179.
  77. Fee, *The New Creation*, 176, 177.
  78. The Greek word οἶκος (1 Pet 2:5) can be translated as either "house" or "household" and appears to be a play on words here, providing for both a "house" built from living stones, and a "household" of priests.
  79. Women did perform the teaching/administration and prophetic functions (see Deut 33:8–10). Richard M. Davidson, "Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations," paper presented at TOSC, July 2013, 45–47. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>. Note also Jacques B. Doukhan, "Women Priests in Israel: A Case for Their Absence," in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 36.
  80. For a detailed discussion of this passage, see chapter 12.
  81. The issue of head coverings may have related to hairstyles or to what was worn on the head.
  82. Paul identifies this attitude toward their freedom and rights especially clearly in 1 Cor 8:9.
  83. Paul generally uses the words *anēr* and *gynē*, with their basic meanings, *man* and *woman* (e.g., 1 Cor 11:4, 8). However, the context makes clear that at times he uses *anēr* alone to refer to both men and women (Rom 4:8; Eph 4:13) and at other times uses *anēr* and *gynē* more narrowly to indicate *husband* and *wife* (11:3b, possibly 11:11). There is no more indication that this counsel was to be extended to the male elder or pastor in the church than to any other man in society.
  84. See Richard Davidson, chapter 8 in this volume, for a full discussion of the meaning of *ezer*.
  85. While in today's society the term *head* often symbolizes *rule*, or *power over*, this was not a common metaphorical meaning in the Greek of Paul's day, whether in the Greek Old Testament (LXX) used by the earliest church or in everyday spoken Greek. A place of rulership would be normally expressed by other Greek words such as *archē* (*ruler*) and *hēgeomai* (one who governs). Ephesians 5:21–31, the one place where Paul uses (*kefalē*) of a human leadership role, refers only to the husband-wife relationship. Although the Hebrew word for *head* (*rōsh*) can be used to refer to a *chief* or *ruler*, few of the Corinthian Jews would have spoken Hebrew, and virtually none of the Gentile Christians would have known Hebrew. See chapter 2 for a discussion of use of the word *head*.
  86. The reference to the angels in verse 10 might, in this time when angels were eagerly studied and highly revered, be referring back to the reference in 4:9 to the angels being deeply interested

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- witnesses to the whole great controversy, and how it is played out in the lives of women and men.
87. Eliezer Gonzalez, "Gender and Shame in Paul's Churches: The Intersection of Theology and Culture," *JATS* 22.1 (2011).
  88. The term *sigāō* does not necessarily refer to absolute silence, but often to "keeping one's peace" with reference to an issue or person (Exod 14:14; Ps 31:3; Luke 9:36).
  89. Some translations of v. 34 say "be in subjection to such men," but the word *men* is not present, nor is it necessitated in the Greek. These to whom believers are told to submit could thus include the women whom leaders such as those Paul identifies as among those working together with him (*synergetos*), elsewhere including Priscilla (Rom 16:3) and Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2, 3), and possibly others, including Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosis, and Persis (Rom 16:12) whom Paul says labored (*kopiaō*) much for the Roman church. Timothy, in the same list (Rom 16:21; cf. 1 Thess 3:2), and Titus too are spoken of as *synergos* (2 Cor 8:23).
  90. Carl Cosaert, in chapter 15 of this volume, provides a detailed discussion of this passage (1 Tim 2:11-15).
  91. It was only many years later, likely under the influence of Greco-Roman philosophical beliefs about the place of women, that the church fathers began to interpret this word in the sense of simple straightforward authority. See Linda L. Belleville, "Teaching and Usurping Authority: 1 Timothy 2:11-15," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 209-221.

## PHOEBE: AN EARLY CHURCH LEADER<sup>1</sup>

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BY ALL ACCOUNTS, the epistle of Romans is a masterpiece of ancient Christian literature in which, in a brilliant and logical manner, its author, the apostle Paul, lays out the case for the Christian belief in salvation through Jesus Christ alone. This belief was instrumental in the rise of a new kind of community of believers called into existence purely through God's gracious love. We are thus presented with a breathtaking vision of a Christian community. While clearly rooted in the Old Testament idea of the "people of God," this was a "new" community, and as such, it powerfully challenged the various forms of racial, cultural, gender, or economic discrimination so prevalent in first-century Judaism and the larger society. Toward the end of the letter, in chapter 12, Paul lays down the ground rules according to which this new community is

to function. There, we find that self-sacrifice and self-denial are essential elements of the Christian life; that each member of the body of Christ is to function according to the spiritual gifting bestowed by God; and, finally, that agape love is to be the primary value guiding the life of the community. Chapters 13–15 build on the groundwork established in chapter 12, and then chapter 16 concludes the book of Romans.

In this final chapter, Paul issues a series of greetings to both men and women, all of whom he considers his "co-workers in Christ Jesus" (Rom 16:3; Phil 4:3). Among the many individuals listed in this chapter, Phoebe, whom Paul refers to as "our sister," receives special recognition (Rom 16:1, 2). Not only is Paul's discourse on Phoebe the first and longest in the chapter, but also the words and allusions he uses to describe her and her ministry hint at the remarkable stature this woman had among the early Christians. For these reasons, Phoebe has fascinated Christian writers throughout the centuries, most of whom have written in an environment unfriendly to the ministry of women. Origen (c. A.D. 184–253) thus wrote that "this passage teaches two things at the same time: As we have said, women are to be considered ministers in the church [and] ought to be received in the ministry."<sup>2</sup> A century or so later, the "golden-mouthed" John Chrysostom (c. A.D. 347–407) noted: "For how can the woman be else than blessed who has the blessing of so favorable a testimony from Paul, who had also the power to render assistance to him who had righted the whole world."<sup>3</sup> After the fourth century A.D., however, such statements became rare, as the Christian church moved toward male-dominated ministry in the church.<sup>4</sup>

The role of Phoebe in early Christianity has been a subject of debate in scholarship throughout the centuries, ranging from views suggesting that her ministry was nothing more than that of a helper (or patron) of the apostolic task, to those ascribing to her

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a significant ministerial role. As we shall see, this debate often influenced the biblical translations of the Greek words used by Paul to describe the ministry of this remarkable woman. In this chapter, I will focus on three aspects of Phoebe's ministry that flow from the text of Romans 16:1, 2: her ministry as a *diakonos*; her role as the letter bearer to the Romans; and finally, her role as a *prostatís*, which literally translates as "the one who stands before."

### Phoebe As a Deacon?<sup>5</sup>

In Romans 16:1 Paul writes of Phoebe: "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me" (NIV).

There has been much discussion in Christian literature with regard to the word *servant*, which is a translation of the well-known Greek word *diakonos*, also translated as "deacon." The concept of a deacon was familiar to first-century society and referred primarily to household service. In the New Testament it is at times used in conjunction with another Greek term, *doulos*, or slave.<sup>6</sup> Reading the word *diakonos* from a modern-day perspective often obscures the fact that in Paul's day, the position of servant was considered to be the lowest in society—people who were the menials and lackeys of the day. There exists a tension, thus, between the modern, ecclesiastical understanding and use of the word "deacon" and the ancient *diakonos*. It is this term, as well as the word *doulos*, however, with all their cultural connotations, that Christ adopted to describe His own ministry (Mark 10:45). Following Jesus' example, Paul used the words *diakonos* and *doulos* to describe Christ's ministry, when he wrote in Rom 15:8: "For I tell you that Christ has become a servant (*diakonos*)

of the Jews on behalf of God's truth" (NIV; see also Phil 2:7, where Paul refers to Jesus as *doulos*), and he repeatedly used the same word to describe his own ministry and that of his co-workers (see, for example, 2 Cor 3:5; 4:1; 6:4; 8:4).

It is thus remarkable that just a few sentences later, in Rom 16:1, Paul refers to Phoebe as *diakonos*, essentially equating her *diakonia* (or service) with that of Christ, as well as his own apostolic ministry. It is noteworthy that the word *diakonos* in this passage is used in its masculine rather than feminine form.<sup>7</sup> At that stage of Christian history the Greek term for deaconess had not yet been invented.<sup>8</sup> Be that as it may, Paul's calling Phoebe a *deacon* appears to make her ministry as equally important and valid as that of other early church leaders, such as Tychicus (Eph 6:21), Epaphras (Col 1:7), and Timothy (1 Tim 4:6). Otherwise, why would Paul use such a term with reference to a woman and create intentional misunderstanding?<sup>9</sup>

It must be pointed out, however, that in contrast to Paul, who functioned as *diakonos* in service to the entire church, Phoebe's *diakonia* seems to be specifically tied to the local church of Cenchrea. Being the only time the New Testament links such service directly to the local church suggests, for some commentators, that Phoebe was most likely involved in some sort of recognized ministry or a position of responsibility within her local house church.<sup>10</sup> The case for Phoebe's functioning as such seems strengthened by Paul's use of another Greek word, *ousa* ("being"), which occurs together with the noun *diakonos*. The phrase indicating her as *being* a deacon indicates some sort of leadership position. Thus it could be stated that Phoebe was probably the first recorded local church deacon in the history of Christianity.<sup>11</sup> This being so, Paul's exhortation to bishops and deacons found in 1 Tim 3 would apply equally to Phoebe as to any other church leader of early Christianity.<sup>12</sup>

### Phoebe as a Courier?

Careful exegetical, historical, and linguistic study has led many commentators to conclude that Phoebe was actually the person Paul chose to deliver his letter to the Roman house churches.<sup>13</sup> While, to our modern eyes, the text is more implicit than explicit, Paul's words appear to be a recommendation for a letter bearer written according to first-century custom.<sup>14</sup> The purpose of such a recommendation was to introduce the letter carrier to the congregation in Rome. Paul's letter to Philemon serves as another example of a similar recommendation, with Onesimus also functioning as a letter bearer.<sup>15</sup> If Phoebe was indeed the carrier of the letter to the Romans, it would be natural for Paul to introduce and recommend her, since she was obviously unknown to the believers in Rome. Being Paul's co-worker and emissary, it is also probable that Phoebe read the letter to many Roman congregations and was able to provide commentary on everything that could have been misunderstood, thus providing needed clarifications. Additionally, knowing Paul well, she could provide the house churches of Rome with information regarding his personal needs and travel plans.<sup>16</sup> All this raises a question: why would Paul make such a culturally questionable decision as choosing a woman to be his emissary? Was there a shortage of men who could fulfill this task more aptly? Conceivably, Phoebe had proven herself to be a respected and trustworthy church leader, to whom Paul could entrust his message of salvation to the Gentile world. As one scholar commented: "Phoebe carried under the folds of her robe the whole future of Christian theology."<sup>17</sup>

### Phoebe as a Leader (*Prostatis*)?

Verse two of Romans 16 provides us with one more important piece of information about

Phoebe that often tends to disappear in translation. There, Paul calls Phoebe *prostatis*, literally, "the one who stands before." The New International Version renders the text this way: "for she has been a great help (*prostatis*) to many people, including me." Other versions translate the word *prostatis* variably as "patron" (ESV), "succourer" (KJV), "helper" (ASV, NASB), "she has been helpful to many" (NLT), or even "good friend" (GN). There are, however, some translations which render *prostatis* as "leader" (YLT), "respected leader" (CEV), or "defender of many" (Emphasized Bible of J. B. Rotherdam, 1872).<sup>18</sup>

The translators' disposition toward rendering *prostatis* as "helper" or "patron" appears to flow from a widespread conviction that Phoebe was nothing more than a rich woman who supported Paul and other missionary workers financially. This conclusion seems to be supported by the fact that, in antiquity, there existed women who, while they could not hold any public office, offered their patronage and financial help to various causes. Furthermore, the passage ends with "including me." According to these translators, if *prostatis* had meant more than being a "helper," it would have meant that at times Paul would have allowed others to exercise their gift of leadership in his presence and possibly even submit to their authority. This, according to hierarchical thinking, would not have been possible, as Paul would have outranked everyone in his presence (even in matters of local church governance), and particularly a woman.<sup>18</sup>

However, this kind of reasoning does not resolve the problem of why Paul would use the word *prostatis* in his description of Phoebe if he could have simply called her a *boethos*, "helper" (Heb 13:6), or said that she was *sumballo polu*, "being of great help" (Acts 18:27). Perhaps Phoebe was more than just a rich woman who desired to support the

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missionary work financially. To determine the veracity of this line of reasoning, we must follow the line of evidence that would unlock the meaning of the word *prostatis*.

The best way to begin is to look for the same word used in other passages of the New Testament. Unfortunately, *prostatis* happens to be a *hapax legomenon*, i.e., it occurs only once in the New Testament as a noun. To discover the meaning of *prostatis*, we must thus look beyond the New Testament to sources such as the Septuagint, which was Paul's Bible,<sup>20</sup> other ancient Greek literature, as well as related words throughout Paul's writings.

Fortunately, *prostates*, the masculine form of *prostatis* occurs more than once in the Septuagint. The author of 1 Chr 27:31 lists Jaziz the Hagrite as the one of the *prostates* or chief officials of King David's court. The same word is also listed in 1 Chr 29:6, where *prostatai* (plural of *prostates*) were the "the officials in charge of the king's work." Similarly, 2 Chr 8:10 and 24:11 use the word to designate "King Solomon's chief officials," who were given charge of the workers and/or money. The English Standard Version renders 2 Chr 8:10 in this way: "And these were the chief officers of King Solomon, 250, who exercised authority over the people." When the word is used in the Septuagint, therefore, it tends to signify some kind of leadership function.

*Prostates* also frequently appears in ancient extra-biblical literature. For Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), it designated a person who stood before others as a "democratic leader" or "protector of the people."<sup>21</sup> Subsequent historical evidence testifies to the existence of specially selected persons in many Greek cities who functioned as champions, or defenders, of the poorer citizenry. These people were charged with protecting citizens against the attacks of the chief magistrates in power or the richer classes. They would also defend

the underprivileged in courts and functioned as guardians of peace and constitutional liberty.<sup>22</sup> *Prostates* was also known to be a common term used among the Greeks for presidents of various secular or religious associations.<sup>23</sup> The same term could also be applied to defenders or champions of Greek cities in times of need or warfare.<sup>24</sup> At times, entire cities were considered as *prostates* of other cities or regions. For example, between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C., Sparta and Athens jostled for the position of the leading city (*prostates*) in the region and the protector of peace.<sup>25</sup>

Evidence from ancient inscriptions indicates that in Egypt, and eventually in Rome, the word *prostates* had already become a word of choice for synagogue leadership among Diaspora Jewry prior to the birth of Christ. In this way, *prostates* functioned as an equivalent of the Hebrew *rosh ha-knesset* (the head of the synagogue).<sup>26</sup> Inscriptional evidence also indicates that in Rome *prostates* served as a technical term for the leader or president of the Jewish community.<sup>27</sup> It is reasonable to assume that Paul, being a Hellenistic Jew and growing up in the Diaspora, was thoroughly familiar with the Greek concept of the *prostates* as the champion/defender or presiding officer of the community. This would also mean that when the Christian leaders in Rome received Phoebe, they were aware that she was a Christian leader in her own standing.

The most interesting line of evidence, however, suggesting that Phoebe might have been much more than just a "helper" comes from Paul's own writings. While *prostatis* as a noun occurs only once in the New Testament, its other forms, such as *proistemi*, appear several times. The first time *prostatis* appears in the New Testament in another form is in Rom 12:8 in Paul's list of gifts of the Holy Spirit: "If it is to lead [*proistamenos*] do it diligently." Speaking of elders, Paul encourages

the Thessalonians “to acknowledge those who work hard among you, and who are over you [*proistamenous*] in the Lord.” Most important, in 1 Tim 5:17, Paul uses the verb form of *prostatis*, when he writes: “The ruling elders [*proestotes presbuteroi*, i.e., “those elders who stand before”] of the church are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.”

How is it, then, that most versions seem to water down this important word *prostatis* and to view Phoebe simply as a “helper”? Why not, following the Contemporary English Version, use “respected leader”? The most likely answer to these questions is that perhaps the translators may have felt uncomfortable with a notion that a woman could carry any leadership or presiding role in the early Christian church.<sup>28</sup> It is entirely possible that like Junia (Rom 16:7), who, despite the historical and linguistic evidence to the contrary, metamorphosed, in most translations, into the male Junias (a name that does not exist in antiquity, whereas Junia was a common name), Phoebe became just a “helper.”<sup>29</sup> On the basis of these findings, it is conceivable that Phoebe may have been an important leader among the ancient Christians who led a congregation in Cenchrea and served so well that Paul was willing to let her run the affairs of the church in his presence and entrusted to her the precious epistle of Romans to carry to the Christians in Rome.

A careful reading of Rom 16:1, 2, thus, offers us a new glance at this remarkable woman who appears to be a close associate of Paul in spreading the gospel of Christ; who served as a leader of her house church in Cenchrea; who, despite all the dangers associated with travel on Roman roads, accepted the task of carrying the message of salvation to the Roman church; and who was recognized by Paul and others as a Christian leader in her own right.

## Endnotes:

1. An earlier version of this study was published as “Phoebe: Was She an Early Church Leader?” *Ministry* (April 2013): 10–13. Used by permission.
2. Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, in *The Fathers of the Church: Origen, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 6–10*, tr. and ed. Thomas P. Scheck (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 291.
3. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 30.2, in *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom On the Epistle of St. Paul The Apostle* (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1841), 478.
4. Gerald Lewis Bray and Thomas Oden, *Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005–2006), 355.
5. For an excellent overview of Phoebe’s ministry, and particularly for a more in-depth study of the linguistic use of the word *prostatis*, see Elizabeth A. McCabe, “A Reexamination of Phoebe as a ‘Diakonos’ and ‘Prostatis’: Exposing the Inaccuracies of English Translations.” Accessed Mar. 31, 2015 at <http://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?articleId=830>.
6. Although the words *diakonos* and *doulos* carry different meanings in literature, they were often used by both Paul and Jesus interchangeably. See, for example, Matt 20:25–28; 22: 1–14, Mark 10:45, Phil 1:1; 1 Cor 3:5. In Col 1:7 and 4:12 Epaphras is called *diakonos* and *doulos*, respectively. Cf., Murray J. Harri, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 179. For a thorough discussion on the differences between the words *diakonos* and *doulos*, see EDNT s.v. *diakonos* and *doulos*.
7. This fact should put to rest the argument taken from 1 Tim 3:2, 12 that Paul’s statement that bishops and deacons must be “the husband of but one wife” means that only men can function as bishops or deacons.
8. The technical term *diakonissa* appears for the first time in Christian literature in Canon nineteen of Nicaea. There are no known earlier versions of the term. Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 286.
9. Denis Fortin notes the inconsistency in how various versions translate the word *diakonos* with reference



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- to Phoebe. While most translators have no problem with translating the word *diakonos* as “minister” with reference to Paul and other early leaders in the church, no translation uses the latter term with reference to Phoebe. Only the words *servant*, *deacon*, or *deacons* are used. Fortin sees this as a “strange bias against women in ministry.” Denis Fortin, “Was Phoebe a Deacon, a Servant, or a Minister?” *Memory, Meaning and Faith*. Accessed Mar. 31, 2015 at <http://www.memorymeaningfaith.org/blog/2010/04/phoebe-deacon-servant-or-minister.html>.
10. James Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, WBC 38 (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1988), 886, 887; Kevin Giles, *Patterns of Ministry Among the First Christians* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1989), 56.
  11. Dunn, 887.
  12. Ibid. At the same time, warns James Dunn, it would be anachronistic to read into the New Testament our understanding of an established office of episcopate or diaconate, “as though a role of responsibility and authority, with properly appointed succession, had already been agreed upon in the Pauline churches.” Cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans BCENT* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 787.
  13. The notion that Phoebe was, in fact, Paul’s courier has been strongly affirmed in contemporary exegetical literature on Romans. See, for example, Schreiner, 786.
  14. For a careful study of Christian passages of commendation and their comparison with contemporary non-Christian examples, see Chan-Hie Kim, *The Familiar Letter of Recommendation* (Missoula, MT: University of Montana Press, 1972), 50–60; also see Harry Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 44, 84, 85.
  15. Chan-Hie Kim, 120–134.
  16. Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 569.
  17. Brenda Poinsett, *She Walked with Jesus: Stories of Christ Followers in the Bible* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 2004), 192.
  18. McCabe, 1.
  19. Although the New Testament indicates that the original apostles carried a special authority within the community of faith, this does not preclude the possibility that, once established, local communities had freedom to govern themselves without external interferences.
  20. Calvin J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 20–24.
  21. P. J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 447, 97.
  22. Abel Hendy Jones Greenidge, *A Handbook of Greek Constitutional History* (London: MacMillan, 1896), 188.
  23. Margaret H. Williams, “The Structure of Roman Jewry Re-Considered: Were the Synagogues of Ancient Rome Entirely Homogenous?” *ZPE* 104 (1994): 138; cf. Franz Poland, *Geschichte Des Griechischen Vereinswesens* (Leipzig: Zentral-Antiquariat Der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1967), 363–367.
  24. Peter Liddel, “Democracy Ancient and Modern,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought* ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 138.
  25. Kurt A. Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 169; cf., Tōru Yuge, Masaoki Doi, *Forms of Control and Subordination in Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 575.
  26. Joseph Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt: From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 96; cf. Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 115.
  27. Williams, 138; cf., Paul R. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 109.
  28. See, for example, 2 Cor 4:5 where Paul writes, “For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants (*doulos*) for Jesus sake.” See also 1 Cor 9:19. In Col 1:7 and 4:7, Paul uses the terms *doulos* and *diakonos* interchangeably. Cf., John L. McKenzie, *Authority in the Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966), 23.
  29. For a thorough historical and linguistic treatment of the Junia-Junias controversy, see Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005). McKenzie, 23–25. For a history of these events, see my paper, “The Problem of Ordination,” presented at TOSC, January 2013. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.

## JUNIA THE APOSTLE<sup>1</sup>

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JUNIA APPEARS ONLY once in the New Testament. She is mentioned in a list of friends and co-workers in Rome, to whom Paul sent greetings in Rom 16. Through the years, questions have been raised about her identity, especially her gender and her occupation.

The Greek of Rom 16:7 reads as follows: "Greet Andronicus and *Junia* who are my relatives and fellow prisoners, who are recognized *in/by/among* the *apostles* and were in Christ before me" (translation mine). I have placed *Junia*, the phrase *in/by/among*, and the word *apostles* in italics because the secret of the identity of Junia is hidden in the interpretation of these words.

### Junia

In Greek, all nouns take on recognized endings

to show the "case" they are in, that is the function they carry out in the sentence. Here both Andronicus and Junia appear in the accusative case, as objects of the active verb *greet*. A masculine noun, the object of a verb, makes the form *Andrónikon*, which appears in this verse. The other name, *Iounian*, also in the accusative, is problematic.

The difference between the masculine *Iouniān* and the feminine *Iounian* is only an accent. In truth, the oldest manuscripts, the uncials, are written in capital letters, without accents. Hence both genders would be given as IOUNIAN, leaving the reader to decide which gender Junia was.

To elucidate the gender of Junia, we will consider the use of the name in Antiquity, the references to Junia in early Christian writers, and the name in ancient Greek New Testament manuscripts, as well as in Greek New Testaments through the centuries.

### The Name *Junia* in Antiquity

In spite of the statement made by Wayne Grudem and John Piper, that Junia was not a common female name in the Greek-speaking world,<sup>2</sup> Junia was a commonly used female Roman name, meaning "youthful." It derived from the goddess Juno and appears more than 250 times in Rome in first-century records alone.<sup>3</sup> There, it is often found on tombstones.<sup>4</sup> The name also appears in inscriptions in Ephesus, Didyma, Lydia, Troas and Bythinia.<sup>5</sup> The best-known Junia is the half-sister of Brutus and wife of Cassius.<sup>6</sup>

Were the name masculine, it should have been Junias in Greek, or Junius in Latin. The name Junius is well attested. However, there is no attestation for Junias in any "inscription, letterhead, piece of writing, epitaph or literary work of the New Testament period."<sup>7</sup> Some have suggested that *Iouniās* would have been a short form of *Iounianós*, but that name is not evident either.<sup>8</sup> According to Linda Belleville,

"*Iouniās* as a contraction of *Iounianós* originates in the English-speaking world with Thayer" in 1885.<sup>9</sup>

### Early Christian References

In his commentary on Romans, Joseph Fitzmyer listed sixteen Christian Greek and Latin writers of the first millennium who understood Junia in Rom 16:7 to be a woman. Among these, the earliest is Origen (ca. 185–254), whose commentary on Romans was translated by Rufinus (345–410) into Latin, and quoted by Rabanus Maurus (ca. 776–856).<sup>10</sup> In his *Liber Nominibus Hebraicis*, Jerome (ca. 345–419) lists the name as Junia.<sup>11</sup>

From John Chrysostom (ca. 344–407) to Peter Abelard (1079–1142), Greek and Latin commentators on the epistle to the Romans used the feminine name Junia. The only exceptions, Ambrosiaster (late 4th century) and Atto of Vercelli (924/5–960/61), used Julia, obviously a female.<sup>12</sup>

Those who want Junia to be a male have made much of the *Index Discipulorum*, attributed to Epiphanius (ca. 315–403), where the masculine Junias appears. However, Belleville notes that Epiphanius also calls Priscilla a male and makes her a bishop of Colophon, while her husband Aquila was bishop of Heraclea—two very different locations. "Both the gender confusion and the disparate locations call into question the overall reliability of the document," Belleville concludes.<sup>13</sup>

Aegidius of Rome (1245–1316) was the first church writer to make Andronicus and Junia "those honorable men."<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, this corresponds to the time when Pope Boniface VIII, well remembered for his difficulties with Dante, decreed in 1298 that all nuns were to be permanently cloistered.<sup>15</sup>

### Junia in Ancient Greek New Testament Manuscripts

Whether the scribe of an uncial manuscript meant to write *Iounían* or *Iouniān* would be immaterial. The letters would be capitalized and unaccented: IOUNIAN. The gender of this person must be found elsewhere.

Minuscule manuscripts began to appear after the seventh century. In fact, uncial manuscripts were recopied in minuscule, forcing the use of accents. These manuscripts had *Iounían*, making Junia feminine. According to Eldon Epp, no Greek minuscule manuscripts used the masculine *Iouniān*.<sup>16</sup>

The UBS *Greek New Testament* notes at least twenty minuscule NT manuscripts that use *Iounían*, the feminine. Among them, the oldest are MS081 (from 1044) and MS104 (from 1087). The latest is MS2200, from the fourteenth century.<sup>17</sup>

More than once, in NT manuscripts and writings about this chapter, the name in v. 7 is given as Julia, who appears later, in Rom 16:15. This can be seen in P46, an uncial manuscript from about the year 200.<sup>18</sup> In any case, Julia is obviously a feminine name.

Richard Bauckham surmises that Junia of Rom 16:7 is Ioanna of Luke 8:3 and 24:9. Her Roman name would be easier to pronounce, and her relation with Jesus would certainly put her as a Christian before Paul. Andronicus was either a second husband or a Roman name taken by Chuza.<sup>19</sup>

### The Name in Printed Greek New Testaments

According to Epp's table, thirty-eight Greek New Testaments, beginning with Erasmus (1516) through Eberhard Nestle in 1920, use the name *Iounían*, indicating feminine gender for Junia. During those centuries there is only one exception: Alford in the nineteenth

century uses the masculine form but puts the feminine in the apparatus.<sup>20</sup>

From the Nestle version of 1927 through the UBS *Greek New Testament* of 1993, only the Hodges-Farstad New Testament of 1982 uses the feminine; the other fourteen versions use the masculine, often without an alternate explanation in the apparatus. This trend is reversed with the 1994 Kurt Aland and the UBS 1998 versions, which return to the feminine, with no alternate reading.<sup>21</sup>

### Junia in Modern Language Translations

The seven earliest English versions, from Tyndale (1525-1534) to the KJV (1611), all have Junia as a woman. From the Revised Version (1881) until the New Living Translation (1996), twenty-one English translations have the masculine, while ten have the feminine.<sup>22</sup> Of this tendency, Scot McKnight notes ruefully: *Junia Is Not Alone*; women, he says, have not taken or been allowed their proper place in ministry.<sup>23</sup> Some recent English translations still have the masculine, no doubt because their parent translations did so, and the masculine form was in the Greek New Testament from which these versions were translated. Such are the French Louis Segond, the Spanish Biblia de las Américas, the 1995 revision of the Spanish Reina Valera, the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the Contemporary English Version (CEV), and the Message, among others. One wonders however, how much the translator's bias is shown in such a translation.

### Notable Among or Noticed By

The Greek phrase *episēmoi en* has been problematic to some. Is Junia one of the apostles? Or is she recognized by the apostles? The Latin Vulgata has Junia as "notable among the apostles (*nobiles in apostolis*)."

John Chrysostom wrote the following on

Andronicus and Junia in his comment on Rom 16:7:

Who are of note among the Apostles. And indeed to be apostles at all is a great thing. But to be even amongst these of note, just consider what a great encomium this is! But they were of note owing to their works, to their achievements. Oh! how great is the devotion (*philosophia*) of this woman, that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation apostle!<sup>24</sup>

Very little discussion on the issue of Junia's apostleship appears until late in the nineteenth century. William Sanday and Arthur Headlam noted in their 1895 commentary on Romans:

Junia is of course a common Roman name and in that case the two would probably be husband and wife; Junias on the other hand is less usual as a man's name. . . . If, as is probable, Andronicus and Junias are included among the apostles . . . , then it is more probable that the name is masculine.<sup>25</sup>

The adjective *episēmoi* refers to something that has a distinguishing mark, as in stamped precious metal. The word may be used to signal that a thing or person is considered very good, as in Rom 16:7, or very bad, as when it is applied to Barabbas in Matt 27:16, where the NRSV translates "notorious."<sup>26</sup>

According to the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, the word refers to something of note—a thing or person who is eminent or worthy of attention.<sup>27</sup> The word could also be translated "notable." The *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* has this definition: "Pertaining to being well known or outstanding, either because of positive or negative characteristics—'outstanding,' 'famous,' 'notorious,' 'infamous.'"<sup>28</sup>

Beginning around 1900, the idea that the name was Junia, a woman, esteemed by the apostles, was circulated in commentaries by

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several authors.<sup>29</sup> Since it was understood that only a man could be an apostle, Junia could not be an apostle, but she could be esteemed by the apostles.

In 1994 the *Textual Commentary* to the UBS Greek New Testament noted: "Some members [of the UBS Committee], considering it unlikely that a woman would be among those styled 'apostles,' understood the name to be masculine."<sup>30</sup>

It is immediately apparent that the crux of the issue is the understanding of the preposition *en*, which can be variously translated as "in," "among," "on," or even "with" or "by."<sup>31</sup> The word denotes location and means and is normally followed by a word in the dative case, as is *tois apostólois* here.

Which meaning does *en* have here? Are Andronicus and Junia recognized as being apostles? Were they notable among the apostles? This is the *inclusive* view. Or are they recognized by the apostles as notable outsiders, not as apostles? This is the *exclusive* view.

In 2001 Michael Burer and Daniel Wallace presented a reexamination of Rom 16:7. They proposed that Junia was a woman and that she and Andronicus were admired by the apostles. After noting what they perceived to be an error of those who took the *inclusive* position, they found evidence for their own *exclusive* position in the study of ancient documents.<sup>32</sup> *Episēmoi en toīs apostólois* must mean "notable to the apostles."

Three major responses to their paper came from Bauckham, Belleville, and Epp.<sup>33</sup>

Bauckham analyzed the study by Burer and Wallace and challenged their findings.<sup>34</sup> Belleville replicated the study of Burer and Wallace and gave biblical evidence to show their error. She showed that the preposition *en* plus the dative is normally inclusive. For example, Matt 2:6: Bethlehem is by no means least "among the rulers of Judah." She also found Hellenistic parallels of the

phrase *episēmoi en toīs*, which clearly are inclusive. In Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead* 438, she found one exact parallel to Rom 16:7: "Most distinguished among whom were our rich countryman Ismenodorus and . . ." <sup>35</sup> Further, she found instances of poor research techniques and mistaken reporting.<sup>36</sup> Belleville's conclusion was clear: Junia was a woman and one of the apostles.<sup>37</sup> In 2002, Eldon Epp wrote an extensive article that became the basis for his 2005 book, *Junia, the First Woman Apostle*.<sup>38</sup> In it he made a well-documented case for Junia as a woman and one of the apostles.

### The Apostles

The question of who are these apostles arises. Obviously, these are not the Twelve. In 1 Cor 12:28 Paul makes reference to the spiritual gift of "apostleship." Had Andronicus and Junia received this gift? We know very little, except the meaning of the word *apostolos*: one who is sent. If Andronicus and Junia were sent or commissioned, who sent them?

Whatever the specific meaning, "apostles" make up a special group of people who carried out Christ's mission, much as Paul did. Richard Bauckham suggests that Paul refers to apostles of Christ, like himself, who have been commissioned by the risen Christ, and who, together with the Twelve of the Synoptics, form a larger group.<sup>39</sup> Origen stated that Andronicus and Junia were among the seventy-two sent out by Jesus.<sup>40</sup>

John of Damascus (ca. 675-749) noted about Junia: "To be called 'apostles' is a great thing. . . . But to be even *amongst these of note*, just consider what a great encomium this is."<sup>41</sup>

Ute Eisen points out the following: "In the *Liturgikon*, the missal of the Byzantine Church, Junia is honored to this day . . . as an apostle, together with fifty-six male apostles and the two 'like to the apostles,' Mary Magdalene and Thecla."<sup>42</sup>

Craig Keener observes:

It is also unnatural to read the text as merely claiming that they had a high reputation with “the apostles.” Since they were imprisoned with him, Paul knows them well enough to recommend them without appealing to the other apostles, whose judgment he never cites on such matters. . . . Paul nowhere limits the apostolic company to the Twelve plus himself, as some have assumed (see especially 1 Cor 15:5-11). Those who favor the view that Junia was not a female apostle do so because of their prior assumption that women could not be apostles, not because of any evidence in the text.<sup>43</sup>

### Conclusion

It is difficult to complete this study without finding that Paul is referring to a woman named Junia, who, together with Andronicus (probably her husband), was part of the New Testament group of apostles. Paul recognized her as one of the apostles—a woman who was willing to suffer for the gospel she was busily spreading!

### Endnotes:

1. An earlier version of this study was published as “Junia the Apostle” *Ministry* (July 2013): 6–9, used by permission.
2. Wayne Grudem and John Piper, “An Overview of Central Concerns,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 79–81. Grudem and Piper claimed they found only three occurrences of this name in the *Thesaurus Lingua Graecae* database, whereas Linda Belleville found seven. See Linda Belleville, “*Iounian . . . episēmoi en tois apostólois*: A Re-examination of Romans 16.7 in Light of Primary Source Materials,” *NTS* 51.2 (2005): 231–249.
3. Joyce Salisbury, *Encyclopedia of Women in the Ancient World* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2001), s.v. “Junia.”
4. Linda Belleville, “Women Leaders in the Bible,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, ed. Ronald Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 117.
5. *Ibid.*; See also Belleville, “Re-examination of Romans 16.7,” 241.
6. Belleville, “Re-examination,” 234.
7. Belleville, “Women Leaders,” 117.
8. Eldon Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 26–28.
9. Belleville, “Re-examination,” 239.
10. Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans*, AB 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 737, 738.
11. Jerome, *Liber de Nominibus Hebraicis, Migne Patrologia Latina* 23, Hieronymus, vol. 2–3, col 895. There, Junia is wrongly listed under the epistle of James, but footnote 5 indicates that the name really appears in Romans. [http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/02m/0347-0420,\\_Hieronymus,\\_Liber\\_De\\_Nominibus\\_Hebraicis,\\_MLT.pdf](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/02m/0347-0420,_Hieronymus,_Liber_De_Nominibus_Hebraicis,_MLT.pdf).
12. Ute Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary Studies* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 47.
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15. Eisen, 47, *Women Officeholders*, who footnotes Brooten, “Junia . . . Outstanding among the Apostles,” in *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration*, 141–144; Elizabeth Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women: Periculoso and Its Commentators, 1298–1545* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1999); Dianne McDonnell, “Junia, a Woman Apostle.” Accessed Mar. 31 2015 at <http://www.churchofgoddfw.com/monthly/junia.shtml>.
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17. United Bible Societies, *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993), 564.
18. Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1971), 539.

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20. Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle*, 62, 63.
21. *Ibid.*
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23. Scot McKnight, *Junia Is Not Alone: Breaking Our Silence about Women in the Church Today* (Englewood, CO: Patheos, 2008), e-book.
24. John Chrysostom, *Homily 31 on the Epistle to the Romans*, on Rom 16:7, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, n. d.), vol. 11, accessed August 26, 2012, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf111.pdf>.
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27. *ISBE*, rev. ed. (1986), s.v. “Notable.”
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33. Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women*; Linda Belleville, “*Iouinian . . . episēmoi en tois apostólois*: A Re-examination; Eldon Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle*.
34. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 172–180.
35. *Ibid.*, 246.
36. Belleville, “Re-examination,” 242–247.
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## FIRST CORINTHIANS 11:2-16 AND THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN TO PASTORAL MINISTRY

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THE PURPOSE OF this chapter is to explore 1 Cor 11:2-16 to discover how Paul's counsel in this passage relates to the issue of the ordination of women to pastoral ministry. Despite the fact that we each deeply wish to honor God by doing His will in this matter as revealed in Scripture, there is significant divergence in understanding the meaning of this passage and its implications for the place of women in the church. Personal and cultural factors influence human interpretation of a text even in the best of conditions. Where language and culture differ greatly between the writer and reader of a text, and where strong feelings exist on a topic as in the case of this passage, Scripture and research both witness that the human mind will almost inevitably follow its own biases until and unless God is

able to break through with more accurate understanding.<sup>1</sup>

In the question we now face, our natural human tendencies draw some of us toward the opportunities for women that have recently become available in Western society, while others are drawn towards preserving roles traditional for women in the cultures and religions in which they were raised. For each group, certain ways of viewing the text may appear obvious, simply because we read it with these and other prior, and often unexamined, commitments and inclinations.

Because of the deceptiveness of the human heart, the only possibility of accurately interpreting Scripture and recognizing where one is being misled by culture—whether in the direction of tradition or of contemporary thought—is to constantly remember our own limitations. We each must humbly call on the Spirit to convict us of where we are reading Scripture through the lens of our own personal and cultural biases. With the grounding of biblically shaped hermeneutics, we must make use of careful methods of Bible study. These will aid us in hearing the meaning and intentions of Scripture itself, both in the specific texts that appear to speak most directly to the issue and in the larger story of God's working to draw to a close the great controversy between Christ and Satan.<sup>2</sup> And we must listen closely to, and thoughtfully test, the insights of our brothers and sisters in the faith.

It is in this spirit that this reading of 1 Cor 11:2-16 is submitted to readers. This passage has been identified as one of the most difficult in the New Testament. This chapter will address only those issues/aspects that have significant bearing on the discussion of the ordination of women. The clearer aspects of the passage will first be addressed, followed by a consideration of the remaining interpretive issues.



**1 Corinthians 11:2-16 in Context:  
Background, Genre, and Structure**

In studying 1 Cor 11:2-16 we are stepping into the middle of a long-distance conversation between Paul and the strongly Gentile church of Corinth (1 Cor 12:2; 16:8; cf. 10:1; Acts 18, 19). Since Paul's first visit to Corinth there had been an exchange of letters (1 Cor 5:9, 11; 7:1) and at least one trip by certain Corinthians to visit Paul (16:17; cf. 1:11), Paul had thereby been informed of certain issues that were troubling the church.<sup>3</sup>

As a whole, the letter we call 1 Corinthians is a pastoral letter of exhortation written for the purpose of instructing the believers concerning some of these issues. Two general underlying problems among the believers are apparent. As the letter opens, a *thirst for preeminence* is evident in the friction between rival groups (1:11, 12). This thirst involved a desire to appear wise and knowledgeable (8:1; 10:15; cf. 1:17-19). It also showed itself in lawsuits against one another (ch. 6), in their failure to share fairly in the Lord's Supper (11:18-21), and in their seeking to possess the more "spiritual" gifts (ch. 12-14). Paul, in response, directs the believers to God's deeper wisdom of humble service, evidenced above all in the Cross of Christ and demonstrated in Paul's own ministry (1 Cor 1-4). At the center of this better way Paul placed the surpassing value of love (1 Cor 13).

A second, and related, problem was the Corinthians' *belief in their own freedom, or authority (exousia), to do as they individually chose* (6:12; 8:9).<sup>4</sup> This had shown itself most flagrantly in a case of sexual immorality among the believers (ch. 5). To this sentiment Paul responds with a call to disciplined holiness (6:18-20), and counsels them regarding godly sexuality (ch. 7). He reminds them that in reality God has already provided cleansing (1:2, 30; 6:11). A less straightforward issue

related to freedom and responsibility was the eating of food that had previously been offered to idols. In chapters 8-10, Paul exhorts the believers to recognize that the love and unity God wants for them requires that they consider the effect of their actions on others and on their loyalty to Christ. He calls them to act in this light, rather than selfishly flaunting their own freedom (see esp. 8:7; 10:23, 24).

At bottom, in their self-focus, the Corinthian believers had lost their appreciation of the goodness of God (1:4-9). To such goodness, in Paul's mind, the truly wise can only respond by giving God glory and honor in word, in life, and in appropriate worship.

The problem Paul had been dealing with immediately prior to 11:2-16 was this feeling, that because they now knew that other gods did not exist, they were free to eat food offered to idols (ch. 8-10). Paul first points out that by so doing they were likely to lead the weak—who have only recently come out of idol worship—back into practices that would re-enslave them to such worship. He then turns to the Old Testament example of what happened when Israel in the wilderness mixed loyalty to God and loyalty to idols. Warning them to avoid following Israel's example, he again stresses that the Corinthians must consider the influence of their actions on other people, however justifiable such actions may seem. He points them instead to the glory of God as the motive and criterion for all action (10:23-31). He concludes, "Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God," challenging them to follow the example he has set for them (10:32; also 10:33-11:1).

First Corinthians 11:2-14, which we will now address, evidences some similar concerns. It begins a section in which Paul deals with issues related to Corinthian church gatherings. In this larger section, desire to have one's own way and rivalry for honor are once

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again in evidence, even at the Lord's Supper, feeding into disorderliness in relation to spiritual gifts.

### Getting the Big Picture: The Structure and Main Message of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

If one is to understand in a balanced way the details of any text, it is essential, after exploring the surrounding context, to discover the big picture of what the author is seeking to communicate in the passage. This is especially essential in a complex passage such as this. The brief overview below seeks to identify the main sections, or stages, of Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 11:2-16 and to consider what role each stage plays in identifying and communicating his message. Following this overview, each section of the passage will then be examined in more detail in light of the framework we have discovered.

*11:2: Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the tradition, just as I delivered them to you.*

Verse 2 introduces a transition to a new topic by stepping back from correction and instruction to offer a word of commendation to the believers in Corinth.

*11:3: But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.*

Paul next puts forward an assertion outlining three important relationships among humans and the divine. This verse is often treated as the main point and focus of Paul's attention in the entire passage. To test this idea, notice whether each of the following stages of the passage is aimed toward the support and explanation of verse 3, or whether there is a different kind of connection being made.

*11:4-6: Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head.*

Verses 4-6 make a set of parallel observations regarding the wearing of head-coverings improper to one's gender while praying or prophesying. The word *head*, introduced in verse 3, is used in a multivalent way to refer to both the literal head and to metaphorical "heads." The relationships spoken of in verse 3 provide background necessary for understanding the assertions in verses 4-6. Paul then underlines the level of significance of inappropriate head coverings.

*11:7-12: For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.*

In verses 7-12 Paul continues to address the issue of head-coverings, bringing in points from Scripture which lend authority to his argument. Again there are parallel statements addressed to the man and then to the woman

(“the man ought not to . . .” v. 7 / “the woman ought to . . .” v. 10). In this case, however, instead of observations structured as a simple contrasting parallelism, Paul words these statements as directives with accompanying support and qualification. References to a literal head further elucidate by means of specific Scriptural points how the premise is meant to relate to the head-covering issue.

*11:13–16: Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering. But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.*

Even as he concludes the passage, summing up his argument, Paul does not develop the relationships in verse 3, as would be expected if verse 3 were the main point of the passage. Instead, he remains focused on the question of head-coverings. This final two-part argument is based on the perception of what is proper, of what is “natural,” and, finally, on church practice.

Upon considering this overview of Paul’s argument, we can now see that his main point is to instruct and convince the Corinthians regarding the appropriate use of head-coverings. Verse 3 can be seen to function in the passage as the statement of an opening premise from which Paul will then begin to build his case for following his counsel. Verses 4–6 offer an initial statement of the problem, followed by further instruction and rationale regarding appropriate head-covering (vv. 7–12, 13–16).

### What Is Paul Really Saying? Exploring the Argument

Paul’s *primary* purpose in this passage, then, is not to address the question of whether women should lead in worship or other functions of the church, but rather how they should be attired as they pray and prophesy in the assembly of believers. The question we are left with is whether the passage carries no implications for our question regarding women’s ordination. We are now in a position to proceed through the passage exploring each stage in Paul’s argument to discover any possible implications regarding this issue.

**11:2: Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the things handed down (*paradosis*), just as I delivered them to you.<sup>5</sup>**

Paul’s commendation in this verse may be intended to function as a general encouragement before the series of corrections he is about to give in the new main section of the letter he is now beginning (ch. 11–14).<sup>6</sup> However, the fact that he introduces his next topic in 11:17 with the opposite statement, “I do not praise you,” suggests that this positive commendation is especially related to 11:2–16.<sup>7</sup> In addition to providing encouragement, these words point the Corinthian believers toward faithfulness to the traditions taught by Paul as being a better basis for receiving recognition and honor than some of the other methods they have tried, and are receiving correction for, in this letter.<sup>8</sup>

**11:3: But I want you to understand (*oida*) that Christ is the head (*kephalē*) of every man, and the man is the head (*kephalē*) of a woman, and God is the head (*kephalē*) of Christ.**

For Paul, who has centered his whole life and ministry upon God and what He has done

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in Jesus Christ, everything needed to have a theological grounding. Thus, as he begins to address the issue of head-coverings, he seeks to clarify for the Corinthians three basic relationships which he believed were important for dealing with the problem.<sup>9</sup> Verses 4-7, 11, and 12 will then allude back to this verse as he builds his main argument.

The ordering of the three relationships in verse 3 does not emphasize hierarchy; otherwise, one would expect to find the lowest level of the hierarchy at one end and the highest level at the other end. Instead, it appears that it is organized so that the relationship between the man and the woman falls in the center, emphasizing its focal place in the passage. The two relationships placed on either side of this man-woman relationship receive little attention in the passage as a whole. Possibly they serve to remind the Corinthians of their obligation to Christ and to God in this and all relationships.

The repeated word common to all three paired relationships is *head*, or *kephalē*. Many consider the idea of "headship" to be the central point of the whole passage, and thus assume that identifying the single most likely first-century Christian meaning for *kephalē* would provide the key to unlocking the meaning of verses 2-16. Unfortunately, as often happens, simply picking a definition from a dictionary or lexicon can lead to misunderstanding or false assumptions if one does not explore the literary and historical contexts of that word's usage. Indeed, the discussion regarding the uses of *kephalē* in Paul's time is so polarized that most work on the question has tended to skew the data to a surprising degree in the direction of each individual writer's preconceptions.<sup>10</sup> (See the endnotes for a more extensive summary of the actual evidence.)

The word *kephalē* literally refers to the "head" as part of the human or animal body. However, the word is also often used to

represent a variety of figurative ideas suggested by the perceived physiological attributes of this physical head. The value of such figurative language in human communication is its flexibility and its power evoke richer and broader meaning.

In the English language probably the most common figurative meaning of "head," when used of an individual, is to identify that person as having "authority" with relation to others, whether it is the authority of influence or the authority to act as "boss," or "ruler."<sup>11</sup> This is linked to our understanding of the physical head as the control center of the rest of the body.<sup>12</sup> The Hebrew word for head (*rōsh*) is also sometimes used to represent this figurative idea.<sup>13</sup> However, the word *kephalē* (head) was not used at all in the earlier classical Greek to symbolize the authority of an individual, and even by Paul's time, centuries later, only a few rare instances can be found of its it being used in this way.<sup>14</sup> Some of the few clear examples of this usage from Paul's day are in the early Greek translations (the Septuagint, or LXX) of the Hebrew Old Testament, where *kephalē* is used in several instances to translate the Hebrew *rōsh*, which did more often carry the implication of authority.<sup>15</sup> However, even in these instances the Jewish translators of the LXX most often chose to translate *rōsh* with Greek words more clearer related to authority such as *archē* and *hēgemonia*, which their Greek-speaking audience would have more easily understood.<sup>16</sup> Those who read *kephalē* in 11:3 from this perspective understand it to say that Christ is the authority over the man, the man/husband is the authority over the woman/wife, and God is the authority over Christ. This group points for support to Paul's references to the creation in verses 7-9, to the presence of the word *authority* in verse 10, and to Paul's reference to the husband as *kephalē* in Eph 5:20-33.

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A more common figurative meaning of *kephalē*, which is linked to its position as the top or foremost part of the body, is the idea of the extremity of a thing—that is, the “first,” “beginning,” or “top.” A related concept—sometimes argued to be the best option for interpreting *kephalē* in 11:3—is the idea of source, referring most directly to the sources (heads) of a river but also used in broader ways.<sup>17</sup> To read 11:3 in this way would yield the reading, “Christ is the source of all men, the man is the source of woman, God is the source of Christ.” On the one hand, “source” is also a rather rare meaning for *kephalē* in Paul’s day,<sup>18</sup> but on the other hand, this reading makes clear sense of the ordering of the three relationships in verse 3. Such a reading would reveal a simple chronological sequence beginning with Christ as the source of the man (at Creation), followed by the man as the source (through his rib) of the woman, and ending with God as the source of Christ (the Messiah, at the Incarnation).<sup>19</sup> Paul references this idea of man as the “source” of the woman in verse 8, where he states, “For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man” and verses 11, 12, “as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman.”

A third cluster of figurative ideas that derives from the relation of the physical head to the body builds on the prominence of the head in this relationship. Few today would explicitly argue that the man is preeminent over the woman in the sense of being ontologically superior. However, the physical prominence of the head also links to the concept of the head as being representative of the whole person. This is actually the most common figurative usage of *kephalē* in the LXX.<sup>20</sup> Such a “representative” meaning could be argued to make sense in 11:3, conveying the idea of Christ acting in a representative sense for all

men, the man representing the family unit (as in Gen 1:26 or in Paul’s first Adam/second Adam theology), and God representing Christ (in the sense that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are often referenced with the simple term *God*). Verses 4, 5, and 7 of 1 Cor 11 use *kephalē* in this representative sense in arguing that the head-covering an individual chooses to wear can function to bring disgrace or glory to their “head,” that is, to the representative of the family, or spiritual, unit. This reading too has found support among some students of the passage.<sup>21</sup>

The careful reader of the examples in the endnotes will no doubt notice that often a given use of *kephalē* may suggest several possible or overlapping figurative ideas. This is a common characteristic of metaphor both outside and within the writings of Paul. For example, in Eph 4:15, 16 he states:

We are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head (*kephalē*), even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Here, we can see Christ being held up as *prominent*, surpassing all others. In addition the focus is on Christ as *source* of life and *growth*.<sup>22</sup>

Some of Paul’s usages, on the other hand, focus quite strongly on one idea, placing other ideas in the background. For example, we find one of the three possible meanings for *kephalē* being alluded to in each of three passages about Christ in the epistle to the Colossians. The passage of Col 1:15–18 builds on the idea of the head as the first, or foremost, part of the body, stating, “He is also the *kephalē* of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself

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will come to have first place in everything.” In Colossians 2:9, 10 this idea shades into Jesus’ authority, “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head (*kephalē*) over all rule and authority. . . .” And in 2:18, 19, Paul emphasizes the idea of Christ as source, “Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement . . . and not holding fast to the head (*kephalē*), from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.”

In Ephesians 5:18-6:2, the single passage outside of 1 Cor 11 where Paul uses *kephalē* figuratively of ordinary humans, believers are called first and foremost to mutually submit (*hypotassō*) to one another (v. 21). In the context of this mutual submission, Paul calls on wives to submit to their own husbands (v. 22, 24).<sup>23</sup> The close ties between verses 21 and 22 are underlined by the fact that the verb (*hypotassō*) does not actually appear in the Greek text of verse 22, so that the verses literally read, “Submit yourselves to one another in fear of Christ, the women to their own husbands as to the Lord. . . .” Paul does not call on husbands to control or subject their wives to themselves, but on wives to yield in love to their husbands (5:22). Neither are wives ever told to “obey” (*hypakouō*) as children are told to do. Also important, for the purposes of our current study, is the fact that in the books of Moses (Genesis-Deuteronomy) and the rest of Scripture, there is no instruction that women are to submit to men anywhere outside of the husband-wife relationship.

The reason Paul gives for the voluntary submission of wives is that the husband is head/*kephalē* of the wife as Christ is the head of the church (v. 23). Obviously, the husband does not stand fully in the same relation to his wife as Christ does to the church, for Christ

is infinitely above the church in character, sovereignty, and being. Rather, as verses 25-28 make clear, the husband is *kephalē* to the wife in that he cares for her with sacrificial love, seeking to supply her needs and to aid in her sanctification—that is, in being holy and set apart for divine use in whatever way God should choose to use her. If these are indeed the primary concerns of the husband he would also find himself submitting his own desires to the needs of his wife. (Compare, for example, vv. 21 and 25.)

From this examination of Paul’s uses of *kephalē* outside of 1 Cor 11, it is evident that he uses this word in a multivalent way, playing on one or more of its different figurative meanings as suits the point he is making in each passage.<sup>24</sup> Although it is sometimes frustrating to human desires for precision, language cannot be captured in rigid and impermeable boxes allowing for no blending or deviation. It cannot therefore be carelessly assumed that where an author uses figurative language, he wishes either to bring to mind all possible meanings, or to allude to one and only one meaning. The interpretive possibilities, however, are not without boundaries; rather, as can be seen in the examples above, intended meanings for a particular usage are primarily suggested by the context in which it is used.

It is essential, then, to avoid jumping to conclusions about the meaning of *kephalē* in this passage and to consider carefully the context of the passage as a whole. In this way it can be determined whether, for example, Paul is building on the idea of *kephalē* as “authority” in his main argument, or whether he is emphasizing “source,” “representation,” and/or other figurative ideas related to the “head.” Doing thus should help the interpreter to avoid imposing on the text his or her own assumed or desired reading.

Several observations regarding each of the

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three relationships described in verse 3 will prove helpful as we proceed. In the first pair, Paul states that "Christ is the head of every man." In Greek, the words "*pantos andros*" (of every man) are placed first in the sentence, emphasizing that this relationship with Christ as head affects *every* man. The Greek word used here for man, *anēr*, normally refers specifically to a male person. Paul, however, occasionally uses it in a representative way to apply more broadly to all human beings. For example, he tells the Romans, "Blessed is the *anēr* whose sin the Lord will not take into account" (Rom 4:8; cf Eph 4:13). Understanding *anēr* in 1 Cor 11:3 to include all people seems necessary based on the larger context of Scripture, which insists that no person, male or female, is to stand in the position of an intermediary between Christ and the individual (e.g., Matt 11:28; John 7:37). Such an understanding would seem necessary if Christ is the head only of the male. Another possibility is that Paul makes this initial statement in order to remind men that the authority they take on is not limitless but is circumscribed by the loving example of Christ (cf. Eph 5:25-27). It may be that Paul chooses to use the term *anēr* here to lead into the second and central pairing, where he speaks of the relationship of the *anēr* and the *gynē*, a relationship that is important to his argument in the verses that follow.<sup>25</sup> The word head (*kephalē*) in this pairing is clearly not referring to the literal head of one's physical body, but could fit any or all of the main possible Greek metaphorical uses of the word—authority, source, or representation.

The terms, *anēr* and *gynē*, used in the second pairing, can be used in Greek to speak either of a "man" and "woman" or a "husband" and "wife." These terms can also be used in the singular (as here) to refer to a specific man and woman to whom the speaker is directing attention. Each of these three possible senses

of *anēr* and *gynē* is used in the verses that follow. For example, Paul would not mean to suggest in verse 3 that Christ is the head only of "husbands." Conversely, in the logic of verses 4–6, it must be the "husband," not just any "man," who would be disgraced by a woman's improper head-coverings. Again later, in verse 8, when speaking of the single time when woman was made from "man," Paul uses the general words, *anēr* and *gynē*, to speak of the specific individuals, "Adam" and "Eve." But then he returns to the generic meaning "man"/"woman" when he insists in verse 12 that it is also true the *anēr* (ever since Adam) is born through the *gynē*. Thus, once again, it is essential to allow the context to point to the meaning of words in a specific usage, rather than insisting on interpreting every word in a rigidly unvarying way. Here in verse 3, "husband" and "wife" seem most likely, on the basis of Eph 5, although "Adam" and "Eve" might also be in view, as suggested in 1 Cor 11:8. When one looks at the Bible as a whole, carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture, it is clear that the pairing cannot be suggesting that every man is in authority over every woman. Such a teaching is found nowhere else in Scripture, rather any such instruction is confined to the husband-wife relationship. It is possible that he speaks of the man (Adam) being the source of the woman (Eve), an idea he carefully balances in verses 11, 12 by demonstrating that, ever since, the woman has been the source of the man.<sup>26</sup>

The third relationship, "God is the head of Christ," raises huge issues in Christology if read as an eternal relationship of control and supremacy. Certainly Paul understands Christ as making the choice to place all things under the Father at the end (1 Cor 15:24, 28), but this must be balanced with the recognition that "all the fullness dwelt in Christ" (Col 1:19)

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and that the Father likewise places all things under Christ (Eph 1:22) and places Christ's name above all names (Phil 2:9-10). Indeed, it is said that Jesus actually "learned obedience" specifically during His time on earth (Phil 2:8; Heb 5:28). In this third pairing, therefore, God may be spoken of as the *kephalē* ("head") in that He is the *source* (cf. Gal 4:4) from whom Christ (Greek for the Messiah) came; or that God is the name used *representatively* of all three persons of the Godhead.

Bringing together what has been discovered thus far, several observations may be made that will guide us in understanding the implications of this passage for the ordination of women. First, in the understanding of first-century Greek-speaking believers, in the writings of Paul generally, and in 1 Cor 11:3 itself, *kephalē* ("head") could carry several figurative meanings, including being representative of a whole; being first, or even source; and, carrying some level of authority in relation to others.<sup>27</sup> All three of these make sense in the context of the passage, although source makes more sense out of the sequencing of verse 3.

Second, the focus on Christ created by His dual mention in the passage reminds us that all is done in relation to Christ. It also thus points us to Jesus' teaching and example regarding human and male-female relationships as an important interpretive key to understanding Paul's words here. While on earth He stood as our *representative* taking our sins upon himself, and becoming the *source* of life for all who believe. He used his *authority* to help and bless others in the role of servant (Luke 22:27), loving and giving himself for his church (Eph 5:25).

Third, the second pairing referred to in verse 3, must refer either to the husband and wife (if used it includes some type of authority) or in particular to the first husband being the source of the first wife.

*11:4-6: Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head.*

Verses 4-6 reveal the problem that Paul is addressing in the passage as a whole. He begins by stating the consequences of improper head-coverings: the disgrace suffered by one's "head." His decision to address this issue reveals that at least a few Corinthian believers are engaging in, or at least beginning to advocate, such improper head covering. It would appear that the problem primarily involved the Corinthian women, for the bulk of Paul's attention is addressed to the woman's responsibility in this matter. The attention given to male head-coverings would then function to provide balance and recognize the importance of a differentiation between the head-coverings of men and women. It also indicates that there were expectations for men's head-coverings which should not be forgotten.

Paul does not describe the exact situation taking place in the church, and reconstructions of the situation generally involve a fair amount of guesswork.<sup>28</sup> However, certain aspects of the historical situation regarding head-coverings have become clear, based on the growing body of strong research done in recent years. One thing that is clear is that Paul's concern regarding shame brought by certain head coverings was well-founded in the expectations of the time. Traditionally, in the Greco-Roman culture, it was considered deeply immodest for married women to



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appear in public without the appropriate head-coverings, although some women (especially among the wealthy) had lately been choosing not to conform.<sup>29</sup> As evidenced in the many statues and inscriptions of women of that day, including a number from Corinth itself, this generally involved wearing a length of cloth (sometimes called a veil) over one's head.<sup>30</sup> The belief was that a woman's beauty was to be reserved for her husband and shielded from the desire of other men through covering of the head and body.<sup>31</sup> Protection of a woman's modesty was considered a matter of honor for the husband, as well as for the woman, because—as in many societies today—the wife was both a repository of, and a potential threat to, the honor of the man and the family.

A second common practice in the Greco-Roman world at that time, which some consider to be what Paul was actually calling for, was that a woman's hair—which was considered to be particularly alluring—should be bound up (covering her head) when in public.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, in speaking to men in verse 4, the literal Greek does not use the word for covering (*katakalyptō*), but rather describes the man simply as “having (something?) down from (the) head.” This is supported also by the direct references to hair in verses 14 and 15. Since head-coverings are not directly spoken of, it is possible that Paul was dealing here not with what men wore on their heads, but with the issue of long, effeminately arranged hair. Such a blurring of genders was recognized in the broader culture as inappropriate.

The reasoning that Paul initially uses with reference to head-coverings does not deal with the issue in the sense of sin or moral wrong. Rather, by speaking of “disgracing one's head,” he points directly to this issue of honor and shame in the eyes of others (e.g., 11:22; 2 Cor 9:4). Such reasoning was only natural to the Corinthians, who held honor in such high

esteem.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the acquisition of honor and the avoidance of shame were among the highest values of the ancient Mediterranean world, to the degree that it caused problems Paul was forced to combat repeatedly his letter to the Corinthians.<sup>34</sup>

In 11:2–16, Paul points again and again to the disgrace, or shame, brought to one's head as a result of improper head-coverings. Such disgrace fell not only on the individual's own physical head. Paul's statement in verse 3—when understood as stating that the *husband* is the head of the *wife* (cf. Eph 5:23)—can be seen as preparing the Corinthians to be reminded that a woman's head-covering choices were not only a matter of their own personal freedom, or authority (*exousia*, 8:9), but also affected her husband. Thus, as at numerous other points in this letter, Paul's emphasis is not only on the individual's own honor, which they may have been willing to eschew for the freedom/*exousia* they so much valued (6:12; 8:9), but on how it affects others.<sup>35</sup> This is a point he had just made in 10:31–33 and is also evident in many other passages such 8:7–13; 13:1–6; 14:19, 26. In the case of the woman's head-covering, Paul's primary concern is with the dishonor brought upon the husband—a dishonor of which everyone in that world was aware. Such dishonor would also have had an impact on the honor with which God and the Gospel of Christ were viewed within the larger community.

The final point worthy of note in these verses is the activities in which the man and woman are spoken of as engaging—that is, praying and prophesying. These activities are activities that were not done silently within oneself. They were taking place publicly in church gatherings, for there would be no necessity of coverings in the privacy of one's home, and the counsel of chapters 11–14 focuses on such gatherings. While debate continues about the exact nature

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of the prophesying and its function as a leadership role, two things should be noted. First, Paul speaks of men and women without qualification, as engaging in exactly the same leadership activities in worship. Second, he speaks in this way without making even the smallest differentiation between men and women regarding how these two activities are carried out, or suggesting, as one would expect if this passage is about the proper authority of the male in church leadership, that there are other activities or leadership roles in the church in which women must not engage. While Paul throughout the passage supports the idea of gender distinctions with regard to dress, he here makes absolutely no gender distinctions in regard to functions in the church. If this passage were indeed commanding a male-only spiritual headship or leadership in the church, it would seem odd that the male and female activities in the church are described in exactly the same terms.

Considering, then, the implications of the passage thus far for the question of women's ordination, Paul's initial argument, following 11:3, is an argument dealing with how people of that culture would view certain head-coverings. He makes this cultural argument through reminding men and women—by speaking in terms of “the head” and thereby linking to verse 3—that they are intimately connected to the one who is their head, and that whatever they do impinges not only upon themselves but also upon their metaphorical head. This way of using *kephalē* evidences a much stronger connection to the idea of *prominence* or *representation*, than to any position of control or dominance in relation to the woman. As Adventists have recognized in choosing not to require women to wear head-coverings to church, the counsel is aimed at a particular cultural setting. A faithful application of its underlying principle would suggest that a wife

take special care not to shame her husband, and the husband his God, by their choice of what to wear in church. Indeed, the counsel seems to relate also to the biblical counsel that men and women are to avoid blurring culturally recognized distinctions of attire that separate the male from the female (cf. Deut 22:5).<sup>36</sup> No distinction between male and female participation or functions in church gatherings is anywhere suggested.

*11:7-12: For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. Therefore the woman ought to have (a symbol of?) authority (exousia) on/over (epi) her head (kephalē), because of the angels. However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.*

A close look at the structure of this stage of Paul's argument provides a means of perceiving more accurately his thinking. The two “ought” statements are the most obvious structural markers, insisting that the man and the woman are “under obligation” to act in the way Paul describes. This obligation is based in their creation by God. For the man, the rationale given is brief (v. 7a). By pointing to Gen 1:26, 27, Paul demonstrates that as the image and glory of God, the man is to reveal that image, thereby giving due glory to his Maker.<sup>37</sup> The rationale for the woman's obligation (vv. 7b-9) is longer and more complex than that of the man, and falls before rather than after the statement of obligation. It is, however, similar to the rationale for the man, in that it is based

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in Genesis 1 and 2. The word glory in verse 7, applied to a human in this way, functions as a synonym of honor. Thus it links Paul's rationale in verses 7-9 with the statements regarding head-coverings in verses 4-6, presenting here God's positive intention in contrast to the negative disgracing of one's head warned against there.<sup>38</sup>

It is not to be supposed that Paul, in stating that "the woman is the glory of the man," had forgotten or was deliberately ignoring the full text of Gen 1:26, 27. In Genesis God declares, "Let us make man in Our image . . . and let *them* rule . . ." and then "God created man in His own image . . . male *and female* He created them." Indeed, Paul can actually be seen here to be supporting and expanding on Genesis' positive attestation regarding the woman. He does this in verses 8 and 9 by briefly summarizing Gen 2:21-24. This Genesis passage describes the creation of the woman in greater detail than that of the man, portraying how God brought satisfaction and companionship to Adam through the creation of the woman and showing the joy this gift of a counterpart brought to Adam. In this way Paul demonstrates that not only is the woman, like the man, in the image of God, but she is also created from and given to the man, not as an object of ownership or domination, but as a counterpart who will bring him glory.

Since in the circumstances of her creation, having been brought from man to stand by his side as companion, it is appropriate for her to seek to dress in a way that will bring him honor and not disgrace.<sup>39</sup> Further, because these Corinthian women lived in a society which dealt with the attractive qualities of a woman by covering them, going without the head-coverings while praying and prophesying had the potential to distract others from the attention and glory to be given during worship to God alone.

Verse 10, which concludes the rationale of verses 7b-9 by giving a statement of obligation for the woman, is very cryptic. (Likely, Paul could assume that his meaning would be clear to the Corinthian believers, with whom he shared many experiences and understandings that we today can only guess at.) The literal translation is: "Because of this the woman ought to have authority upon/over the head."<sup>40</sup> A common way of adjusting this statement to fit with the traditional reading of the passage is to assume that the head-coverings Paul has been speaking of somehow represent "authority," and as such should be worn by the woman as a symbol of her husband's authority over her. This interpretation involves adding the words "wear a symbol of" to Paul's statement so that it reads, "the woman ought to *wear a symbol of* authority on her head" It also attributes a symbolic meaning to the head-covering that is not supported elsewhere. Indeed, such an interpretation does not fit with Paul's argument for head-coverings in the rest of the passage, which is concerned with giving honor appropriately. A much more straightforward reading which necessitates adding no new words, and which is more true to the normal usage of those words that are present, is simply: "a woman should have authority over her head."<sup>41</sup> In the context, such authority is to be enacted by wearing the appropriate head-covering, which would protect her from prying eyes and safeguard her dignity.<sup>42</sup>

Following this statement of obligation, Paul matches and balances the rationale of verses 7b-9, based on Creation, with a structurally parallel instruction about man-woman relationships, based "in the Lord" (vv. 11, 12). "In the Lord" refers to the life and community of faith in Jesus. Here another aspect of Christian life is brought out—that of mutuality.<sup>43</sup> Not willing to leave the impression that the woman is alone in having

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relationship obligations based in the will of God, Paul reminds his audience in verses 11 and 12 that not only did the first woman come from a man, but ever since then every man has come from a woman. Thus each owe their origin to the other, and above all, both owe their existence to God alone, who is their true source. In stepping back from his argument about head-coverings to ensure that such reciprocal obligations are understood, Paul advocates a level of mutuality that is remarkable in the ancient Mediterranean world.<sup>44</sup>

The passage of 1 Cor 11:7-12 does, for the purpose of addressing the head-covering issue, call on the woman to remember to be concerned for the glory of the One who created her and also of her husband. However, it does so with respect and on the basis of the concepts of priority and source, not on any attribution of authority. Further, it calls on men to recognize that they themselves also stand in a similar position of obligation to women. As has been demonstrated regarding verses 4-6, there is no evidence in verses 7-12 that would insist that women be excluded from leadership in the church.

*11:13-16: Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?<sup>14</sup> Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,<sup>15</sup> but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering<sup>16</sup> But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.*

Paul's argument in favor of appropriate head-coverings, which in verses 7-12 has been based in Scripture—both in the Creation story and in the Gospel story of redemption in Christ—now returns to the concern for the way in which improper head coverings will

be viewed by observers (11:4-6). Concern regarding the effect of one's actions on others is not a new or unworthy focus of attention for Paul. He uses a similar argument repeatedly in chapters 8-10 in addressing the question of meat offered to idols. And he will use the same rationale again in chapter 14 in addressing the unruly practices of some as they speak and prophesy in the church.

This final section of Paul's argument opens with a question that directs attention to what is considered proper (honorable) with regard to a woman's head-covering (v. 13). Paul appears to expect that every Corinthian believer, if they will think about it honestly, will recognize in their hearts that for a women to pray with the head uncovered is improper, or shameful. Such an expectation witnesses to the practically universal recognition of this custom in that time and place.<sup>45</sup>

The second question (v. 14, 15a) illustrates his point about what is proper by reference to what "nature" teaches about hair length. Since Paul would have been aware of Samson, Nazirites, and other males who successfully grew long hair, his appeal to nature is not based on the physical characteristics of the natural world or even a universal principle banning such hair. Rather, he refers here to the regular (natural) order of things as recognized by humans.<sup>46</sup> By analogy, with the length of hair believed to be appropriate for men and for women, Paul establishes further the points he has made in verses 4-6 about what kind of head-coverings are appropriate for men and for women. It is noteworthy that in closing his argument here he speaks of the individual's own honor rather than pointing to the effects of these styles on the honor of another. As before, the differentiation between men and women that Paul insists on is a visual separation in appearance between male and female, underlined by hair and clothing styles.

Verse 16 concludes the passage by appeal

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to broader church practice, and operates as the conclusion to Paul's argument. The verse witnesses to the value Paul, and likely by other leaders of the day, gave to considering the choices of other believers in one's decisions about Christian practice and also to learning from their wisdom. As with verses 4–12, there is no attention given either to building a theological system around the pairings in 11:3 or to making any declarations regarding authority, which is what one would expect if the authority of man over woman had been the central point of the passage.

### Implications for the Ordination of Women As Pastors in the Adventist Church

In summary, the purpose of 1 Cor 11:2–16 is to persuade the Corinthian believers to choose appropriate head-coverings that will bring honor, rather than dishonor, to one's "head." The passage has been identified as presenting three overlapping kinds of rationales to make this argument.

First Paul sets out in verse 3 a series of relationships which can be seen, in the context of the whole passage, as ones that would be particularly affected by one's choice of head-covering. By speaking of each these relationships in terms of a "head" (Gk: *kephalē*), he prepares his audience for the use of several different figurative and literal meanings of *kephalē* to be used in the ensuing argument. The figurative meanings of *kephalē* that receive the clearest allusions in the passage are those related to some degree of prominence or representation (in verses 4–7) and to temporal priority and source (in verses 8, 9, 12).

Second, Paul gives significant attention, in verses 4–6 and 13–16, to showing why this is important, based on what is considered honorable by the people of that time. Of first importance for Paul was to give due honor

to Christ and to God. In addition, the wife is asked, as one who is considered to carry in a special way the glory, or honor, of the husband, to seek to honor him by means of her appropriate and modest attire. Even the individual concern for one's own honor is a factor in Paul's argument. Recognition that the instructions of 11:2–16 are based upon this culturally specific rationale is, of course, the reason that the Adventist Church chooses not to require head-coverings for women in church today.

In the third kind of rationale, Paul makes two arguments from Creation. He portrays the woman (Eve)—who, like Adam, has been created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27)—as having been given to man (Adam, her husband) not only as his help-mate and companion but also as his "glory" (vv. 7, 9). On the basis of a straightforward reading of the Greek of Paul's climactic instruction in verse 10 in this context, Paul can then be seen to be calling on the woman to exercise authority over her head by wearing appropriate head-coverings that would not take away from the honor of either her husband or her God. In connection with this argument he further argues, also from Creation, that the woman (Eve) was made from man (Adam) as the final product of Creation and is thus dependent on the man (v. 8). At the same time he also quietly points out that those living "in the Lord" Jesus Christ should remember the fact that likewise, by God's Creation order, every man since Adam has been born through the woman (vv. 11, 12). Thus Paul reminds both women and men of the mutual dependence they have on each other.

Paul is not seeking in this passage to explain or support any eternal truth about male headship, or leadership, over all women. Indeed, although such a concept would have had enormous bearing on day-to-day human lives,

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no previous explicit command to such a universal norm can be found in Scripture, either in the law of Moses or at any other time across the centuries.

Several basic principles having a bearing on the issue of the ordination of women are, however, clear from this passage. Most important, for our purposes, is that Paul makes no differentiation between the participation of women and of men in church leadership. The activities of each are described in exactly the same terms without qualification, just as are the spiritual gifts in the following chapter (1 Cor 12). Whether or not some aspect of authority is a part of Paul's range of meaning for *kephalē* in the relation of husband and wife, no concern is evident here to bar women from exercising leadership roles or to regulate the level of leadership she is given.

There is, however, concern regarding the husband-wife relation that should be remembered in the selection of women for ordination. A woman who is unconcerned about the shame or honor she brings on her husband and her God is no more an appropriate candidate for ministry than a man who does not act like Christ in seeking as head to love, guide, and benefit his family faithfully (cf. 1 Tim 3:1-7; Eph 5:21-36).

This passage also reminds us that whenever believers gather as a church body, it is imperative that each be responsible to ensure that their personal attire and actions do not, in the culture and situation in which they find themselves, bring dishonor upon God or upon those to whom it is appropriate for us to bring honor and respect. This suggests that we be culturally sensitive as we enter and interact with different cultures, and not insist on doing or saying something that would in that setting bring dishonor upon Christ or upon others. With regard to women's ordination specifically, we must consider how both our

deliberations and our decisions may affect the glory of God and respect toward others in the various cultures of the world.

Finally, the visual differentiation between male and female is an underlying principle behind the "dress code" Paul is advocating for the Corinthians. As women are ordained and lead out in church, they should be encouraged and supported in leading as modest, respectable women rather than trying to fit into a man's shoes of ministry.

### Endnotes:

1. See, for example, Prov 12:15; 14:12, and the experience of the disciples in the Gospel of Mark.
2. An outline of current Adventist commitments regarding hermeneutics, entitled "Methods of Bible Study," was voted by the General Conference Executive Committee at the Annual Council in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Oct. 12, 1986. (This document may be accessed at <http://www.adventist.org/information/official-statements/documents/#Articles81>).
3. Unless otherwise noted, Scriptural quotations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 196, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988, 1995. Used by permission.
4. It may be that the sense of freedom some felt was related to a misunderstanding of Paul's teaching about the law, and/or to a misunderstanding among some about the reality of the resurrection (1 Cor 15).
5. While the quotes in the previous textboxes were quoted directly from the NASB, the quotes in this section have been modified slightly to reflect more transparently the original Greek. The modifications are explained in the paragraph(s) below each quote. Greek words in parentheses are given in lexical form for the non-Greek reader.
6. Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC 32 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914), 228.
7. Troy Martin, "Paul's Argument from Nature for the Veil in 1 Corinthians 1:13-15," *JBL* 123.1

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- (2004): 75–84. (These are the only two occurrences in the Pauline writings of the phrase “I praise you” / “I do not praise you.”) It has also been suggested that Paul is here being ironic, since he has in the previous chapters corrected the Corinthians for several serious sins. However he gives no further hint of irony, and the contrasting statement in 11:37 (“But in giving this instruction, *I do not praise you* . . .”) suggests that he is speaking straightforwardly here as well. Since Paul begins with commendation, the group provoking this counsel would likely be a minority within the church, or possibly critics from outside the church. Thomas F. Martin, “Augustine’s Pauline Method: 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 as a Case Study,” in *Celebrating Paul: Festschrift in Honor of Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, O.P., and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J.*, ed. Peter Spitaler, CBQMS 48 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2011), 258–261. This is further supported by the teaching, rather than rebuking, style of the passage as a whole, evidenced, for example, by the preference for third-person pronouns (e.g., he, she, they) over the more personal and confrontive words (e.g., I, we, and you).
8. The noun *paradosis* (tradition) is the standard term in the New Testament (NT) for ideas that have been handed down or passed on by others. It is used of everything from “philosophy and empty deception” (Col 2:8) and the Pharisees’ tradition of the elders (Mark 7: 3, 8, 9; Gal 1:14) to Christian teachings (2 Thess 2:15; 3:6). *Paradidōmi*, the word translated, “delivered,” is the standard word for handing down or handing over something, including people, objects, ideas, and doctrines.
  9. It is often thought that Paul is here stating something the Corinthians did not know, urging them to hold fast to this new teaching as they had to his previous ones (Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975], 163). Yet such relationships were not particularly new to the Corinthians. *Oida* (“I understand,” “I know”) is often used to speak of grasping, or deepening, one’s knowledge of something. (Stephen Bedale, “Meaning of *Kephalē* in the Pauline Epistles,” *JTS* 5.2 [1954]: 693, 694.) For example, Paul tells the Ephesians he is praying that they will “know what is the hope of His [God’s] calling . . . and the greatness of His power toward us who believe” (Eph 1:18, 19).
  10. The claims of Philip B. Payne (*Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009], 117–139), in contrast to those of Joseph A. Fitzmyer (“*Kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11:3,” *Int* 47 [1993]: 52–59), provide an excellent example of this. A somewhat more even-handed overview can be found in Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 812–822. A bias in favor of tradition can at times be found even in the New Testament lexicons and translations. For example, Bauer, Danker, Arndt & Gingrich’s *Greek English Lexicon* (BDAG) virtually ignores the representative use of *kephalē*, and places “superior rank” as a primary meaning in first-century Greek language on the strength of one citation from A.D. 500 and on their own interpretation of Paul (BDAG “κεφαλή,” 541, 542). My own analysis falls somewhere between the two extremes, largely, I think, because I choose to give priority to clear examples of a usage.
  11. Authority itself has a wide range of meaning growing out of the basic idea of an ascribed or acknowledged right to act and/or to influence the behavior of others. It can range from absolute authority and control, such as God ultimately carries, to an authority of influence and gentle guidance. For further definition and discussion, see Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, *Types of Authority in Formative Christianity and Judaism* (London: Routledge, 1999), 541, 542; Bernard Ramm, *The Pattern of Religious Authority* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 10; Yves Simon, *A General Theory of Authority* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), 3–12; G. D. Yarnold, as cited in John Skinner, *The Meaning of Authority* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983), 6.
  12. In ancient times many viewed the heart as the control center of the body, while other saw it as located in the head or elsewhere. Catherine Kroegeer, “The Classical Concept of *Head* as “Source” in *Equal to Serve: Women and Men in the Church and Home* (Old Tappan, NJ: F. H. Revell, 1987), 269.
  13. BDB 910, lists, as figurative meanings of *rōsh*: the “top” of something; “first in a series;” “chief” (of persons or things); “front;” “beginning (of time);” and “river-heads.”

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14. I am skeptical of using the early church fathers to understand Paul, since they generally wrote several centuries after the NT. Further, there is clear evidence (as early as the late first century) that these writers were influenced by the surrounding pagan culture in numerous areas recognized by Adventists, including that of authoritarianism and monarchialism with relation to church hierarchy (Cf. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 818).
15. The exact number of LXX uses of *kephalē* referring to authority is debated, but numbers suggested range from about six (Philip Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 119) to fifteen (Wayne A. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than One Hundred Disputed Questions* [Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004], 545, 546). I find about five that unmistakably refer to a person in authority. The clearest is Ps 18:43 (Gr. 17:44), which states, "Deliver me from the gain sayings of the people: thou shalt make me head (*kephalē*) of the Gentiles: a people whom I knew not served me" (cf. 2 Sam 22:44). Alfred Rahlfs's translation (*Septuaginta: id est Vetus Testamentum Graece iuxta LXX interpretes* [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006]) is used throughout this chapter, unless otherwise noted. The other LXX uses of *kephalē* that most clearly use it to identify someone in a position of authority are Judg 10:18 (in one LXX translation); 11:8 (in one translation); 11:11; Isa 7:8, 9; Lam 1:5. Others identify more uses associated with authority largely because they include uncertain or secondary connections to authority. However, *kephalē* is never used to indicate authority of one individual over another individual in the LXX, and only rarely elsewhere (Conzelmann, 183 n. 22, 29).
16. This is disputed vigorously, with individuals on each side taking an extreme position that cannot be substantiated by the evidence. Payne, (*Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 119), building on Bedale ("Meaning of *Kephalē* in the Pauline Epistles") and others, claimed that *rōsh* was almost always translated in this way, while Grudem, Fitzmyer, and allies consider it rare (see Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 821).
- A few instances of *kephalē* being used in the sense of "authority" are found also in Philo (a Hellenistic Jewish apologist) and Plutarch (a Greek biographer, essayist, and priest of Delphi), both of whose lifetimes and situations overlapped somewhat with that of Paul. Philo (*On the Special Laws* 3.184 [Philo VII, Colson, LCL]) compares the head with a king and his kingdom, to point out the position of the eyes in relation to the human senses. "Just as nature (*hē physis*) conferred the sovereignty of the body on the head (*kephalē*) when she granted it also possession of the citadel as the most suitable position for its kingly rank, conducted it thither to take command and established it on high with the whole framework from neck to foot set below it, like the pedestal under the statue, so too she has given the lordship of the senses to the eyes. Thus to them too as rulers she has assigned a dwelling right above the others in her wish to give them amongst other privileges the most conspicuous and distinguished situation."
- Plutarch wrote concerning a Roman emperor, "But after Vindex had openly declared war, he wrote to Galba inviting him to assume the imperial power (*hēgemonia*), and thus to serve what was a vigorous body in need of a head (*kephalē*), meaning the Gallic provinces, which already had a hundred thousand men under arms, and could arm other thousands besides...." Plutarch, *Galba* 4.3 (Perrin, LCL). For more possible examples (which need to be carefully weighed), see Fitzmyer, "*Kephalē*."
17. The idea of "source" or "origin" as a figurative meaning for *kephalē* is another hotly debated topic, with Catherine C. Kroeger "The Classical Concept of *Head* as "Source" in *Equal to Serve: Women and Men in the Church and Home*, ed. Gretchen G. Hull (Old Tappan, NJ: F. H. Revell, 1987) and Stephen Payne (*Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 113-140) insisting that it is the single intended idea behind *kephalē* in 1 Cor 11:3, while Grudem (*Evangelical Feminism*, 206-208), on the other extreme, argues that source is never a legitimate meaning for *kephalē*. Consider, however, Artemidorus Daldianus (second- to first-century B.C.), who used it in this way more than once, including of a man's dream about losing his parents, "the head (*kephalē*) resembles parents in that it is the cause of one's living..." (*The Interpretation of Dreams: Oneirocritica*, trans. Robert J. White [Park Ridge, NJ: Noyes, 1975], 34, 35). Note also the common hymn to Zeus, recorded in *Orphic Fragment* 21, which speaks of Zeus both as the head (*kephalē*) and as the maker of all things; as well as Philo's statement that "the virtuous one, whether single



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- man or people, will be the head (*kephalē*) of the human race and all the others like the limbs of a body which draw their life from the forces in the head and at the top" (*On Rewards and Punishments*, 1.124, 125). See also the *Testament of Reuben* 2.2, where *kephalē* is often misleadingly translated as "leaders."
18. Bauer, "κεφαλή," BDAG 542, cites two articles, one in favor of and one in opposition to "source" as a meaning for *kephalē*.
  19. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Once Again," *CBQ* 50.2 (1988): 270.
  20. E.g., Judg 9:57: "Also God returned all the wickedness of the men of Shechem on their heads [*kephalē*], and the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal came upon them." See also: "This is what the LORD has commanded, 'Gather of it every man as much as he should eat; you shall take an omer apiece according to the number of persons [lit. heads, *kephalē*] each of you has in his tent.'" See also: Exod 16:16.
  21. Andrew C. Perriman, "The Head of a Woman: The Meaning of *Kephalē* in 1 Cor 11:3," *JTS* 45 (1994); Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 821. Note, for example, Philo's observation in *Life of Moses* 2.30: "in a word, the whole family of the Ptolemies was exceedingly eminent and conspicuous above all other royal families, and among the Ptolemies, Philadelphus was the most illustrious; for all the rest put together scarcely did as many glorious and praiseworthy actions as this one king did by himself, being, as it were, the leader of the herd, and in a manner the head [*kephalē*] of all the kings." Also from Philo, an earlier statement from *On Reward* 1.125 says, "For as in an animal the head [*kephalē*] is the first and best part, and the tail the last and worst part, or rather no part at all, inasmuch as it does not complete the number of the limbs, being only a broom to sweep away what flies against it; so in the same manner what is said here is that the virtuous man shall be the head [*kephalē*]. . ." See also Jer 31:7 (38:7 LXX) and Deut 28:13; 28:44; Isa 9:13-16 (9:12-15 LXX) in which *kephalē* may represent both preeminence and authority. Note in this last instance that the two groups in Isa 9 represented respectively as head (*kephalē*) and as tail are both leaders of the people. (Compare Plutarch, *Agis and Cleomenes* 2.5.)
  22. Thomas R. Schreiner has suggested that it is Christ's sovereignty which allows Him to sustain and strengthen the church ("Head-coverings, Prophecies and the Trinity: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne A. Grudem. [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991], 128).
  23. Note that the wife is never told to "obey" as children are (6:21), but to make the voluntary choice to yield in love (5:22), just as all are called to do in relation to fellow believers (5:21).
  24. See Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 396, cf. 405, 406 on v. 3. Such a use of figurative language creates a multi-layered and evocative communication that is rich in meaning through word play and multiple interconnections. This is something G. Dawes, ("The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in Ephesians 5:21-33," *BibInt* 30 [1998]) referred to as "living metaphor," the recognition that language is not dead and static but endlessly inventive. The interpretive possibilities of a given word or phrase, however are not without boundaries. Rather, as can be seen in the examples above, intended meanings for a particular usage are primarily suggested by the context in which it is used.
  25. Plummer, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 229.
  26. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 138, suggests that this instance refers specifically to Adam and Eve, since *anēr* has an article and is paralleled (spoken of as head) in the verse with the articular use of Christ and of God, both specific individuals.
  27. Of Peter, the apostle who exercised the most leadership in the earliest church, Ellen White writes, "Peter had been restored to his apostleship, but the honor and authority he received from Christ had not given him supremacy over his brethren. This Christ had made plain when in answer to Peter's question, "What shall this man do?" He had said, "What is that to thee? follow thou Me." Peter was not honored as the head of the church. The favor which Christ had shown him in forgiving his apostasy, and entrusting him with the feeding of the flock, and Peter's own faithfulness in following Christ, won for him the confidence of his brethren. He had much influence in the church" (White, *Desire of Ages* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2006], 817).
  28. E.g., Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

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29. See the many literary and archaeological examples cited, for example, by Mark Finney, "Honour, Head-Coverings and Headship: 1 Corinthians 11.2-16 in Its Social Context," *JNTS* 33.1 (2010): 31-58; and Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003). Note also Num 5:18; Isa 47:1-3; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 3.270; Philo, *On the Special Laws* 3.56; *Mishnah. Baba.Qamma* 8:6; *Ketuboth* 7:6; Valerius Maximus 6.3.10; Plutarch, *Moralia* 267A, B; Apuleius, *Metamorphosis* 2.8.
30. While one or two writers mention women covering their faces as well (see Dio Chrysostom, *Orations*, 33.48, 49), the many extant statues and inscriptions of women of that day give almost no evidence of this level of covering.
31. Finney, "Honour," 40, 41; and Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 91, 92, who cites as an example Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae* 2.7.6.
32. See, for examples, Murphy-O'Connor, "1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Once Again." While Roman men did cover the head in worship settings, Jewish and even Greek expectations regarding head coverings for men in worship are not as clear as those for women and remain disputed. Since there does seem to be some evidence of male's covering their heads in worship, and Paul is here counseling the opposite, it may underline the idea that gender differentiation was also an important part of his underlying concern in this passage (cf. v. 7a). Other options are that he wished men to avoid association with this pagan practice (David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003], 517); or that men were trying to win honor by covering their heads in the style of the upper class (Finney, "Honour"; D. Gill, "The Importance of Roman Portraiture for Head-Coverings in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16," *TynBul* 41.2 [1990]: 260, and Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows*, 96).
33. This esteem is evident throughout the letter, from the rivalry between factional groups in ch. 1 to the seeking after the most prominent gifts in ch. 14.
34. On honor, see for example, David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kingship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 55. Halvor Moxnes, "Honor and Shame," in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Richard L. Rohrbaugh (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996).
35. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 116.
36. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 812-822; W. Loader, *The Septuagint, Sexuality, and the New Testament: Case Studies on the Impact of the LXX in Philo and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 100.
37. Although Gen 1:26 speaks of humans as made "in our image, according to our likeness" (rather than "image and glory" as Paul says here) later Jewish and Christian writing often paired the image of God with His glory as Paul does in this verse. Antoinette C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 95), 120, 279n. See LXX translations of Num 12:8 and Ps 17:15 (LXX 16:15); also 2 Cor 3:28; 4:4.
38. For glory as a synonym of honor see, for example, Heb 2:7 (from Ps 8:5) "You have made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor;" and 3:3, "For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house."
39. The treasuring of a woman as the glory of the husband, in an honor culture, is illustrated in an ancient Jewish tombstone from Rome which reads, "Lucilla, the blessed glory of Sophronius," Collins, *First Corinthians*, 410.
40. The Greek preposition *epi* can have a variety of meanings when modifying a genitive noun. Besides the concrete meaning "on" or "upon" referring to location, it can also carry other extended meanings, including "in regard to" or "concerning." When used in relation to authority, it often carries the idea of authority "over" someone or someth[ing]. BDAG, "ἐπι," 365.
41. M. D. Hooker, "Authority on Her Head: An Examination of 1 Cor. 11:10," *NTS* 10.3 (1964): 135, 136. Compare the use of *exousia* in 8:9 (there translated "right" or "liberty") where the people he is addressing are the ones exercising the authority, rather than having it imposed upon them. This represents the normal usage of *exousia*. Note also that Rev 11:4, 5; 14; and 20:6 use the same Greek words (*echo*, *exousia*, and *epi*) as 1 Cor 11:10 to indicate "have authority over." In the only passage found to support the passive idea of receiving authority upon oneself, Diodorus Siculus' *Bibliotheca Historica* 1.47.5, the three kingdoms on the head of the statue of Ozymandius' mother do not represent authority

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- over her, but her preeminent position in being related to three kings.
42. Plummer, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 232, 233. The stated reason, "because of the angels," was apparently self-explanatory to the Corinthians but today leaves us debating inconclusively between several possible interpretations, including because we should not tempt the angels, because the angels obey their authorities, or because the angels are present at human worship services and would expect humans to give all the glory to God. A decision about which is correct is extremely uncertain and not necessary to the purposes of this chapter.
  43. Possibly the closest Pauline use of this phrase in the Lord (which he uses forty-six times) is actually an OT quote, in 2 Cor 10:17, "But he who boasts is to boast in the Lord."
  44. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 93.
  45. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 199, 200.
  46. See, for example, the varied possible meanings of the Greek word used for nature (*physis*) in BDAG, "φύσις," 1030.

# THE CONTRIBUTION OF GALATIANS 3:28 TO THE THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION

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## Introduction

THE ADVENTIST CHURCH considered the issue of women's ordination as pastors in 1990 and 1995; both times, it decided not to allow each division to decide independently.<sup>1</sup> The theological debate has continued. It is hoped that this additional research might contribute to further understanding of this important subject.

This chapter includes a brief analysis of Gal 3:28 in its biblical and historical context. It also considers the principle of equality and its application to circumcision, discussed in the church of the first century of the Christian era, to slavery in the United States of America, and to women's cultural status of inferiority through the centuries.

Since the focus of our discussion of women's ordination centers on hermeneutics, research explains why the apostle Paul submitted to the customs of his time. Careful analysis reveals that even if Paul did not directly fight slavery and women's inferiority, he established the embryonic principles which, if put into practice, would exterminate them. Paul did not set a date for the end of either slavery or improper treatment of women. The overcoming of these inequalities should be guided by the application of proper hermeneutical principles. We hope that the interpretive suggestion of this chapter may contribute to the solution of the current debate.

## A Brief Analysis of Galatians 3:28

"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).<sup>2</sup>

### *The immediate context of the letter to the Galatians.*

Since the theology of ordination is a theme currently being studied by the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church it demands an analysis based on solid biblical hermeneutics. The Bible Study Committee of the General Conference Annual Council of 1986 stated the following principle: "Recognize that the Bible is its own interpreter and that the meaning of words, texts, and passages is best determined by diligently comparing scripture with scripture. Study the context of the passage under consideration by relating it to the sentences and paragraphs immediately preceding and following it. Try to relate the ideas of the passage to the line of thought of the entire Bible book."<sup>3</sup> This process will be followed in this study.

The passage of Gal 3:28 is part of a section

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which could be titled "In Christ all people are heirs to the covenant promises, by faith" (Gal 3:26-29), which in turn is inserted into a larger section, "The status of 'the law' in relation to the Abrahamic covenant" (Gal 3:15-29), and this one is part of an even broader division of the epistle, "Faith versus legalism as the means of salvation" (Gal 2:15-3:29).<sup>4</sup>

What is the purpose of Gal 3:26-28? According to Timothy George, "Paul was not making a general anthropological claim that can be extrapolated without remainder into political philosophies and social programs" that is, the apostle "had no intention of reforming the Roman Empire."<sup>5</sup> The book *Prove All Things* defends a similar position:

"The real issue in Galatians 3:28 is religious. The great concern of Jews and Christians of the first century was religious status, that is, the status of men and women before God,"<sup>6</sup> that is, "the equality Paul defends here is only in the 'spiritual' sphere."<sup>7</sup>

Longenecker partly agrees when he says that the three areas of relationship mentioned by Paul should be seen "in terms of spiritual relations;"<sup>8</sup> nevertheless, later on in his commentary, he adds, "These three couplets also cover in embryonic fashion all the essential relationships of humanity."<sup>9</sup> In contrast, Betz has a different understanding. To him, "There can be no doubt that Paul's statements have social and political implications of even a revolutionary dimension."<sup>10</sup> Thus the ideals presented by Paul "include the abolition of the religious and social distinctions between Jews and Greeks, slaves and freemen, men and women."<sup>11</sup> We will see what some phrases of the immediate context have to say about the purpose of the section, vv. 26-29.

As seen above, the interpreters are divided as to the purpose of Gal 3:26-29. Was Paul actually intending to approach only the religious aspects, discarding any social or ethical

purpose? The answer partly depends on the meaning of the expression "in Christ." Here a hermeneutical guideline needs to be presented:

A basic principle of interpretation with regard to words is to investigate the same word or term in its usage within a book, by the same author, and then beyond in the remaining writers of the Bible. As this is done the interpreter takes into account the various purpose and development of thought in a particular writer and among the various Bible writers.<sup>12</sup>

According to this principle it is necessary to first analyze the meaning of the expression "in Christ." It appears in v. 26: "In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith." It is repeated in v. 27: "You were baptized into Christ," and in v. 28: "You are all one in Christ Jesus." The phrase *in Christ* is one of the apostle's favorites, which indicates a dynamic, local, and personal relationship of the believer with Christ. The phrase, in its various forms ("in Christ Jesus," "in the Lord," etc.), appears 172 times in Paul's writings.<sup>13</sup>

Generally, as used by Paul, "in Christ" describes the nature of the Christian, but it can also designate conduct.<sup>14</sup> In his letter to the Romans, Paul said Tryphaena and Tryphosa "work hard in the Lord;" as well Persis "has worked very hard in the Lord" (Rom 16:12). The ethical connotation of the expression "in Christ" is also transmitted by Paul in Col 1:28 and 2 Tim 3:12. To confirm the usefulness of the hermeneutical principle quoted above, we mention Peter's use of the expression when he instructs his readers to answer properly those who asked for an explanation of the "reason for the hope" that encouraged them: "keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against *your good behavior in Christ* may be ashamed of their slander" (1 Pet 3:15, 16).<sup>15</sup> Thus, contrary to the view

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which recognizes Gal 3:28 as being just “religious” or “spiritual,” the use of the expression *in Christ* in other biblical passages reveals that it includes an ethical connotation describing the believer’s good behavior.

Just as “in Christ,” the expression *clothed* also has an ethical connotation. Notice Rom 13:14: “Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.” These two expressions clearly indicate that Gal 3:28 presents more than simple spiritual relationships, but above all, principles of equality that should rule the life of Christians and society in general.

### *The Broader Context of Gal 3:28*

Paul’s phrase “There is neither Jew nor Gentile,” in v. 28, is in direct connection with Gal 2:11–15, where Paul vehemently condemns the “hypocrisy” shown by Peter and Barnabas in Antioch. It was written of Peter, “Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group” (Gal 2:12). Evidently, the “hypocrisy” of Peter and Barnabas consisted of favoritism regarding people. Was it favoritism or two-faced actions?

Keeping in mind the close connection between Gal 2:11–15 and Gal 3:28, we now analyze the connection of Gal 2:11–15 with Acts 10:1–11:17. Here, we must mention a hermeneutical principle defended by Adventists concerning the writings of Ellen White: “Seventh-day Adventists believe that God inspired Ellen White. Therefore, her expositions on any given Bible passage offer an inspired guide to the meaning of texts without exhausting their meaning or preempting the task of exegesis.”<sup>16</sup> Looking at her comments will broaden our understanding of the biblical theme of equality.

Until Acts 10, Luke narrates the establishment

and growth of the Christian church. Initially, the movement was limited to Jerusalem, but due to the stoning of Stephen in A.D. 34,<sup>17</sup> the church expanded to Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). According to Luke, “Those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews” (Acts 11:19). In turn, Acts 10 narrates the divine intervention in the lives of Cornelius (Acts 10:3–6) and Peter. A sheet was shown to the apostle in vision containing “all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds” (Acts 10:11, 12), and its interpretation was given by the apostle himself: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean” (Acts 10:28). The impact of that divine revelation led Peter to tell Gentile listeners: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism” (Acts 10:34).

The Talmud declares, “The dwelling-places of heathens are unclean.”<sup>18</sup> Also, Tacitus (A.D. 56–120) wrote about the Jews: “Among themselves they are inflexibly honest and ever ready to show compassion, though they regard the rest of mankind with all the hatred of enemies. They sit apart at meals, they sleep apart.”<sup>19</sup> Explaining Peter’s action, Ellen White observes, “It was looked upon as unlawful for Jews to mingle socially with the Gentiles, that to do this involved ceremonial defilement.”<sup>20</sup> Primarily, Jewish isolation from the Gentiles had a ceremonial, religious reason, but it degenerated into “prejudices,” expressed in an “exclusiveness utterly contrary to the spirit of the gospel.”<sup>21</sup> Such exclusiveness was mentioned by Juvenal (c. A.D. 55/60–127):

It’s their custom to ignore the laws of Rome, the Judaic Code being that

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which they study, adhere to, and revere; The Pentateuch, the mystic scroll handed down by Moses: Nor do they reveal the way to anyone but a fellow-believer; Leading only the circumcised, when asked, to the fountain.<sup>22</sup>

Ellen White notes:

How carefully the Lord worked to overcome the prejudice against the Gentiles that had been so firmly fixed in Peter's mind by his Jewish training. By the vision of the sheet and its contents He sought to divest the apostle's mind of this prejudice and to teach the important truth that in heaven there is no respect of persons; that Jew and Gentile are alike precious in God's sight; that through Christ the heathen may be made partakers of the blessings and privileges of the gospel.<sup>23</sup>

Thus there is a close connection between Gal 3:28, Gal 2:11-15, and Acts 10 and 11. The search for ceremonial purity separated the Jews from the Gentiles socially and spiritually. This separation generated national and religious prejudice and exclusivity, classified as favoritism. Peter yielded to prejudice, even after having been so clearly instructed by the Lord on the occasion of the Cornelius episode. This Jewish exclusiveness led to missiological blindness; since, in Jewish perspective, the Gentiles were unclean and unworthy, there was no need to communicate to them the knowledge of salvation.

### Galatians 3:28 and the Principle of Equality

Various commentators<sup>24</sup> identify in the three pairs of expressions of Gal 3:28 a conscious attempt by Paul to refute the three *bērākôt* ("blessings") that appear in the beginning of the Jewish cycle of the morning prayers: "[Blessed art thou . . .] who hast not

made me a heathen,' . . . who hast not made me a woman'; and ' . . . who hast not made me a brutish man,' . . . who hast not made me a slave.' And is not that the same as a woman?"<sup>25</sup> Being born a man was considered by the Jews to be a gender, social, and national superior status; in short, it was a reason for personal pride. Such pride was present in Peter's reprehensible attitude when he distanced himself from the Gentiles. Although Paul did not verbally mention the expression "favoritism" in Galatians, such an attitude was displayed by Peter's hypocritical separation (Gal 2:11-15).

The immediate context of Gal 3:28, the general context of the letter, and the broader context in Acts and Romans make it clear that neither descent from Abraham, nor circumcision, nor observing the law would ensure any type of advantage or superiority. When Paul says, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female" (Gal 3:28), he is establishing a spiritual and social principle of equality to be assimilated and practiced by all Christians.<sup>26</sup> The new vertical relationship with God produces a new horizontal relationship among brothers and sisters. All racial, economical, gender, and other barriers to equality are removed. Equality and unity of all in Christ are essential to the gospel. Thus, equality in Christ becomes the starting point of the true Christian's social ethics.<sup>27</sup> Equal treatment is a basic component of the phrase "does not show favoritism," one of the integral themes of the immediate and broader context of Gal 3:28.

The phrase, "does not show favoritism," appears for the first time in Deut 10:17. It is the translation of the Hebrew *lo yissa panim*; the Septuagint translated it as *ou thaumazei prósopon*. According to Deut 1:17, this same quality should be practiced by the judges. Impartiality is another basic prerequisite of the

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phrase. God's impartiality is demonstrated by the declaration, "He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing" (Deut 10:18). God is particularly concerned with those who have a vulnerable social and economic status.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the expression "does not show favoritism" in Deut 10:17 primarily censures the neglect of the less privileged and, second, provides an incentive to execute social justice that respects their rights.

The phrase "does not show favoritism" was spoken by Peter in Cornelius' house (Acts 10:34). Through the vision of the sheet, God taught Peter that salvation is a gift to all humankind, not just to the Jews. Here, the ideal of divine impartiality takes on a missiological character. God showed clearly that racial pride was a serious obstacle to preaching the gospel to all creatures (Mark 16:15). If they continued secluded in their exclusivism, the Gospel preaching would not go forward.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, in Acts 10, the expression "does not show favoritism" reproaches the Jewish racial pride while establishing the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles.

In Romans 2:11, the phrase "does not show favoritism" appears in a context of judgment and retribution (vv. 12, 16). God's impartial justice appears in Paul's argumentation, "God 'will repay each person according to what they have done.' To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger" (Rom 2:6-8). The passages of Jas 2:1, 9 also employ the phrase to reproach partiality in the treatment of those who visited the synagogue. The rich received preferential treatment, leaving the poor disadvantaged.

As explained above, the phrase "does not show favoritism" is based on God Himself

(Deut 10:17; Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; 1 Pet 1:17) and encompasses equal, impartial, just, and merciful treatment. There is no initiative for evangelism without the understanding that all people are equal and need God's salvation—therefore, the phrase "does not show favoritism" is the basis of the evangelizing mission theology to "every nation, tribe, language, and people" (Rev 14:6).<sup>30</sup> Because of the early church's lack of egalitarian and missiological perspective, the vision of the sheet containing clean and unclean animals was given to Peter.

The principle of equality is also based on creation and redemption:<sup>31</sup> "No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption."<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore God "does not show favoritism" expresses the logical outcome of God's impartiality. Because of impartiality God "so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Christ is a gift of God to all His Creation, not only to Jews or Gentiles.

His/Christ's impartiality is also the foundation of the Golden Rule: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matt 7:12). What is expected of Christians is an egalitarian, impartial, just, and merciful treatment of fellow humans. This high principle is acknowledged by Paul in Galatians and other letters: "For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal 5:14); "No one should seek their own good, but the good of others" (1 Cor 10:24); "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves" (Phil 2:3); "Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else" (1 Thess 5:15).



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In short, Paul's declaration, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28), considered in its immediate and broader context, establishes an egalitarian, impartial, just, and merciful treatment for all of God's sons and daughters.<sup>33</sup> This principle is a practical application of Christ's Golden Rule and, ultimately, it has its origin in the love of God as the "active principle which promotes good only."<sup>34</sup>

### **The Historical Context of the Phrase "There Is Neither Jew Nor Gentile" (Gal 3:28)**

Remembering the hermeneutical principle of considering the historical background,<sup>35</sup> we see that the phrase "there is neither Jew nor Gentile" in Galatians, is directly related to the belief that the nationality and religion of the Jews were superior to those of the rest of the nations. This belief made the Jews keep themselves distant from the Gentiles. This was shown by Peter in his separation from the Christian Gentiles on the occasion of the arrival of "the circumcision group" in Antioch. The apostle's attitude was a retrogression that strengthened the belief "that salvation was restricted to the Jews."<sup>36</sup> The broader historical context is linked to the Jerusalem Council: "Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: 'Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved'" (Acts 15:1). If they did not participate in circumcision, this would be disrespectful toward the "national peculiarities of the Jews, which had hitherto kept them distinct from all other people."<sup>37</sup> Therefore, there was a certain exclusivist spirit, a superiority complex that was being transplanted from Judaism to Christianity:

Jerusalem was the metropolis of the Jews, and it was there that the greatest

exclusiveness and bigotry were found. The Jewish Christians living within sight of the temple naturally allowed their minds to revert to the peculiar privileges of the Jews as a nation. When they saw the Christian church departing from the ceremonies and traditions of Judaism, and perceived that the peculiar sacredness with which the Jewish customs had been invested would soon be lost sight of in the light of the new faith, many grew indignant with Paul as the one who had, in a large measure, caused this change.<sup>38</sup>

About the Council experience, Ellen White writes, "The advance of the gospel message must not be hindered by the prejudices and preferences of men, whatever might be their position in the church."<sup>39</sup> In continuation of the historical context of Gal 3:28, there is Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37/38–100). His work, *Against Apion*, exalts the Jewish laws: "With regard to the excellency of our laws, let our enemies make us this concession, that our laws are most excellent."<sup>40</sup>

### **Brief Study of the Biblical and Historical Context of the Expression "Neither Slave Nor Free" (Gal 3:28)**

The passage establishes the principle of equality in Christ. The first phrase "there is neither Jew nor Gentile" goes directly against Jewish ethnic-religious pride, theologically classified as "does not show favoritism." The second phrase "neither slave nor free" establishes social equality, opposing the notion that the master belonged to a social group superior to that of servants/slaves. The first phrase is a response to Peter's sectarian hypocrisy, recorded by Paul in Galatians. The next phrases, which are not directly connected to the context of Galatians, point to the establishment of a theological principle of social equality.

A careful study of slavery in the Bible in

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light of customs and cultures of the ancient world reveals various principles pertinent to other social issues—first, a missiological-ethical-hermeneutical principle which we will title *accommodative to culture*:

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings" (1 Cor 9:19–23).

The context indicates that, initially, Paul was referring to the consumption of meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 8:9–13). Although believers might not consider it wrong to eat food sacrificed to the idols, they should avoid doing it in case their attitude becomes a "stumbling block" to the brother who thought it improper to do so. Personal convenience and inclination should not be the first factor to be considered; rather, it is necessary to evaluate the effect this act has on others. Therefore, patience and tolerance are required attitudes when dealing with the weak brother.<sup>41</sup>

When saying "To the Jews I became like a Jew" (1 Cor 9:20), Paul was referring to the way he would come close to them in an attempt to lead them to Christ.<sup>42</sup> The apostle did not merely adapt his preaching to the Jews, but also acted according to their customs and even shaved his head as a promise (Acts 18:18). He circumcised Timothy, whose mother was Jewish and whose

father was Greek (Acts 16:1, 3); he did this to prove that he did not disrespect the customs of the religion. The apostle did not believe that conformity to the ceremonial laws and ritual observance were necessary to Christians, but he was willing to do everything possible to create a favorable impression and convert to Christ those who lived "under the law."<sup>43</sup>

To Paul, the Christian who had a limited understanding of the Gospel and could easily feel offended by attitudes that were licit in themselves was "weak" (Rom 14:1–3). In his relationship with these brothers, the apostle sought to avoid any attitude that could awake in them prejudices or confusion because of their limited understanding of the truth.<sup>44</sup>

Paul's phrase, "I do all this for the sake of the gospel," exposes the apostle's driving reason for everything he did. Actually, the ethical, missiological principle *accommodative to culture* is "a general principle of Christian behavior, the practical outworking of the golden rule in things that are of minor importance."<sup>45</sup>

Another verse clarifies the ethical-missiological-hermeneutical principle *accommodative to culture*:

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free" (Eph 6:5–8. Cf. Col 3:22; Titus 2:9; 1 Pet 2:18).

This instruction to the Christian slaves is an application of the ethical-missiological-hermeneutical principle *accommodative to culture*. In turn, the apostle Peter offers a clarifying explanation for this adaptation,

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Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people" (1 Pet 2:11-15).

In 1 Pet 2:18, *oiketes* is the Greek word for "servants." This is a more limited term than *doulos*, designating a residential servant; the one who is closer to the family than the other slaves (*doulos*).

The verb *hupotagēte*, "submit yourselves," in 1 Pet 2:13 deserves greater attention. It could also be translated as "obey." The other relevant word is *authority*, the Greek original being *ktisis*. Usually *ktisis* is translated as "creation" (Mark 10:6; Rom 8:22; 2 Pet 3:4), but it can also be translated as "authority" as in 1 Pet 2:13.<sup>46</sup> In turn, *hupotasō*, usually translated as "submission" or "submit," has relevant implications for this study of the relations between Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, men and women (Gal 3:28). Peter's recommendation that Christian servants/slaves "submit yourselves" to their "masters" (Greek *despotais*) is found in the immediate context (1 Pet 2:18), where Peter strongly recommends that Christians generally, not only the servants, "submit yourselves" to human institutions.

The historical context of slavery as "human authority" is instructive. In *Politics*, where Aristotle describes the lifestyle of the Greeks, which included slavery, democracy is

based strictly on equality. In such a democracy the law says that it is just for nobody to be poor, and for nobody to be rich; and that neither should be masters, but both equal. For if liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost. And since the people are the majority, and the opinion of the majority is decisive, such a government must necessarily be a democracy.<sup>47</sup>

However, the reality did not match the ideal, because in this same work, Aristotle's reasoning shows that slaves were excluded from the exercise of democracy. The philosopher said that for some, "the rule of a master over slaves is contrary to nature, and that the distinction between slave and freeman exists by law only, and not by nature; and being an interference with nature is therefore unjust."<sup>48</sup> Yet to the philosopher, slavery was justified because "no man can live well . . . unless he is provided with necessaries."<sup>49</sup>

The distinction between freeman and slave was defined by the use of reason. It is interesting to see that dualism between soul and body is present in the elaboration of this distinction. According to Aristotle, living beings are made of "soul and body: and of these two, the one is by nature the ruler, and the other the subject."<sup>50</sup> To the philosopher, the best condition is reached when "the intellect rules the appetites";<sup>51</sup> on the other hand, "the rule of the inferior [body] is always hurtful."<sup>52</sup> With this reasoning, Aristotle justifies slavery: "He who participates in reason enough to apprehend, but not to have, reason, is a slave by nature."<sup>53</sup> He then says, "It is clear, then, that some men are by nature free, and others slaves, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right."<sup>54</sup>

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Slavery was part of the Roman lifestyle. Cicero says in the work *On Duties*, “we must have regard for justice even towards the humblest. Now the humblest station and the poorest fortune are those of slaves; and they give us no bad rule who bid us treat our slaves as we should our employees: they must be required to work; they must be given their dues.”<sup>55</sup>

As noted above, slavery was a practice of ancient times that was justified by Greek and Roman philosophy. For that reason Christians needed to adapt to such a context, just as the apostles Paul and Peter did.

Now, we need to consider the biblical reasons for accommodation to the culture. To the apostle Paul, Christians who were slaves should adhere to what was expected of them by their masters, “so that God’s name and our teaching may not be slandered” (1 Tim 6:1. Cf. Titus 2:10; 1 Pet 2:15). If Christians had opposed the “institution of slavery, which was permitted by Roman law, they would have made Christianity appear as opposed to law and order and as fomenting insurrection and bloodshed. Thus God and the gospel would have been blasphemed.”<sup>56</sup> Therefore, the primary reason for accommodating the culture of slavery was the desire to preserve God’s name and teaching in the eyes of the Romans. The second reason was missiological: “I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings” (1 Cor 9:22, 23). Leading fishermen to salvation was what drove Paul to accommodate to the “customs, habits, and opinions of all classes of men.”<sup>57</sup>

The principle of cultural accommodation must have a limit. In part, the biblical expression “in the Lord” is the phrase which sets this limit: “Slaves, obey your earthly masters . . . as you would obey Christ” (Eph 6:5, 7. Cf. 1 Cor 7:39; Col 3:18). The expression “in the Lord”

can “indicate the limitations that are inherent in any human commands.”<sup>58</sup> That is, Christian conduct should be ordered “not just by social convention but in the light of their Lord’s will (cf. also 5:10, 17).”<sup>59</sup> Obedience to God is the limiting factor of the cultural accommodation, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

That said, it is now possible to enunciate the ethical-missiological-hermeneutical principle accommodative to culture: The New Testament teaches that to preserve God’s name, His doctrine, and His evangelizing mission to the world, and to avoid scandal, Christians should adapt to the secular society’s values and customs *as long as they don’t violate the divine precepts of Scripture* (1 Cor 8:9–13; 9:12, 19–23; Rom 14:1–3, 13; 2 Cor 6:3; 1 Pet 2:11–15; 1 Tim 6:1; Titus 2:10; Eph 6:5, 7; 1 Cor 7:39; Col 3:18; Acts 5:29).<sup>60</sup> The principle is “ethical,” because it applies to conduct (in the specific case of the slaves studied above); it is “accommodative to culture,” because if the conduct of the Christians violates the present customs of the society, it rejects any initiative toward its evangelization—this explains the reason of broadening, which is also a “missiological” reason; however tolerance of secular society customs is not absolute. That is why accommodation is limited by biblical precepts.

The ethical-missiological-hermeneutical principle of accommodation to culture is demonstrated by the early church’s adaptability to slavery. But for how long should the church accept a value or custom of the secular society? Take, for example, slavery. Until when should Christians, themselves, continue having slaves? Should Christians take upon themselves the role of reformers, exhorting political leaders to abolish slavery? In part, the answer is given by the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*,

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Those who find fault with the early church for not making a frontal attack on the social evils of the time, such as slavery, the exposure of unwanted infants, and other widespread evils, should consider that the function of the gospel is primarily to cure the malady of sin. Once the cure has been effected, the symptoms will disappear. Further, if the infant church had attacked the social system as such, it would never have had time or strength to do anything else, and it would probably have been completely crushed in the process.<sup>61</sup>

Actually, a close examination of the New Testament reveals some germinal slave-liberation principles that should guide Christians to the abolition of slavery, at least among themselves: "And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him" (Eph 6:9). The study of the phrase, "does not show favoritism," showed that the notion of equality among human beings is vindicated. This equality is based on the impartial love principle of the Golden Rule articulated by Jesus Christ (Matt 7:12).<sup>62</sup> There is also Paul's request to Philemon that he would receive the slave Onesimus, whom the apostle had converted, "no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. . . . Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask" (Phlm 16, 21). Paul's solicitation sounded almost like a request for the liberation of Onesimus.

Thus, we can say that, if it depended on Paul, members of the church could already free their slaves. Yet Paul did not directly request from Philemon his friend's liberation, in order to be in harmony with the cultural accommodation principle. As for Christians reforming the society by asking the political leaders to abolish

slavery, Ellen White's answer is a commentary on Paul's letter to Philemon:

It was not the apostle's work to overturn arbitrarily or suddenly the established order of society. To attempt this would be to prevent the success of the gospel. But he taught principles which struck at the very foundation of slavery and which, if carried into effect, would surely undermine the whole system.<sup>63</sup>

Yet Ellen White confirms the germinal liberation principle insinuated in Paul's text. This inspired declaration is of vital importance, because it confirms the functionality of the ethical-missiological-hermeneutical principle accommodative to culture. On the other hand, what she wrote refutes the thesis that Gal 3:28 is only applied to the spiritual area of the Christians. The equalitarian principle expressed by Paul also has a social application, first to the church and, second, to society as a whole. As a result of the inspired commentary of Ellen White on the advice the apostle gave to Philemon, we can say that it was God's will that Christians set free their slaves, even in Paul's time.<sup>64</sup> From history we know that secular society formally abolished slavery about 1,800 years after Paul defended the principle of equality between slaves and freemen (Gal 3:28). It is even more lamentable that there were conflicts that set professed Christians against one another due to divergent beliefs and practices related to slavery, particularly in the United States of America.

### *The Conflict Between Slave Owners and Abolitionists in the United States of America*

The "superior minds of the Anglo Saxon race"<sup>65</sup> is one of the justifications of the slavery theory; consequently, "this race, known as the African, is inferior to the Caucasian."<sup>66</sup> This

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justification considered the African “to be designed by their creator [God] for a different sphere in life, and an inferior position to the white man.”<sup>67</sup> Warren, the slave owner author, makes use of irony to criticize the abolitionist assumption of equality between human beings by saying, “A negro, therefore, may one day be President of these United States.”<sup>68</sup> Although, if such possibility occurred, it “would turn the world ‘upside down,’ annul the Divine order and reverse the decrees of nature,”<sup>69</sup> because “God did not make all men free and equal. He has enslaved some by placing them in bondage to others.”<sup>70</sup>

William Graham, pastor of the second Presbyterian church of Oxford, illustrates the slavery biblical doctrine. In his anti-abolitionist book of 1844, Graham initiates his considerations starting with Genesis and going through the Old Testament and, then, through the New Testament up until the last reference in which appears the word *slave*, in Paul’s letter to Philemon. After considering all the biblical references on slavery, he summarizes,

We have now completed this biblical investigation. We have shown that the relation of master and slave, existed in the Patriarchal Church; was recognized in the Abrahamic Covenant; was incorporated with the entire Civil and Ecclesiastical polity of the Jews; existed in the families of persons whom our Savior and his Apostles represented and treated as eminently pious; and that in the churches formed by the Apostles, it was the subject of advice and legislation, like the other social and domestic relations.<sup>71</sup>

Among the various justifications of the pro-slavery theory there is one which is fundamental according to Warren. It is Noah’s curse on Canaan (Gen 9:25), which marks “the origin of slavery, it comes directly from God through His servant Noah.”<sup>72</sup> As to the New

Testament, according to Warren, it “contains no precept prohibitory of slavery”<sup>73</sup> and, he adds, “demands of the master to liberate his slaves was never once contemplated by Christ or His Apostles.”<sup>74</sup> This justification, according to Warren, came from Paul who “calls this instruction on slavery, the ‘words of the Lord Jesus Christ’ [1 Tim 6:3].”<sup>75</sup>

The pro-slavery theory has another important assumption: “That the gospel was not designed to interfere with the social relations of life.”<sup>76</sup> Warren goes on with this same line of thought, but with irony, saying that abolitionist ideology, in its last consequences, “would break every yoke, political, social, marital, parental; in a word, totally disorganize society, enthrone socialism.”<sup>77</sup> In Warren’s evaluation, these would be the consequences of the “interpretation of the Golden Rule, when applied to all these relations.”<sup>78</sup> Sadly, those who were pro-slavery did not perceive that the application to Christ’s Golden Rule would really promote equality between human beings.

In their clash against abolitionists, pro-slavery advocates accused their opponents of denying the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice:

Their interpretation “annuls many precepts of the New Testament, and substitutes its own in their stead.” As proof against the abolitionists they cited 1 Cor 7:21; Eph 6:5; 1 Tim 6:1; Titus 2:10; 1 Tim 6:2; Titus 2:9; 1 Tim 6:3, 4. It is a remarkable circumstance, that among good men, whose motto is, ‘The Bible—the only rule of faith and practice,’ there should be such a palpable mutilation of the Scriptures.”<sup>79</sup>

In contrast, North American Christian abolitionists argued: “enslaving men is reducing them to articles of property” and “the reduction of persons to things.”<sup>80</sup> The slavery practice is not condemned in the Scripture by these terms,

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but by "other names, and by descriptions, plainly and severely," such as "kidnapping, assault and battery, and false imprisonment."<sup>81</sup>

Bourne demonstrates that the interpretation and pro-slavery logic were wrong because "The investigation of Scripture must be characterized by a sincere desire to discover and obey God's will and word rather than to seek support or evidence for preconceived ideas."<sup>82</sup>

The theological debate on slavery was won by the abolitionists, who managed to correctly identify and apply the biblical principles of Christ's Golden Rule (Matt 7:12) and social equality written by Paul (Gal 3:28). Thus, facts contributed to prove that this other principle, the cultural accommodation principle, is not permanent; it is temporary. The reality is that the principles understood through the Golden Rule and social equality empowered the abolitionists to continue their efforts until they had extinguished the slavery economy.

### *Calibrating the Hermeneutical Principle of Cultural Accommodation*

We have already demonstrated the functionality of the ethica-missiological-hermeneutical principle accommodative to culture regarding slavery in the Bible. Now, we can verify an occurrence derived from slavery. Ellen White advised that marriages between people of African origin and European origin should not take place:

In reply to inquiries regarding the advisability of intermarriage between Christian young people of the white and black races, I will say that in my earlier experience this question was brought before me, and the light given me of the Lord was that this step should not be taken; for it is sure to create controversy and confusion. I have always had the same counsel to give. No encouragement to marriages of this character should be

given among our people. Let the colored brother enter into marriage with a colored sister who is worthy, one who loves God, and keeps His commandments. Let the white sister who contemplates uniting in marriage with the colored brother refuse to take this step, for the Lord is not leading in this direction.<sup>83</sup>

The quotation above has been used to accuse Ellen White of racism;<sup>84</sup> nevertheless, the study of the context indicates that this is not the case. Racism is based on inequality, superiority of one and inferiority of another, while Ellen White defends the same rights for everyone: "We should treat the colored man just as respectfully as we would treat the white man."<sup>85</sup>

The root of the problem was the prejudice present in the North American society that rejected interracial marriage. Maryland was the first of the colonies to prohibit marriage between whites and Afro-American slaves in 1664. The white woman who would marry a slave would be condemned to become a slave herself. In 1691 the colony of Virginia banished all interracial marriages, threatening to exile all those who would violate the law. In 1883, the Supreme Court decided to prohibit interracial marriage, and this decision stood until 1967, when the Supreme Court considered the prohibition of interracial marriage as being unconstitutional.<sup>86</sup> In 2010 in the United States of America, the percentage of all marriages deemed interracial was 8.4%; while in 1980 it was 3.2%.<sup>87</sup> In Brazil, in 2010, the interracial marriage percentage was 23.3%.<sup>88</sup>

In the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, neither the Adventist Church, nor Ellen White could encourage interracial marriage, for if they had, there would have been serious difficulties.

The gospel is to be presented to the downtrodden Negro race. But great

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caution will have to be shown in the efforts put forth for the uplifting of this people. Among the white people in many places there exists a strong prejudice against the Negro race. We may desire to ignore this prejudice, but we cannot do it. If we were to act as if this prejudice did not exist we could not get the light before the white people. We must meet the situation as it is and deal with it wisely and intelligently.<sup>89</sup>

The divine instruction of not having interracial marriage is better explained by the ethical-missiological-hermeneutical principle accommodative to culture, because if there was such a sanction toward these unions, the increased cultural prejudice would hinder the advance of the Gospel preaching both among the African descendants and among those of European origin.

This section dealt with the biblical and historical context of the expression "neither slave nor free"; it established the cultural accommodation principle and its application to slavery and interracial marriage. We are now going to analyze the expression, "nor is there male and female."

### The Biblical and Historical Context of the Expression, "Nor Is There Male and Female" (Gal 3:28)

Paul states in Gal 3:28, "There is a unity in the body of Christ and an equality of access to salvation through faith in Jesus,"<sup>90</sup> yet its purpose is more than spiritual. The verse also has ethical, social, soteriological, and missiological implications.

When Paul says, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free," he establishes ethical and social equality for the Christians. In the first century culture was based on inequality characterized by the superiority complex of Greeks, Romans, and Jews, which has

been demonstrated above. To complete the explanation of Gal 3:28, the implications of the expression, "nor is there male and female," must be examined.

In Greek the expression is *ouk eni arsen kai thēly*, a little different from the previous two pairs, for instead of repeating "neither" and "nor," Greek *oude* and *oude*, Paul uses the conjunction *kai*. Several scholars recognize here a possible reflection of Gen 1:27, *arsen kai thēly epoiēsen*.<sup>91</sup> According to Gerhard Hasel, the definition of being a human created by God in His image "does not suggest any superiority of one sex above the other. Woman is not subordinate to man; man is not subordinate to woman."<sup>92</sup> Equality between man and woman is also presented in Song of Solomon as a return to Eden, "My beloved is mine and I am his" (Song 2:16; 6:3).<sup>93</sup> It is significant that Jesus quoted Gen 1:27 in answer to the Pharisees' question concerning the law of divorce by repudiation (Matt 19:3-12). The casuistic law of repudiation is found in Deut 24:1-4, where Moses allowed a man to repudiate a woman if he had discovered in her something indecent. The expression "for any and every reason" in Matt 19:3 seems to indicate that the interrogators supported the conservative position of the rabbinical school of Shammai, which only recognized adultery as a valid reason to divorce. The rabbinical school of Hillel, more tolerant, accepted as sufficient any cause,<sup>94</sup> such as incompatibility of characters.<sup>95</sup> Through the declaration "because your hearts were hard," and "but it was not this way from the beginning" (Matt 19:8), Jesus was giving back to the woman the position of equality to man that she had been given in the beginning (Gen 1:27). There could not be a divorce and a new marriage for any reason other than "sexual immorality" (Matt 19:9).

Among the various principles of hermeneutics available to Bible interpretation, the



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more relevant is Christocentrism.<sup>96</sup> In the case of the discussion on the equality of rights shared by man and woman, the position adopted by Christ in Matt 19:3–14 assumes a definitive character. In this case, Gal 3:28 broadens and clarifies, though Christ had already determined the theme's relevance.

### *The Historical Context*

A brief look at women's history in antiquity seems advisable here, because it was in this hostile environment that the Christian church emerged and developed. The New Testament authors had to write their works with this background as reference. How then did the Greeks, Romans, and Jews see women?

According to Plato (428/427–348/347 B.C.), the Greeks viewed women as more prone to emotional passion, while righteous men were "not getting into a passion, like a woman."<sup>97</sup> Sophocles (497/496–406/405 B.C.), the Greek playwright, said, "Women love tears too well."<sup>98</sup> As to virtue, Plato said, "Woman's nature is inferior to that of men."<sup>99</sup> Wives had two roles, as "their duty is to keep their house in order and care for what is inside of it and obey their husband."<sup>100</sup>

When it comes to woman's inferiority, Aristotle is even sharper than Plato, "The male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind."<sup>101</sup> And according to the philosopher, this "inequality is permanent."<sup>102</sup>

Also, Euripides (484–406 B.C.) said, "A woman and a slave is not of much account."<sup>103</sup> He compared the woman with a viper: "Though some god hath devised cures for mortals against the venom of reptiles, no man ever yet hath discovered ought to cure a woman's venom, which is far worse than viper's sting."<sup>104</sup>

The historiographer Herodotus (484–430/420

B.C.) does not differ from the philosophers: "Spare thy ships, and do not risk a battle; for these people are as much superior to thy people in seamanship, as men to women."<sup>105</sup>

Among the Romans, Seneca stands out (4 B.C.–A.D. 65); he "shares many of the prejudices of his time and of all antiquity."<sup>106</sup> According to Seneca, the woman acts more on instinct and does not have the capacity to control herself. Women do not think, so if any woman insulted a man, this should not be taken seriously: "Some men are mad enough to suppose that even a woman can offer them an insult. . . . She is just the same unthinking creature—wild, and unrestrained in her passions—unless she has gained knowledge and had much instruction."<sup>107</sup>

Virgil's point of view (70–19 B.C.) can be found in his poem, the *Aeneid*. This epic work presents Rome as a universal empire. The poem treats ancient customs and past traditions with reverence.<sup>108</sup> Various women play relevant roles in the life of the hero Aeneas, yet they are portrayed from a negative perspective. For example, Queen Dido of Carthage, who falls in love with Aeneas, tries to manipulate him and then commits suicide when she cannot.<sup>109</sup> Also, Queen Amata, who is "kindled by a woman's anxieties and anger,"<sup>110</sup> becomes hysterical and also commits suicide. Through these characters, Virgil demonstrates that he viewed women as irrational, irresponsible, and hysterical.

Horace (65–8 B.C.), the Roman lyric poet, presents Candida, who

is the antithesis of decorum, a ravenous, insatiable woman who is powerful at the expense of masculine virility. . . . Horace attempts to use the portrayal of Candida's destructive use of power as a foil to his own creative, positive use of power to benefit the community.<sup>111</sup>

Roman historiographer Titus Lívius (59 B.C.

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-A.D. 17) appealed to the traditional stereotype of feminine inferiority, portraying women as having less rationality than men; "To this the caresses of the husbands were added, excusing what they had done on the plea of passion and love, arguments that work most successfully on women's hearts."<sup>112</sup>

In his poems, Ovid (43 B.C.-A.D. 17) describes women as vain, fragile, and inconstant, whose main target in life is to deceive men and be deceived by them. Sensual and lascivious, the women in Ovid's work are a source of sexual temptation for men: "Secret love's just as pleasing to women as men. Men pretend badly: she hides her desire. If it was proper for men not to be the first to ask, woman's role would be to take the part of the asker. The cow lows to the bull in gentle pastures: the mare whinnies to the hooped stallion. Desire in us is milder and less frantic: the male fire has its lawful limits."<sup>113</sup>

The Roman historiographer Tacitus (A.D. 56-120), in his work *The Annals*, transmits his perception of women through Livia. The events happened between A.D. 14 and 15, "When Agrippa died, and Lucius Caesar as he was on his way to our armies in Spain, and Caius while returning from Armenia, still suffering from a wound, were prematurely cut off by destiny, or by their step-mother Livia's treachery."<sup>114</sup> He speaks of her "cruelty,"<sup>115</sup> her "adulteries,"<sup>116</sup> of the "many murders perpetrated at Messalina's bidding,"<sup>117</sup> and of her marriage with Caio Silio, while her husband Claudius was absent.<sup>118</sup> In his doctoral thesis on the perception of women in Tacitus, Parks says, "we must see women in Tacitus as symptoms, rather than the cause, of the ills afflicting the Roman body politic. The 'bad' or problematic women featured in this study were shaped by negative stereotypes—not because the *Annales* is in itself a misogynistic text, but because patriarchal Roman society made

available a stock of stories about misbehaving women that could be pressed into service for entertainment or pedagogy."<sup>119</sup>

The Jewish culture was similar. Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37/38-100), in his work *Against Apion*, speaks about the divisions of the Herodian temple and who had access to them. Of five compartments, women had access to the first and second; the rest were limited to men only. There is no record in the Bible of such spatial gender distinctions in the courts of either the wilderness tabernacle or of Solomon's temple.

Josephus attributes a classificatory vetero-testamentary norm of women being inferior: "A woman is inferior to her husband in all things."<sup>120</sup> Although there is no such mention in the Old Testament, Josephus says that a woman's testimony was not accepted in matters of justice: "But let not a single witness be credited, but three, or two at the least, and those such whose testimony is confirmed by their good lives. But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex."<sup>121</sup>

Josephus' mention of Queen Salome Alexandra (B.C. 139-67) exposes the negative stereotype of women in antiquity: "A woman she was who showed no signs of the weakness of her sex, for she was sagacious to the greatest degree in her ambition of governing."<sup>122</sup> According to Josephus, from among the three philosophical Jewish sects, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes, the latter practiced a more rigid discipline. The Essenes "do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued; but they guard against the lascivious behavior of women, and are persuaded that none of them preserve their fidelity to one man."<sup>123</sup> By the style of writing, the first depreciative mention regarding women seems to be of Josephus himself, even though it could be an Essenian

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perception, however, due to the dubious character of the writing, we can understand that there is space for both interpretations.

Last, there is the collection of Jewish history. *Genesis Rabbah*, an expository midrash that, like the Talmud, collects the interpretative oral tradition of Genesis, through the generations, was written in the third century of the Christian era.<sup>124</sup> The author attributes various negative characteristics to the woman: "I did not create her from the head, yet she is swelled-headed, as it is written, *They walk with stretched-forth necks* (Isa 3:16); nor from the eye, yet she is a coquette: *And wanton eyes* (Isa 3:16); nor from the ear, yet she is an *eavesdropper*: *Now Sarah listened in the tent door* (Gen 18:10); nor from the heart, yet she is prone to jealousy: *Rachel envied her sister* (Gen 30:1); nor from the hand, yet she is light-fingered: *And Rachel stole the teraphim* (Gen 31:19); nor from the foot, yet she is a gadabout: *And Dinah went out*, etc. (Gen 34:1)."<sup>125</sup>

In *Genesis Rabbah*, Adam and Eve are described as representative of humanity, the man having positive features and the woman negative. Eve is responsible for the guilt of sin and for death. It was she who took the life from Adam:

Why is a man easily appeased, but not a woman? Man was created from the earth . . . but Eve was created from a bone. . . . Why does a man go out bareheaded while a woman goes out with her head covered. She is like one who has done wrong and is ashamed of people; therefore she goes out with her head covered. Why do they [the women] walk in front of the corpse [at a funeral]? Because they brought death into the world. . . . And why was the precept of menstruation given to her? Because she shed the blood of Adam [by causing death]. . . . And why was the precept of 'dough' given to her?

Because she corrupted Adam, who was the dough (hallah) of the world. . . . And why was the precept of the Sabbath lights given to her? Because she extinguished the soul of Adam.<sup>126</sup>

Woman's head-covering, then, is related to the shame of her sin. This custom is similar to the one according to which condemned people had to use an ankle band or another device to identify them as delinquent.

The Talmud is composed of the writings which were preserved for posterity as the product of two schools, Palestinian and Babylonian. It is a compilation of the oral tradition produced by various authors over several centuries. The Amorims recorded the writings between the third and fifth centuries of the Christian era.<sup>127</sup> According to Judith Baskin,

Despite the egalitarian vision of human creation found in the first chapter of Genesis, in which both male and female appear to share equally in the divine image, Rabbinic tradition is far more comfortable with the view of Gen. 2:4ff., that women are a secondary conception, unalterably other from men and at a further remove from the divine.<sup>128</sup>

The Talmud informs that the woman is valued when she dedicates herself to care for home, husband, and children:

Whereby do women earn merit?  
By making their children go to the synagogue to learn Scripture and their husbands to the Beth Hamidrash to learn Mishnah, and waiting for their husbands till they return from the Beth Hamidrash.<sup>129</sup>

In the Talmud, women are described as uncontrolled, "Women are of unstable temperament;"<sup>130</sup> they are sensual, when "men sing and women join in it is licentiousness;"<sup>131</sup> and, adds, listening to a woman "is indecent."<sup>132</sup>

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Women are more immoral than men,

Why are the women investigated but not the men?—When women quarrel among themselves, they quarrel [only] about immorality, so that if there is anything, it is not generally known. But when men quarrel among themselves, they quarrel over birth; if there is anything, it is generally known.<sup>133</sup>

The testimony of a woman, differently from a man, was limited to a few issues, such as in the case of the firstlings. An explanatory note of Shabbat says, “A woman is a valid witness only in certain matters, which includes a firstling’s blemish, and in these hearsay too is admissible.”<sup>134</sup> It is interesting to note that the Talmud affirms “women are a separate [independent] people;” that is why “whatever is fit for a man is not fit for a woman, and whatever is fit for a woman is not fit for a man.”<sup>135</sup>

In summary, Greek, Roman, and Jewish societies all tended to deride women and their abilities. In Greek culture, woman’s inferiority was characterized by her greater propensity to passion than man’s; by her weaker character than man’s, thus being considered less virtuous; by her obedience due to her husband; by her perniciousness comparable to the serpent’s. A woman’s area was limited to the care of the house. This inferiority was not perceived as temporary but permanent. In Roman culture, woman’s inferiority was characterized by uncontrolled passion and irrationality; by her lack of self-control and action motivated mainly by instinct; by the tendency of seducing men.

Among the Jews, women’s inferiority appears in the three *bērākôt* (“blessings”) from the beginning of the Jewish cycle of morning prayers. The inferiority of the Gentiles and slaves was shown by their access only to peripheral areas of the Herodian Temple, while men could enter the inner and more

sacred parts. As related to husbands, women were considered inferior in everything; they were refused the right of witnessing, because they were considered to be more frivolous and more daring; for being, naturally, more arrogant, lascivious, and jealous. This was because Eve, the first woman, corrupted Adam, bringing sin and death into the world; because they were believed to have a more unstable temperament; and because they were thought licentious, more immoral. Unlike Josephus, the Talmud said that women’s testimony could be valid in some cases, such as the case of the firstlings. However, like the Greeks, Jews limited women’s function to domestic chores.

### *Hermeneutic Observations About the Theme of Women’s Ordination As Pastors*

The study of the historical context of woman’s condition shows that in Greek, Roman, and Jewish culture she was seen as rationally and emotionally inferior to man. Since conduct is determined by the underlying belief, no wonder the treatment offered to women in antiquity was so unfair and biased. How should the Christian church deal with the situation? Was it its duty to fight the secular society’s biased treatment to women? Why did Paul establish instructions for the women in church that they must submit to the customs of their time, keep quiet in the church, and not teach? The answer is found in the understanding of the ethical-missiological-hermeneutical principle accommodative to culture applied to the woman’s situation in the Bible: The New Testament teaches that considering the preservation of God’s name, His doctrine, His evangelizing mission to the world, and in order to avoid scandal in the environment they live in, Christians should adapt to the values and customs of the secular society, as long as they do not violate the

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divine precepts written in the Holy Scriptures.

The principle is “ethical” because it applies to conduct (in the specific case of the women studied above); it is “accommodative to culture” because if the feminine members of the church violated any of the values approved by the society, such position would hinder the advance of the gospel preaching among the Gentiles of the society in which they lived. For this reason older women should instruct “younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God” (Titus 2:4, 5).<sup>136</sup> This explains the reason why the principle is missiological. The acceptance of the customs of secular society is not absolute. The accommodation is limited by the divine precepts written in the Bible.

In spite of its efficiency, the cultural accommodation principle does not answer the question, For how long should the Christian church adapt and practice an existing value or custom in the secular society? In the case of the woman’s situation, until when should she stay silent in church, and until when should she be forbidden to teach? Until when should she pray and prophesy with her head covered? Even if the cultural accommodation principle doesn’t define a time for its validity, it presents a conditioning element which, when properly understood, may indicate an end to its application—it is scandal avoidance. Since, today, preaching, public teaching, praying and prophesying (in the Adventists’ case, this would apply to Ellen White) without a head-covering does not scandalize society anymore, the application of these restrictive rules established by Paul, under inspiration, are no longer justified, though some Christians still apply them. Among the Brazilian evangelical churches, the Christian

Congregation Church in Brazil believes that the use of the head-covering is a permanent valid custom and that is why its feminine members adopt it.<sup>137</sup>

As for women’s ordination as elders or pastors, what position should the church adopt? The answer depends on a discerning application of the conditioning elements of the cultural accommodation principle. A possible ordination of women as elders and pastors should be in harmony with the preservation of God’s name, His doctrine, His evangelizing mission to the world—and to avoid scandal.

We will now consider the arguments of the thesis contrary to women’s ordination to eldership and pastorship. The following Bible verses are often presented prohibiting women’s ordination: 1 Cor 11:2–16; 14:33–37; Eph 5:22 (cf. 1 Pet 3:1); 1 Tim 2:11–14; Heb 13:7, 17; 1 Pet 5:1, 5; 1 Tim 3:1–5. The main arguments are: (1) paternal—God is the Father, and Jesus Christ His Son was incarnated as man; (2) apostolicity—Jesus only chose men to be apostles; (3) inferiority—as suggested by the arguments of paternity and apostolicity; there is a presumed relationship with the biological, emotional, and spiritual inferiority of the woman; (4) female subordination—on the basis of the order of Creation, according to which the woman should submit to the masculine headship; having the New Testament confirmation that the order of creation did not change, on the contrary it reaffirms it;<sup>138</sup> (5) the relationship between Jews and Greeks, slaves and free men, established by Paul in Gal 3:28 applies only to the relationship with God;<sup>139</sup> (6) women did not serve as priestesses in the Old Testament.<sup>140</sup>

Among the arguments found in the book *Prove All Things*, by Mercedes H. Dyer, one stands out: “What does the New Testament actually say about women in elder-pastor leadership roles?”<sup>141</sup> And it quotes, “I do not

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permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet" (1 Tim 2:12); "Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church" (1 Cor 14:34, 37).<sup>142</sup> Another text used as an impediment to women's ordination is 1 Cor 11:3-12,<sup>143</sup> which talks about the condition of the head-covering for a woman to pray and prophesy in church. The main reason for the argument is that the New Testament practice was based on the divine revelation of the Old Testament (see 1 Tim 2:12, 13), pointing to the role of headship given to man at Creation to fulfill in the home and church.<sup>144</sup> According to *Prove All Things*, the interpretation by which the eldership and pastorship should be only masculine is based on "Authority of Scripture."<sup>145</sup>

As Ángel M. Rodríguez, former director of the Biblical Research Institute suggests, the sensitive point of women's ordination is hermeneutical.<sup>146</sup> This fact has been known for a long time.<sup>147</sup> This division will continue unless there is a desire to admit the hermeneutical differences and a willingness to solve the dispute. Since this is the central focus of the problem, we will focus our attention on it.<sup>148</sup>

Let us consider the first observation in the area of hermeneutics. In 1 Timothy the issue is church leadership; in 1 Cor 14:34, 36 the context is the attitude of women in church worship; 1 Cor 11:3-12 talks about feminine participation in the service by praying or prophesying with the head covered. One of the differences in the context of the three passages mentioned above is the fact that in 1 Cor 11, contrary to the other two passages, the woman can participate in the service in an active way. Indeed, Paul is not discussing

the theme of women's ordination to eldership or pastorship. The alleged impediment of 1 Tim 2:12, 13, 1 Cor 14:34, 36, and 1 Cor 11:3-12 to women's ordination has a serious inconsistency; in that argument, the role of masculine leadership based on the order of Creation<sup>149</sup> is permanent, but the situations mentioned by Paul are not.

The thesis opposed to women's ordination has two fundamental assumptions, "Creation order" and "man's headship." It is obvious that from the time of the New Testament until now these two assumptions have lost strength. In today's Adventist Church, women can generally speak and teach in the congregation; the prophetess can also speak without a head covering (there is no record that Ellen White used head covering when she was speaking in churches).

What is the value of the arguments of "Creation order" and "man's headship" to prevent women's ordination to pastorship, if neither one of them is used anymore to prevent women from talking and teaching in church?

How does the thesis contrary to women's ordination explain the current acceptance of feminine participation by speaking and teaching in church? The strength of the argument of "Creation order" and "man's headship" would require, just as much as Sabbath-keeping and monogamy, that women should remain silent and without permission to teach in church.

Even if it is not admitted, directly or indirectly, the thesis against women's ordination to pastorship accepts the cultural changes that took place through the years and recognizes women's right to speak and teach in church today. That is why the argument against women's ordination is inconsistent, partial, selective, and unfair. Since the assumptions of "Creation order" and "man's headship" do not have enough strength anymore to prevent women from speaking and teaching in today's

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church, the same should apply to women's ordination to pastorship. Neither one of the assumptions has strength to prevent it from happening.

Second, though it may not be readily admitted, this thesis recognizes that the issues approached by Paul in 1 Tim 2:12, 13, 1 Cor 14:34, 36, and 1 Cor 11:3-12 involve cultural situations whose practices are not required anymore of today's female members. However, as we have seen above, though they quietly admit the discontinuity of such practices at the present time, the proponents of this thesis have not presented a hermeneutical explanation for this situation, yet. The most adequate and coherent explanation is that woman's silence in church, the use of the head covering to pray and prophesy, and the non-participation in teaching were required by Paul for the women of the early church, as an accommodation to the secular society's customs in order to avoid scandal. Otherwise, God's name and the church would be maligned and the evangelizing mission would be seriously impaired or irremediably interrupted.

Third, the thesis contrary to women's ordination does not recognize that in Gal 3:28 Paul establishes an egalitarian treatment principle not just for religious life<sup>150</sup> but for the social life, as well.

Does Galatians 3:28 represent the great breakthrough in which Paul proclaimed the abolition of all differences between men and women, opening the way for women to be ordained as pastors or elders? No, for this same Paul vigorously upheld role distinctions for men and women (1 Cor 11:3-15; Eph 5:22).<sup>151</sup>

This argument has various mistaken assumptions: first, it denies equality between men and women. The second error is related to the alleged distinction of functions between men and women attributed to Paul. The third

error presumes underlying feminine inferiority.

Let us briefly examine the error that denies equality between men and women. Before this, remember that the biblical and historical context of Gal 3:28 showed that the three relations assumed inferiority: racial (Jew and Gentile), social (slave and free), and gender (man and woman). The immediate context in Galatians indicates that the phrase "There is neither Jew nor Gentile" was an answer to Peter's hypocrisy in "showing favoritism" when he refused to sit at the table with the Gentiles. The assumption of the slave's inferiority was based on the idea of slavery defended since antiquity by Greek and Roman philosophy. Woman's inferiority was commonly accepted in Greek, Roman, and Jewish culture, as shown above. So, the sensitive point of the issue of women's ordination is hermeneutical.

Sadly, the opponents of women's ordination have put aside the study of the broader biblical and historical context of the racial, social, and gender aspect in Gal 3:28.<sup>152</sup> Thus, the denial of women's ordination because of the "Creation order" is an arbitrary application, simply because the Pauline texts that were used are not dealing with ordination. More serious is that, consciously or not, the insistence on the use of the argument of distinctive functions of men and women has the view of a pretended masculine superiority and, consequently, a feminine inferiority.

The fourth observation has to do with the posture of the defendants of "Scripture authority," as opposed to those who defend women's ordination. The similarity with the argumentation used by those who opposed the abolition of slavery in the United States of America is interesting. The continuation of slavery was defended with the allegation that it was supported by the Scriptures, including the argument of African slaves' inferiority.

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On the other hand, abolitionists were accused of opposing the biblical principle as the only rule of faith and practice. The religious debate between the defenders of slavery and the abolitionists had as its central focus the hermeneutical issue. The abolitionists demonstrated that the solution to the conflict was in the understanding and application of broader biblical principles such as the Golden Rule. The abolitionists also had the sensitivity to notice the egalitarian principle that would lead to the abolition of slavery and that had been suggested by Paul in Col 4:1 and Phlm 16.

The opposers of women's ordination need to consider the evaluation of Ellen White on the egalitarian principle defended by Paul in Gal 3:28 and Phlm 16, 21:

It was not the apostle's work to overturn arbitrarily or suddenly the established order of society. To attempt this would be to prevent the success of the gospel. But he taught principles which struck at the very foundation of slavery and which, if carried into effect, would surely undermine the whole system.<sup>153</sup>

This declaration of Ellen White has a double hermeneutical relevancy because, first, it confirms that the Pauline phrase "neither slave nor free" really encompassed an egalitarian principle of deep social meaning; that is, it was not only a religious principle. Second, Ellen White's declaration confirms the legitimacy of the ethical-missiological-hermeneutical principle accommodative to culture.

The fifth observation of hermeneutical character is related to the argument of masculine leadership coming from the Creation order and the necessity of feminine submission. First Corinthians 11<sup>154</sup> notes that women need to use a head covering in order to pray and prophesy. In 1 Timothy 2:13, 14, the argument of the Creation order is used by Paul to justify women's silence and not teaching in

church.<sup>155</sup> Even though Paul did not use the argument of masculine leadership that comes from the Creation order and the need of feminine submission as an impediment to women's ordination to eldership and pastorship in the first century of the Christian era, the opposers apply the argument as an impediment to women's ordination today. There is also an error which could be clarified by the use of the ethical-missiological-hermeneutical principle accommodative to culture, as compared to Ellen White's advice on interracial marriage. Like Paul, who uses a strong argument based on the Creation order to obtain a ready answer for his readers, Ellen White uses a strong argument to say that there should not be marriages between people of European origin and those of African origin. In both cases, we need to consider the respective advice as inspired. Although categorical, Paul's and Ellen White's advice should be interpreted according to the principle of cultural accommodation. In Paul's situation, it was an accommodation to the depreciative perception of the woman, while in Ellen White's case it was an accommodation to the depreciative perception of those of African origin who had a slavery-connected background. The reason, also presented by the conditioning factor of the principle, is to avoid scandals that would damage God's cause and hinder the advance of evangelism.

The sixth observation in the area of hermeneutics approaches the argument of absence of women in the Old Testament priesthood. This is an anachronistic argument, because we do not live in the time of the old covenant anymore.<sup>156</sup> Consider the book of Hebrews, for instance. The epistle was written for Christian Jews (see Heb 2:1; 3:12; 4:1, 11; 5:12; 5:6, 10; 7:14; 10:23-25, 29, 34-39) who continued to trust in the efficiency of the Jewish rites and ceremonies for salvation. The Council of Jerusalem had freed the Gentiles from the Jewish requirements but remained



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silent about the duty of the Jewish Christians and gave the impression that it was not against their continuing with their religious practices. The problem came when the Jewish Christians started to demand from the Gentile Christians the observance of the requirements of the Jewish system. One of the arguments of the epistle was that the Jewish Christians needed to "transfer their loyalty, to Christ as their high priest in heaven above, and to rely completely on His ministry as efficacious for salvation instead of on an earthly priesthood."<sup>157</sup> George Reid notes: "No longer is the worship leader acting on behalf of the celebrants, but among them. Sacerdotalism and sacramentalism disappear."<sup>158</sup> Following the same line of thought, Ellen White declared,

The sacrificial service that had pointed to Christ passed away; but the eyes of men were turned to the true sacrifice for the sins of the world. The earthly priesthood ceased; but we look to Jesus, the minister of the new covenant.<sup>159</sup>

The argument of the absence of women in the Old Testament priesthood, as a reason against women's ordination, is similar to that of those in favor of circumcision in Paul's time, who requested that Gentile Christians practice circumcision and all the other Jewish rites that had already been substituted by Christ's ministry and sacrifice. Today, the Christian church is living in the time of the new alliance;<sup>160</sup> that is why the argument of the absence of women in the Israelite priesthood cannot be applied as an impediment to their ordination.

There is still another aspect to be considered—the laying on of hands. Since the pastoral office has been related to eldership, ordination by laying on of hands became known as a recognition that the church grants only for one function. In the Old Testament we find the precedent of anointment for priests

(Lev 8) and kings (1 Sam 9:16; 16:1), as well as the laying on of hands on Levites (Num 8:10) and leaders like Joshua (Num 27:15–23; Deut 34:9). In the New Testament, there was also the laying on of hands on those who received the Spirit (Acts 8:17; 9:17; 19:6) and on the deacons (Acts 6:6). It is worth noting that Paul and Barnabas also received the laying on of hands from the church of Antioch as a recognition of their gifts so that they might use them in the mission of evangelizing the Gentiles (Acts 13:2, 3). Paul and the elders also laid their hands on Timothy as recognition of the spiritual gift he possessed (1 Tim 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6). Though there was the laying on of hands to recognize a function (Acts 6:6), it was more common, in the New Testament, to be done as a recognition that the believers had received spiritual gifts from the Lord.<sup>161</sup>

The seventh hermeneutical observation is about the issue of feminine submission as an impediment to ordination.<sup>162</sup> The theme of equality between man and woman in Gen 1 and 2 and the wife's submission beginning with Gen 3 was well explored exegetically by Hasel,<sup>163</sup> that is, why God created Adam and Eve to live together as equals:

When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that in all things she should be his equal. The holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other; and yet each had an individuality in thinking and acting.<sup>164</sup>

White further points out: "Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with His great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each other."<sup>165</sup> Eve's submission to Adam happened as a consequence of her sin: "But after Eve's sin, as she was first in the transgression, the Lord told her that Adam should rule over her. She was to be in

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subjection to her husband, and this was a part of the curse.”<sup>166</sup> The wife’s submission to her husband continues in present time: “It is the duty of the wife to yield her wishes and will to her husband. Both should be yielding, but the word of God gives preference to the judgment of the husband.”<sup>167</sup> It is clear that submission of the wife to her husband continues to be valid in the present, but being submissive does not mean being inferior: “Woman should fill the position which God originally designed for her, as her husband’s equal.”<sup>168</sup> As Grant R. Osborne synthesized very well, it is about “ontological equality and functional hierarchy”<sup>169</sup> at a marital level.

The hermeneutical error consists in taking from the wife’s submission to her husband to the church level. Gerhard Hasel perceived,

Is it then not the responsibility of the church to bring about the reproduction of the image of God in man, to restore harmony between God and man, and establish equality and unity in the human family where there is now inequality between men and women in such spheres of life and activity where the divine declaration of man’s rulership over his wife and of the wife’s submission to her husband (Gen 3:16; Eph 5:22, 23; 1 Pet 3:1ff.) does not apply? Furthermore, do the urgency of the task and the shortness of time not require the total utilization of all our manpower and woman-power resources in the completion of the gospel commission given to the remnant church?<sup>170</sup>

### **The Ethical-Missiological-Hermeneutical Principle Accomodative to Culture and the Issue of Women’s Ordination to the Ministry**

Twice, in 1990 and 1995, the worldwide

Church voted against allowing each administrative division to decide about women’s ordination to pastorship,<sup>171</sup> but this didn’t finish the debate on the theme, so much so that three administrative unions of the worldwide church, the North German Union Conference from the Inter-European Division, and the Columbia Union and the Pacific Union of the North American Division, voted separately in 2012 to allow the ordination to ministry “without regards to gender.”<sup>172</sup> Given these facts, there is pressure on the church to maintain its unity. Why does the debate between those in favor of and those against women’s ordination continue? It is because the Church has not reached a theological consensus on the issue. Thus it was decided to form the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), which concluded in 2014.<sup>173</sup>

Just as today, the Christian church of the first century faced a difficult situation when the Jewish Christians started to require from the Gentile Christians the practice of circumcision and other Jewish cultural customs. Another intense debate took place among Christians from the United States of America about the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century. Today the dispute is about women’s ordination. One group takes Bible verses and says it finds in them support for their opposition to women’s ordination; another group also uses the Bible to defend the woman’s right to ordination. Evidently, the solution to the debate is found in an interpretation solidly supported by the Scriptures. Here, it is useful to consider the Scripture harmony principle,

Jesus succinctly stated this aspect of the analogy of Scripture: “Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). Since Scripture has a single divine Author, the various parts of Scripture are consistent with each other. Thus Scripture cannot be set against scripture. All the doctrines

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of the Bible will cohere with each other; interpretations of individual passages will harmonize with the totality of what Scripture teaches on a given Subject.<sup>174</sup>

In light of that principle, we understand that the Adventist Church needs to reach a consensus on the theme of ordination that will be consistent with the Scriptures as a whole.

The abolitionists were correct in their interpretation of the slavery issue because, contrary to the defenders of slavery, who clung to the literal interpretation of the supporting biblical texts, they managed to find broader biblical principles that favored abolition. Today we need to learn from past errors, particularly from those of the slavery defenders. Like them, we in the twenty-first century face a situation that was never approached by the writers of the New Testament.<sup>175</sup> We need to be careful not to fall into the “temptation to appeal to Scripture as sanction for positions which may actually rest on prejudices that spring from the culture and social customs in which one has been brought up.”<sup>176</sup>

The abolitionists found the germinal principles for the liberation of slaves in Bible verses such as Eph 6:9 and Phlm 16, 21. They also had the spiritual discernment to see that Christ's Golden Rule (Matt 7:12) was putting slaves of African origin at the same level of equality with their white slave owners. If we are open to new ideas, we can see that Paul “hints at more to come, notably slavery (the epistle to Philemon) and even [the end] of barriers between men and women (Gal 3:28).”<sup>177</sup> The idea that women were inferior to men lasted for thousands of years and has even extended its reach to the twenty-first century, but Paul, inspired by God, announced the germinal principles for the egalitarian treatment of women: “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman” (1 Cor 11:11)

and “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

Ellen White recognized the biblical principles that establish a basis for the egalitarian treatment of women, particularly in her comments on Gal 3:28. According to the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Ellen White's explanations on Gal 3:28 are found in *Christ's Object Lessons*, *The Desire of Ages*, *Prophets and Kings*, and *Testimonies for the Church*.<sup>178</sup> All four quotations focus on the fulfillment of the mission. In the case of *Christ's Object Lessons* and *The Desire of Ages*, the incentive to mission is turned to the world. In *Prophets and Kings*, Ellen White criticizes Israel for not having evangelized the neighboring nations; while in *Testimonies for the Church*, she criticizes the church for overlooking the evangelization of the former slaves from the south of the United States of America. Both in *Christ's Object Lessons* and *The Desire of Ages*, White mentions only two pairs of relationships, the national one and the social one, maintaining silence over the pair related to gender. Why this silence? The logic of the argument required her to apply the end of distinctions between men and women, as well. Probably, the reason why White did not comment on the end of gender distinctions was their strong presence in her time. It seems the time to approach this controversial theme had not yet come. However, there are two quotations of Ellen White which, like 1 Cor 11:11, establish the germinal principle that can aid in the theology of ordination study: “It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God;”<sup>179</sup> and “Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the

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poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands."<sup>180</sup>

The title of this article suggests Gal 3:28 as a support text for the theology of ordination. Clearly, neither the text nor the context approaches the ordination theme, but that of egalitarian treatment, which rejects any type of racial, social, and gender superiority or ideology.<sup>181</sup> Nevertheless, the study of the broader biblical context of Gal 3:28 contributed to the development of a hermeneutical principle which can help with the explanation of the apparent contradiction between the Pauline texts that establish an egalitarian treatment principle and those that instructed the feminine members of the church to submit to the values and customs of the culture of their time.

The limiting aspect of the culture-accommodative principle was already noticed by John Reumann: "Paul's use of Genesis categories scarcely answers that question in unambiguous terms: he sees a 'new creation' in Christ, yet he can invoke the order of the original creation as a restraint on going too far too fast."<sup>182</sup> Raymond Stamm also seeks to interpret the apparent contradiction between the apostle's texts by saying that "Paul's intention may have been merely to forbid a self-assertion which would violate the proprieties to which women were subject in those days."<sup>183</sup>

Though the writings of Clarence Crisler may be a secondary source, his point is still valid, for it testifies of Ellen White's thought on the ordination of women to the ministry:

Sister White, personally, was very careful about expressing herself in any wise as to the advisability of ordaining women as gospel ministers. She has often spoken of the *perils* that such general practice would *expose* the church to by a gainsaying world; but as yet I have never seen from her pen any statement

that would seem to encourage the formal and official ordination of women to the gospel ministry, to public labor such as is ordinarily expected of an ordained minister.<sup>184</sup>

Thus, this position attributed to Ellen White confirms the adaptability to values and customs of the society in order to avoid scandals.

According to Ángel M. Rodríguez, the discussion about the ordination to the ministry "was not a test of Christian fellowship in the apostolic church."<sup>185</sup> It is interesting that even people from outside the theological circle admit, "Fondness for traditions doesn't allow one to see that the change wouldn't affect the basis of the Christian faith"<sup>186</sup> regarding "women's ordination."<sup>187</sup> That is why the final decision on women's ordination to pastoral ministry should consider the principle accommodative to culture adopted in this paper. We understand, as does Ángel M. Rodríguez, that women's ordination to ministry does not violate the preservation of God's name, neither His precepts written in the Holy Scriptures. Only two factors can limit the decision of the Adventist Church in favor of women's ordination: avoiding scandal and the hindrance of the evangelizing mission to the world. In this sense, the cultural factor is decisive. This does not mean secular culture is replacing the authority of the Scriptures; it only means we need spiritual sensitivity to perceive the signs of the times we live in. Paul had this sensitivity when he announced the germinal principles of the abolition of slavery (Col 4:1; Phlm 16) and the egalitarian principle that should be shown to women (1 Cor 11:11; Gal 3:28). However, the apostle Paul knew very well that the secular culture of his time would see as scandalous both asking for the abolition of slavery and women leading churches.

Just as the Jewish Christians' discord in

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the first century of the Christian era did not prevent the liberation of the Gentile Christians from circumcision and other Jewish customs; just as the discordance of the pro-slavery Christians did not prevent the abolition of slavery in the United States of America, in the same way the disagreement of those who oppose the ordination of women to ministry should not prevent it. As was considered above, only two factors should be taken into consideration: the avoidance of scandal and the obstruction of the evangelizing mission to the world. It is true that the issue of women's ordination threatens the unity of the church; on the other hand, it is also true that "any consensus on ministry without the full participation of women and men together is an act of disunity against humankind."<sup>188</sup>

When the apostle Paul approached the subject of imposing circumcision on the Gentile Christians, after having presented his theological arguments, he pleaded for the practice of love as a solution to the differences, both in Romans and in Galatians (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14); the principle of love was also presented by the apostle as a determining factor for the solutions of various problems of the church of Corinth (1 Cor 13). We agree with Raymond T. Stamm, who says in the discussion of women's ordination to ministry, "Today this same love may require us to transcend these restrictions. Indeed, if we do not follow its prompting, we may falsify the very spirit of love which determined Paul's solutions for his day,"<sup>189</sup> who also had his foundation on the love principle of Christ's Golden Rule (Matt 7:12).<sup>190</sup>

### Conclusion

Initially, we analyzed Gal 3:28 in its immediate and broader context and then studied the principle of equality it contains. We individually considered the expressions "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free,

nor is there male and female" in their respective biblical and historical contexts.

Through the study of the historical context of the Greek, Roman, and Jewish cultures, we found a common denominator, which is the complex of national, social, and gender superiority. Greeks, Romans, and Jews considered themselves, individually, superior to the other nations. The concept of white race superiority supported the slavery thesis in the United States of America, and the notion of masculine superiority has permeated civilization from ancient times until modern times. We also considered the main objections regarding women's ordination in the light of the ethical-missiological-hermeneutical principle accommodative to culture.

Even if the Roman culture in Paul's time practiced slavery and discriminated against women, the apostle, under God's inspiration, established the embryonic principles for the abolition of slavery and recognition of women as worthy of the same rights as men. Could not the denial of women's ordination be similar to the favoritism condemned by God in the Holy Scriptures?

The problem of slavery was addressed almost two centuries ago, while the issue of woman's inferiority in the church continues unresolved. The Adventist Church needs to decide whether to grant women to be ordained to pastoral ministry. The possibility of ordination depends on the consideration of two conditions: avoiding scandal and not being an impediment to the advance of the worldwide evangelizing mission, both in harmony with the superior principle of love. May God enlighten the church to come to a decision that will be in harmony with His will.

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# MEN AND WOMEN IN CHURCH ORDER

A Study of Paul's Use of Representative  
Statements

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THIS CHAPTER REPORTS on my study of the apostle Paul's use of "representative statements" to present the participation of men and women in church order. He uses such statements to refer to specific genders (masculine and/or feminine) while communicating principles of church order that apply to both men and women.<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes, Paul uses masculine generic language to refer to men and women. For example, he writes: "Brethren [and sisters], I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers [and mothers] were under the cloud, all passed through the sea" (1 Cor 10:1).<sup>2</sup> Here, Paul follows an Old Testament precedent that is strikingly illustrated in the representative statement in Deuteronomy about "your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman" (Deut 15:12).<sup>3</sup>

At other times, the principles taught by Paul apply to both men and women, even when he addresses only men or only women (without using generic language). For example, Paul is addressing only women when he writes that "the young women are to love their husbands" (Titus 2:4). Nevertheless, the principle of his teaching applies also to men, because in another letter he addresses only men when he writes that "husbands ought to love their own wives" (Eph 5:25).

This leads me to propose that Paul's use of masculine language in his teachings on church order does not preclude the application of those teachings to women; and similarly, his use of feminine language in his teachings on church order does not preclude the application of those teachings to men. The remainder of this chapter presents additional biblical evidence to support my proposal.

## **1. Order in All the Churches (1 Cor 7:17; 9:14)**

In 1 Corinthians, Paul uses representative statements to present a general principle of church order, as follows. "As God has distributed (*merizo*)<sup>4</sup> to each one (*hekastos*) [representative masculine], as the Lord has called each one, so let him [or her] walk. And so I ordain (*diatasso*) in all the churches" (1 Cor 7:17).<sup>5</sup> The representative nature of this statement is demonstrated when Paul takes care to explicitly mention both men and women in seven applications of this teaching concerning order in the marriage relationship (7:2, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12–16, 25–28, 32–34). Especially significant is Paul's emphasis on mutual affection and mutual authority among husbands and wives, when he instructs: "Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise, the

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husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does" (1 Cor 7:3, 4).

Representative statements are also used to teach what God has ordained concerning the male and female leaders of the church. With reference to the "work" (1 Cor 9:1) of Paul and Barnabas and the other apostles (9:1-6), Paul writes: "The Lord has commanded [ordained] (*diatasso*) that those (*tois*) [representative masculine] who preach the gospel should live from the gospel" (9:14). This statement is representative because Paul's "authority in the gospel" (9:18)<sup>6</sup> to receive financial support (9:14) is not connected with the fact that he is a man. Rather, his authority is "the authority of the gospel itself"<sup>7</sup> and is therefore also available to those whom he referred to as the "women who labored with me in the gospel" (Phil 4:3).<sup>8</sup> The significance of Paul's reference to female coworkers will be explored further in subsequent sections of this chapter.

### 2. The Head-Body Order (1 Cor 11:1-12)

Again, in his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul makes representative statements in connection with a head-body metaphor for church order that illustrates the interrelationships of men, women, Christ, and God. He writes: "(1) the head of every man is Christ, (2) the head of woman is man, and (3) the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor 11:3).<sup>9</sup> Some Bible students view the word *man* as referring only to male persons; others view it as referring only to husbands.<sup>10</sup> Some view the term *head* as a metaphor for authority; others view it as a metaphor for source.<sup>11</sup> Either way, Paul is presenting representative principles that apply to men and women, as will be demonstrated in the next several paragraphs.

In the statement that "the head of every man is Christ" (1 Cor 11:3), the term *every man* is representative of men and women.

Christ is "head" of "all the body" (Col 2:19; cf. 1 Cor 12:27). The church has "one husband" (2 Cor 11:2). Christ is not just the head of the men; He is the head of the whole church. Peter Coertzen correctly states: "That Jesus Christ is the only Head and Lord of his church and also must be, is indisputable."<sup>12</sup> Ellen White emphasizes the same point: "God has never given a hint in his Word that he has appointed any man [other than the divine-human Christ] to be the head of the church."<sup>13</sup> "Christ, not the minister, is the head of the church."<sup>14</sup>

In a similar way, when Paul refers to God (the Father) as the head of Christ (1 Cor 11:3), Christ (Who is the embodiment of God) is representative of all the men and women in the church (which is the embodiment of Christ). Therefore, women do not depend on the headship of men in order to be represented in Christ. Paul teaches that "in Him [Christ] dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you [men and women] are complete in Him, who is the head" (Col 2:9, 10). As a result, men and women "may grow up in all things into Him [Christ] who is the head" (Eph 4:15). Therefore, the authority of Christ as head of every man (1 Cor 11:3) is representative of the authority of every man and woman through "our authority which the Lord gave us" (2 Cor 10:8; cf. 13:10).<sup>15</sup>

Paul also identifies representative principles, when he writes that "every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head" (1 Cor 11:4). The principles that apply equally to women are evident, in that he goes on to state that "every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head" (11:5). The first principle is that just as men can pray and prophesy, so women can pray and prophesy. The second principle is that just as men should show honor to their head, so should women—though the specific way in which honor is shown is

different. The third principle is that the flow of honor from the body to the head (from woman and man to Christ) is representative of the flow of honor from the head to the body (from Christ to man and woman). Paul does not explicitly mention this double flow of honor. But the author of Hebrews uses representative language to describe how “the grace of God”—through Jesus (Heb 2:9, 10)—crowns “man” [and woman] “with glory and honor” (2:6, 7), “bringing many sons [and daughters] to glory” (2:10). In addition, Peter refers to “husbands” “giving honor to the wife” as “heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Pet 3:7).

Paul also makes representative statements when he writes that “a man . . . is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man” (1 Cor 11:7). Here again, Paul does not explain the representative nature of his statement. However, based on Paul’s high view of what is written in the Old Testament (1 Cor 10:7, 11),<sup>16</sup> he should be interpreted in light of the biblical teaching that women are also in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27; 5:1, 2). In addition, since woman is the glory of man (1 Cor 11:7)—then man is not the glory of God without the glory of the woman. Paul’s own teaching about the interdependence of man and woman in the order of creation (11:11) is discussed further below.

Paul’s representative strategy is very evident when he teaches on authority and the woman (1 Cor 11:10) by presenting the initial creation order (11:8, 9) and then qualifying it by presenting the additional Creation order of childbirth (11:11, 12) as follows. “[Initial Creation order:] Man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason, the woman ought to have [a symbol of] authority (*exousia*) on her head. . . . Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord.

For as woman came from man [initial Creation order], even so man also comes through woman [procreation order]; but all things are from God” (11:8–12).<sup>17</sup> For Paul, the place of the procreation order within the Creation order illustrates how man and woman are the source each other in different ways and how they both represent God, Who is the source of all things.<sup>18</sup>

Later in the same letter, Paul expands on the concept that “all things are from God” (1 Cor 11:12) in relation to the mutual submission between the Father and the Son. The Father has put (*hupotasso*, submitted) all things under Christ’s feet (1 Cor 15:27). Christ also submits “when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father” (15:24).<sup>19</sup> Therefore, “When all things are made subject (*hupotasso*) to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject (*hupotasso*) to Him who put (*hupotasso*) all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (15:28).<sup>20</sup> As stated in the letter to the Romans: “of Him . . . and to Him are all things” (Rom 11:36).

The mutual submission of the Father and the Son illuminates Paul’s statement that, like the man, “the woman ought to have authority” (1 Cor 11:10). A woman’s authority is representative of a man’s authority and complements it. As Paul writes earlier in his letter: “the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does” (7:4). The other side of the coin of shared authority is mutual submission—“submitting to one another” (Eph 5:21). In fact, the act of self-submission is an act of authority in that the one who submits exercises personal authority in choosing to submit.<sup>21</sup>

This mutuality of authority and submission is wonderfully illustrated when Paul makes the following appeal, again using representative statements. “I urge you, brethren [and



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sisters]—you know the household of Stephanas . . . have devoted (*etaxan*, derived from *tasso*) [submitted] themselves to the ministry [service] of the saints—that you also submit (*hupotasso*) to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us” (1 Cor 16:15, 16). Brethren are representative of sisters; and Stephanas is representative of Paul’s fellow workers, including the “women who labored with me in the gospel” (Phil 4:3).<sup>22</sup>

In summary, Paul makes representative statements in connection with his head-body metaphor of the mutuality of men, women, Christ, and God in church order. The principles communicated in these representative statements apply to men and women. The head and the body represent each other. Therefore, Christ is representative of God and of every man—that is, every human being. Also, in Christ, man represents woman, Christ, and God. In addition, all things are from God, man and woman are interdependent, woman is from man and man is from women. As a result, men and women share in the image of God and share with each other honor and glory, authority, and submission.

### 3. The Need for Decency, Order, Silence, and Submission (1 Cor 14:27–35)

Paul’s teaching on mutual self-submission is repeated in his teaching on decency, order, silence, and submission. This teaching is presented in the following series of representative statements concerning tongues and prophecy. First, “If anyone (*tis*, man or woman) speaks in a tongue . . . but if there is no interpreter, let him [or her] keep silent in church” (1 Cor 14:27, 28). The representative nature of this statement is highlighted by the significance of the word *anyone* in relation to masculine pronouns in Greek grammar. As Vern Poythress points out, “The subsequent uses of ‘he’ and ‘him’ do not narrow the scope

of the [representative] principle, but are to be understood [as representative] in the light of the initial general word ‘anyone.’”<sup>23</sup>

Second, Paul makes a representative statement, when he gives similar instruction on the behavior of prophets. He writes: “Let two or three prophets [or prophetesses] speak. . . . But if anything is revealed to another . . . , let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject (*hupotasso*, submitted) to the prophets.”<sup>24</sup> For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (14:29–33). These statements are representative, since (as discussed in section 2) Paul expects men and women to prophesy (11:4, 5). In addition, it is important to note that Paul is recommending—not absolute silence—but the submission of self-control. Instead of speaking continuously, we are to practice self-control by allowing others to speak so that we may learn from what they have to say.<sup>25</sup>

Third, Paul makes representative statements, when he applies the above mentioned principles (of silence and submission) to the behavior of women as follows. “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive (*hupotasso*), as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church . . . brethren [and sisters], desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor 14:34, 35, 39, 40).<sup>26</sup>

In summary, the principles of silence and submission are representative and, therefore, apply to men and women who participate in ministry that is in harmony with proper Church order. Paul has written earlier in his

letter about “every man” and “every woman who prays or prophesies” (1 Cor 11:4, 5). He has also implied that women and men need to be silenced if they are adorned in ways that cause shame and dishonor (11:4, 5; cf. 1 Tim 2:9, 10). Therefore, Paul’s words about women are representative so that they are also applicable to men who are engaged in speech that is unruly, shameful, indecent, and disorderly (1 Cor 14:34, 35, 40).<sup>27</sup> Paul presents similar teachings in his first letter to Timothy which will be discussed in the next section.

### 4. Learning, Teaching and Submitting to Order (1 Tim 1 and 2)

Paul continues to use representative statements concerning church order, when he gives instruction to Timothy about the qualifications of those who are “desiring to be teachers” (1 Tim 1:7). Timothy, a “true son in the faith” (1:2), is to “charge some (*tis*) [men and women] that they teach no other doctrine” (1:3) contrary to the principles of faith and love (1:4, 5) and contrary to sound doctrine (1:10).<sup>28</sup> To encourage Timothy, Paul presents himself representatively (1:12–16) as “a pattern to those [men and women] who are going to believe” (1:15, 16) through “the grace of our Lord” “with faith and love” (1:14). This representative pattern includes Paul’s call to ministry, since he writes: “I thank Christ . . . who has enabled me . . . putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer . . . ignorantly in unbelief [lacking faith]” (1:12, 13). After being converted from blasphemy, Paul “was appointed a preacher and an apostle,” and “a teacher” “in faith and truth” (2:7).

Just as Paul presents himself as a pattern for men and women (1 Tim 1:15, 16), so he presents certain unlearned men as representative examples of other men and women who are unlearned. He mentions “Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that

they may learn not to blaspheme [*blasphemeo*, speak evil]” (1 Tim 1:20). These unlearned men “rejected” and “shipwrecked” the principles of Christian “faith” (1:19) by an unloving blasphemy that speaks evil of authorities and of non-Christians—causing persecution and undermining the preaching of the gospel of salvation. In contrast, Christians should learn to pray “for all men [and women], for kings and all who are in authority, that we [men and women] may lead a quiet and peaceable (*hesuchion*) life” (2:1, 2) in harmony with God’s desire that everyone [men and women] be saved (2:4, 5).

Paul’s instruction is then applied specifically to men and then to women. Men are to pray in public worship with “holy hands” and “without wrath” (1 Tim 2:8). “In like manner also that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel” and with “good works” that are “proper for women professing godliness” (2:9, 10). Though addressed differently to men and women, these instructions are representative. As Paul indicated in 1 Corinthians, both men and women may pray and prophecy in public worship if they are modestly adorned (1 Cor 11:4, 5; cf. Titus 2:10). This representative strategy is also evident in the writings of the apostle Peter, who gives similar instruction to women (1 Pet 3:1–6), then instructs the husbands to do likewise (3:7), and finally applies the instruction to the entire church (3:8–17).

For Paul, the unlearned male blasphemers who need to pray for peace (*hesuchios*) (1 Tim 1:20–2:2) are representative of similarly unlearned women. Therefore, Paul writes: “Let a woman learn in silence (in peace, *hesuchia*) with all submission (*hupotage*). And I do not permit a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over a man, but to be in silence (*hesuchia*, in peace)” (2:11, 12).<sup>29</sup> In this statement, Paul is not prohibiting the proper exercise of

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authority by women,<sup>30</sup> since he writes to the Corinthians about the mutual authority of husbands and wives over each other's body (1 Cor 7:4). Neither is Paul prohibiting women teachers, since he writes, as "sound doctrine," that elder men and elder women should be "teachers of good things," including the principles of "faith" and "love," so "that the word of God may not be blasphemed" (Titus 2:1-5).<sup>31</sup>

Instead, Paul prohibits a behavior indicated by the relationship between the two parts of his statement that women are "[1] not . . . to teach [2] nor to usurp authority (*authentain*)"<sup>32</sup> (1 Tim 2:12). This "not . . . nor" statement presents two parts of a single disorderly speech-act that Paul silences—that is, teaching that involves the usurping of authority.<sup>33</sup> Earlier in the same letter, He makes a similar "neither . . . nor" statement about those who are "desiring to be teachers" while "understanding [1] neither what they say, [2] nor the things which they affirm" (1:7). Here again, Paul identifies two parts of a single compound speech-act—that is, to speak in order to affirm.<sup>34</sup> Paul silences those who teach in order to usurp authority (2:12), and he silences those who teach without understanding what they say or affirm (1:7). In both cases, his statements are representative in that he silences teaching that is contrary to faith and love and is therefore improper for both women and men (1:5; cf. 1:3-6).

Representative statements continue when Paul uses the orders of Creation, sin, and salvation to illustrate his teaching on the principles of faith and love in church order, as follows. "Adam was formed first, then Eve [Creation order].<sup>35</sup> And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression [sin order]. Nevertheless, she will be saved [salvation order] in childbearing [procreation order] if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control" (1 Tim 2:13-15).<sup>36</sup> The

ways in which Paul uses these orders as representative illustrations is discussed in the next few paragraphs.<sup>37</sup>

First, the fact that Adam was created before Eve illustrates the principle that the authority of men is to be respected (1 Cor 7:4; 11:10). At the same time, this illustration is representative because the authority of women is also to be respected. Neither men nor women are to teach in order to usurp authority. As Ellen White states, "Neither husband nor wife is to make a plea for rulership."<sup>38</sup>

Second, the fact that Eve was deceived into transgression illustrates the principle that women need to learn in silence (peace) and self-control. This illustration is also representative, since men need to learn in the same way as do women. This is evident when, in a letter to the Corinthians, Paul uses Eve as an illustration applicable to both men and women in the following way. "I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor 11:3).

Third, Bible students interpret being "saved in [the] childbearing (*tes tecnogonias*)" (1 Tim 2:15) in different ways. If this is a reference to salvation of women from childbearing risks resulting from the curse of sin, then it illustrates the fact that men are also saved from risks resulting from sin. Alternatively, if "the childbearing" is a reference to salvation in Christ—who is born from Eve (Gen 3:15), then it illustrates the fact that men are also saved through Christ.

In summary, Paul's use of representative statements indicates that, like unlearned men, unlearned women who teach in order to usurp authority (1 Tim 2:11, 12) may be saved from this disorder and may continue in faith, love, holiness, and self-control (2:15). This salvation qualifies them to teach the Christian doctrine of faith and love (1:3-5). In this way,

they fit the “pattern” of Paul (1:16), who was “ignorantly” “a blasphemer” (1:13) but was saved “with faith and love” (1:14) and then was called “into the ministry” (1:12). In the next section, I will investigate Paul’s representative statements about elder men and elder women in church order.

### 5. Elders and Church Order (Titus 1:5–7; 1 Tim 3–5)

Paul makes similar representative statements in his teaching on church offices, when he commands Titus to “Set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.” (Titus 1:5). Here the use of the masculine term *elder* does not in principle exclude women. Rather, the principle expressed in the masculine gender may be applied equally to women. This proposal may be supported by the following six points.

Point One: The author of the book of Hebrews makes a representative statement in describing “the elders [who] obtained a good testimony” (Heb 11:2) as including Sarah (11:11), Rahab (11:31), and other women (11:35). These elders were part of the general order of the people of God and were not necessarily officeholders. Nevertheless, with or without offices, women are included among these elders. Similarly, the fact that the term *elder* does not exclude women is evident in Paul’s reference to male and female elders (1 Tim 5:1, 2; Titus 2:1–3). Whether the female elders may hold the office of elder is explored in the remainder of this section.

Point Two: Paul’s instruction about elders may be accurately translated as follows: “Appoint elders. . . if anyone (*tis*)<sup>39</sup> is blameless. . . for a bishop must be blameless” (Titus 1:6, 7; cf. 1 Tim 3:1, 2).<sup>40</sup> This use of the gender neutral term *anyone* fits with the fact that Paul’s list of representative qualifications for these blameless elders is applied to both men and women

in his letters to Timothy and Titus. The elder man is to be blameless (1 Tim 3:2) in the areas of sexual purity (3:2), hospitality (3:2), teaching (3:3), ruling at home (3:4, 5), reputation (3:7), and experience (3:6). Similarly, the elder woman is to be blameless (5:7) in the areas of sexual purity (5:9), hospitality (5:10), ruling at home (5:8), reputation (5:10), experience (5:12, 15), and teaching (Titus 2:3).<sup>41</sup>

Point Three: Paul’s statement about the “blameless” elder or bishop being “the husband of one wife” (Titus 1:6; 1 Tim 3:2)<sup>42</sup> is representative, since it is complemented by his statement that a “blameless” (5:7) elder-widow (5:1–3) is to be “the wife of one man” (5:9). The principle Paul promotes is the sexual purity of the elder, not that the elder is a married man.<sup>43</sup> Paul makes similar representative statements concerning the qualifications for deacons. While a male deacon is to be blameless as “husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:12), the woman Phoebe has the same blameless character and therefore serves as a deacon (Rom 16:1). This understanding of Paul’s teaching is reflected in the Seventh-day Adventist Church order as follows. “Elders and deacons should be persons of experience, chosen wisely. . . . [B]oth men and women are eligible to serve as elders and receive ordination to this position of service in the church.”<sup>44</sup>

Point Four: Representative statements are present in Paul’s teaching that: “A bishop then must be . . . one who rules (*proistemi*) their own house well, having their children in submission with all reverence; for if anyone [*ei tis*] does not know how to rule their own house, how will they take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim 3:2–5).<sup>45</sup> That this qualification is representative is evident in Paul’s use of an even stronger Greek word to apply the qualification to women who are to “rule their households (*oikodespotein*)” (5:14, RSV).<sup>46</sup> Therefore, when Paul teaches about ruling, his emphasis

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is not on being a man; but on character traits that enable one to take care of the home and the church (3:4, 5).<sup>47</sup> Women who rule their households well may share in servant-rule within the church order. For example, deacons are qualified by ability to rule (3:12), and the woman Phoebe is a deacon who served or ruled over (*postatis*) many (Rom 16:1, 2). According to Jesus, Christian rule is servant leadership (Matt 20:25–28).<sup>48</sup>

Point Five: Following Paul's discussion of elder widows (1 Tim 5:1–10) and younger widows (5:11–16), he makes representative statements about the principle of financial honor for ruling elders. He writes: "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine; for . . . the laborer is worthy of his [or her] wages" (1 Tim 5:17–20; cf. Gal 6:6).<sup>49</sup> Ellen White interprets this principle representatively, when she writes: "make no mistake in neglecting to correct the error of giving ministers less than they should receive. . . . The tithe should go to those who labor in word and doctrine, be they men or women."<sup>50</sup>

Point Six: Paul makes a representative statement about church order, when he refers to the "real" elder-widow as a person who "diligently followed every good work" (1 Tim 5:10). As such, she is representative of "the man [or woman] of God" who is "thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:17).<sup>51</sup> Since "anyone" can participate in "every good work" (2 Tim 2:21), men and women may be included in Paul's representative statement that: "if anyone (*tis*) [man or woman] desires the position of a bishop, they desire a good work" (1 Tim 3:1). This parallels his statement that: "brethren [including sisters]" (1 Cor 12:1) may "covet [desire] earnestly the best gifts" (12:31).<sup>52</sup> Like Paul, Ellen White writes representatively about the "special need of men and women who possess Christlike qualifications for service" and

"executive ability" and who "practice the words 'All ye are brethren [and sisters].'"<sup>53</sup>

### 6. Summary and Conclusion

The biblical study presented in the various sections of this chapter may be summarized as follows. 1. Attention to representative statements is helpful in interpreting Paul's teaching on the relations of men and women in Christian church order. 2. Paul ordains a church order according to how God had distributed His gifts to men and women and called them into ministry (1 Cor 7:17; 9:14). 3. Men and women are to minister within church order in ways that demonstrate a bilateral sharing of honor, authority, and submission—as illustrated in various orders: divine, head-body, creation, procreation, and salvation (1 Cor 11:1–12; 15:22–28). 4. The speech of men and women in ministry should be characterized by decency, order, and silence—that is self-controlled speech (1 Cor 14:27–35). 5. Unlearned men and women who teach in order to usurp authority are to learn to pray for all people and to adorn themselves with silence and submission—as illustrated in the orders of creation, sin, and salvation (1 Tim 1 and 2). 7. Elder men and elder women are to be blameless persons who are able to do the good work of teaching and servant-rule—that is, taking care of the church (Titus 1:5–7; 1 Tim 3–5).

In brief, Paul's use of representative statements shows that men and women may be qualified for servant-leadership within Christian church order. As stated in Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief 14: "In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of . . . male and female, must not be divisive among us . . . we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation."<sup>54</sup> Men and women are to submit themselves to receive service from men and women who have submitted themselves to the service of the church (1 Cor 16:15, 16).

### Endnotes:

1. See Vern Sheridan Poythress, "Gender in Bible Translation: Exploring a Connection with Male Representatives," *Westminster Theological Journal* 60.2 (1998): 225–253; Rosa Shand Turner, "The Increasingly Visible Female and the Need for Generic Terms," *ChrCent* (Mar. 16, 1977): 248. Also see Grant Osbourne, "Hermeneutics and Women in the Church," *JETS* 20.4 (1977): 337–352.
2. I frequently indicate a representative word or phrase by providing a qualifier in brackets as I have done above. Also, except otherwise indicated, all Bible quotations are taken from the New King James Version.
3. See Reidar Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers and Sisters: Christian Siblingship in Paul* (New York: T & T Clark, 2004); Verna J. Dozer and James R. Adams, *Sisters and Brothers: Reclaiming a Biblical Ideal of Community* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1993).
4. The term *merizo* is used elsewhere in Paul's writings in Rom 12:3; 1 Cor 1:13; 7:17, 34; 2 Cor 10:13.
5. In the biblical study presented in this chapter, the term *ordain* is not a reference to the ceremony of ordination for church leaders, since there is no single biblical word to describe such a ceremony. However, the concept of ordination is implicit in biblical references such as: "laying on of hands" (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; Heb 6:2), "set in order," and "appoint" (Titus 1:5). See "Ordination, Ordain," in *The Concise Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishing, 2011), 467.
6. Paul states that he does not always use this authority (1 Cor 9:14, 15, 18; cf. 2 Cor 11:7–10), because he desires "to be all things to all men [and women]" (9:22) "that they may be saved" (10:32, 33). Then he appeals: "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (10:32, 33; 11:1). Paul's method is the method of Christ. As Ellen White comments: "Christ ministered to people's needs before inviting them to follow Him—Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men [and women] as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'" (Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry*. [Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1995], 117.
7. Ernest Best, "Paul's Apostolic Authority?" *JSNT* 27.1 (1986), 21.
8. See Mark Husbands and Timothy Larson, eds., *Women in Ministry and the Gospel: Exploring New Paradigms* (Downers Grove, IL: 2007); Jeanene Reese, "Co-workers in the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Partnership," *ResQ* 45.1 & 2 (2003): 106–114. The concepts of preaching and working are synonymous in Paul's writing. "We preach . . . [And] to this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily" (Col 1:28, 29). "Preach the word. . . . Do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim 4:2, 5).
9. Paul does not want the Corinthians to regard him as their head. In connection with praising them for imitating him (1 Cor 11:2), Paul interjects "But I want you to know that the head of every man [and every woman] is Christ" (11:3). The true imitation of Paul is to imitate Christ, whom Paul also imitates (11:1).
10. See Craig Keener, *Paul Women and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992).
11. See Alan F. Johnson, "A Review of the Scholarly Debate on the Meaning of 'Head' (kephale) in Paul's Writings," *ATJ* 41 (2009): 35–57.
12. Pieter Coertzen, "*Decently and In Order*" *A Theological Reflection on the Order for, and the Order in, the Church* (Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2004), 92. Just as every man includes every woman, so the woman represents the church, which includes men and women. The relationship between men and women is not unilateral so that women are the body of Christ only through men. Neither is Christ the head of women only through men.
13. White, *Great Controversy* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2012), 51.
14. White, *Signs of the Times* (Jan. 27, 1890).
15. At the same time, Christ's gift of authority to the church does not diminish His own possession of authority, since "the church is subject (*hupotasso*) to Christ" (Eph 5:24).
16. Cf. 1 Cor 1:19, 31; 2:9; 3:19; 4:6; 9:9, 10; 14:21; 15:45; 54.
17. I have supplied the brackets in v. 10 to point to the value of the more literal translation of the CEB: "have authority over her head." Paul

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- recognizes a woman's right to decide how to adorn her head. At the same time, he recommends that she adorn her head in a way that honors her head. "The word *authority* (*exousia*) is always, in Greek, the person's own authority, not someone else's. The phrase *have authority over* always means having power, freedom, or authority over something. . . . *exousia* never means—and indeed simply cannot mean—having a symbol [sign] of someone else's authority"; namely, the woman's covering as a symbol/sign of a man's authority. Alan Padgett, *As Christ Submits to the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 112. See also BDAG 114, 353, 3; 365, 9a.
18. Like Paul, Ellen White illustrates the ministry of men and women in terms of various complementary orders. She writes: "In the mind of God [the divine order], the ministry of men and women existed before the world was created [the Creation order]. He determined that His ministers should have a perfect exemplification of Himself and His purposes. No human career could do this work; for God gave Christ in humanity [the order of salvation] to work out His ideal of what humanity [men and women] may become . . . . Christ not only held a theory of genuine ministry, but in His humanity He wrought out an illustration of the ministry that God approves." (White, *Manuscript Releases*, 21 vols. [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999], 18:380.)
  19. The submission of the Father is complete, but He is not in submission under the feet of Christ as an enemy. "For He [the Son] must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For 'He [the Father] has put [submitted] (*hupotasso*) all things under (*hupo*) His [the Son's] feet.' But . . . it is evident that He who put (*hupotasso*) all things under Him is excepted" (in that the Father is not an enemy) (1 Cor 15:25–27). Similarly, women are not to be placed under the feet of men as enemies. "God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided 'an help meet for him'—a helper corresponding to him—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self." White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2001), 25.
  20. "We note that *υπότασσειν* also carried the meaning 'to classify under.' To be subordinated in this sense does not mean to take commands but to participate in the reality of something else and to have one's identity established from that participation." David Fredrickson, "God, Christ, and All Things in 1 Corinthians 15:28," *Word and World* 18.3 (1998): 260. "See the entries in Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*. BAGD (Bauer/Arndt/Gingrich/Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*) indicates this only obliquely" (Fredrickson, 260, n. 28).
  21. See Narry F. Santos, *Slave of All: The Paradox of Authority and Servanthood in the Gospel of Mark* (New York: Sheffield, 2003).
  22. The term *fellow worker* is used to "identify a person who is active with and like Paul as a representative of God." The fellow worker is not simply "Paul's 'helper,' 'companion,' or 'servant' . . . . Paul is himself only a 'fellow worker . . .' (2 Cor 1:24 . . . 6:1), i.e., as one standing along with and not over the women and men working together with him." W. H. Ollrog, in *EDNT* 3:304.
  23. Vern Poythress, "Male Meaning in Generic Masculines in Koine Greek," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 66 (2004): 326.
  24. Here submission is self-control; we are to submit ourselves—exercise authority over ourselves (Eph 5:21, 22, 24; Col 3:18; Titus 2:5, 9; 3:1; Jas 4:7; 1 Pet 2:13, 18; 3:1, 5, 22; 5:5).
  25. "The Spirit's authority is obeyed as it actually comes to be; this leads to an order that conforms itself afterwards to the 'event' of the Spirit; and its only purpose is to make room for the Spirit." E. Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1963), 102. There is "no fundamental organization of superior or subordinate ranks, because the gift of the Spirit is adapted to every church member." *Ibid.*, 99.
  26. Cf. Col 2:5. See Pieter Coertzen, "Decently and In Order," 79–123.
  27. "Paul told three groups to keep silent: tongues-speakers, prophets, and women. Everyone understands Paul's injunctions against the first two groups as situational in nature; they were not meant to become universal declarations. We must ask why the analysis should be any different for the third group." T. Scott Womble, *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* (Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2008), 219.

28. Some have turned to “idle talk” (1:6) that misinterprets the law (1:7–10), and is contrary to “sound doctrine” (1:10). Paul’s charge is repeated in his second letter to Timothy as follows. “Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers” (2 Tim 2:14).
29. This translation includes elements from the King James Version and the New King James Version.
30. See Bruce Barron, “Putting Women in Their Place: 1 Timothy 2 and Evangelical Views of Women in Church Leadership,” *JETS* 33.4 (1990): 451–459.
31. Tertullian (ca. 160–225) mentions female elders (*Testament of the Lord*, 1.23), and the Council of Laodicea (364) seeks to prohibit women from the office of elder. See R. C. Kroeger and C. C. Kroeger, “Women in the Church,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 1290.
32. “[T]here is a virtually unbroken tradition, stemming from the oldest versions and running down to the twenty-first century, that translates *authentain* as ‘to dominate’ rather than as ‘to exercise authority over.’” [Old Latin (2<sup>nd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> Cent, A.D.), Vulgate (4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup>), Geneva (1560 ed.), Casiodoro de Reina (1569), Bishops (1589), KJV (1611), L. Segond (1910), Goodspeed (1923), La Sainte (1938), NEB (1961), JBSerf (1973), REB (1989), New Translation (1990), CEV (1991), *The Message* (1993)]. Linda L. Belleville, “Teaching and Usurping Authority: 1 Timothy 2:11–15,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald Pierce, Rebecca Groothuis, Gordon Fee (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 209, 210.
33. The “not–nor” construct involves infinitives as verbal nouns modifying the direct object of Paul’s sentence, indicating an action with “a related purpose or goal” that he does not permit (Belleville, 218; cf. 217, 218).
34. In the writings of Paul, there are a number of “not . . . nor” constructs that involve two parts of one compound action (1 Tim 6:16; 1 Cor 2:6; 2 Cor 4:2; 1 Thess 5:5; 2 Thess 2:2).
35. See Mary Hayter, *The New Eve in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987).
36. A third interpretative option is proposed by Kenneth L. Waters, “Saved Through Childbearing: Virtues as Children in 1 Timothy 2:11–15,” *JBL* 123.4 (2004): 703–735.
37. Paul’s similar illustrative use of these orders is presented in section three of this chapter.
38. White, AH 106.
39. See discussion of the indefinite pronoun *anyone* in Vern Poythress, (2004): 326; and in section 4 of this chapter.
40. In the New Testament, “elder/presbyter” (*presbuteros*) and “overseer/bishop” (*episkopos*) are overlapping terms (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5–7; 1 Pet 5:1–3). Elders and bishops have the same qualifications (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9) and functions as pastors or shepherds (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 5:1–4; 1 Thess 5:12).
41. See T. Scott Womble, 137, 138; Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 449–452. For another perspective see Joseph Fitzmyer, “The Structured Ministry of the Church in the Pastoral Epistles,” *CBQ* 66.4 (2004): 582–596.
42. The noun *woman* is in the genitive case and could be translated possessively—a man possessed by one wife; or relationally—a man who has one wife; or qualitatively—a one-wife kind of man. See Ed Glasscock, “‘The Husband of One Wife’ Requirement in 1 Timothy 3:2,” *BSac* 140.559 (1983): 250, 251.
43. Charlotte Methuen, “The ‘Virgin Widow’: A Problematic Social Role for the Early Church?” *HTR* 90.3 (1997): 285–298; Jouette M. Bassler, “The Widows’ Tale: A Fresh Look at 1 Tim 5:3–16,” *JBL* 103.1 (1984): 23–41; Bonnie Bowman Thurston, *The Widows: A Woman’s Ministry in the Early Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989).
44. *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook*, (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, 2009), 94.
45. See discussion of the indefinite pronoun *anyone* in Vern Poythress, (2004): 326; and in section 4 of this chapter.
46. Paul regards the unmarried life as an advantage in ministry (1 Cor 7:32–35) and also teaches that married life provides an opportunity for ministry (7:1, 2, 7–9, 16, 17). This explains his teaching [about ruling the household (1 Tim 5:14)] to “younger widows” who “desire to marry” and also “cast off their first faith” “learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house,” and are “gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not” (5:11, 12). Clearly, these women



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- are not qualified to be elders, because they lack mature Christian character.
47. An unmarried person who takes over the house after his father's death might also demonstrate these character traits. Similarly, these character traits may be manifested in different situations outside of one's own household. For example, a slave may demonstrate these character traits when appointed as a steward over his master's household.
  48. "The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him [or her] be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him [or her] be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matt 20:25–28).
  49. See Benjamin L. Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 93–97. This discussion of elders begins with instructions on the rebuking of male and female elders (1 Tim 5:1, 2) and ends with instructions on the rebuking of elders (5:19, 20). Between these instructions on the rebuking of unqualified elders, Paul teaches about the financial honor due to qualified elder-widows (5:3–16) and other elders (5:17, 18).
  50. White, 1MR 263.
  51. While, in principle, "anyone" can be "prepared for every good work" (2:21), no one can literally accomplish every good work. Not every blameless elder woman will literally have done the good works of being "a wife of one man" and having "brought up children" of her own (1 Tim 5:9, 10). Alternatively, elder women [and elder men] may also be blameless through the good works connected with an unmarried life of sexual purity and with ministry to children born to others. If every elder/pastor/bishop is required to literally do all good works—including being married and having children in a biological sense, then Christ would not be qualified to be "the Shepherd [Pastor] and Bishop [Overseer] of your souls" (1 Pet 2:25).
  52. Notice also that Paul lists the church offices of pastor and teacher among the gifts of the Spirit (12:28, 29; Eph 4:8–11). As expressed in Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief 17: "the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions," including "pastoral, evangelistic, apostolic, and teaching ministries" (<http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>). Therefore, the Spirit of God may place in the heart of Christian brothers and sisters the earnest desire for the gift/office of pastor/teacher (4:8, 11) which overlaps with the office of elder/bishop (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 2:25; Titus 1:5–7). Elders and bishops are pastors or shepherds, since Paul instructed the elders to take care of the flock and to feed the flock as overseers/bishops (Acts 20:17, 28).
  53. White, 2MR 88.
  54. <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>

# LEADERSHIP AND GENDER IN THE EPHESIAN CHURCH

An Examination of 1 Timothy

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## Introduction

“IF A MAN DESIRES the office of an elder, he<sup>1</sup> desires a good thing. If a woman desires the same, she doesn’t understand. She cannot rule her house well. If she rules it, that is not well.”<sup>2</sup>

This statement from an Adventist website discussing the issue of women’s ordination reflects the position advocated in the papers opposing the ordination of women given at the July 2013 meeting of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC). This conviction is rooted in the belief that the qualifications the apostle Paul<sup>3</sup> gives for the selection of overseers in 1 Tim 3:1–7 are “highly gender-specific.”<sup>4</sup> For this reason, it is claimed that an “elder/overseer must be of the male

gender.”<sup>5</sup> But not merely male, but specifically, “husbands and fathers who have a proven record of successful leadership in their homes.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, on the basis of gender alone, “women can neither be elders nor pastors, nor be ordained as such.”<sup>7</sup>

While the qualifications for overseers in 1 Tim 3:1–7 may at first appear to exclude women from consideration, I believe that a careful evaluation of the passage fails to support that conclusion. Although the vast majority of church leaders in Paul’s day were undoubtedly male, gender does not appear to have been one of the criteria for serving as a leader within the church. Not only do none of the qualifications for an overseer specifically exclude women as potential candidates, but women can also fulfill *all* the requirements set forth just as well as men. But even beyond this, the attempt to identify gender as a fundamental requirement for the ministry of an overseer ultimately undermines the primary nature of all the qualifications Paul provided for guiding in the selection of church leaders: the importance of character.

Before examining why gender should not be seen as part of the criteria Paul established for the selection of an overseer, it is important that we first place Paul’s instructions in relation to the specific historical circumstances that had arisen in Ephesus and that led to his letter to Timothy in the first place. Placing Paul’s comments in relation to the overall situation in Ephesus will not only prevent us from proof texting (as the saying goes, “a text without a context is a pretext for a proof text”), but also has the benefit of helping us to identify the places where we agree and disagree in 1 Timothy regarding the ordination of women.

## I. The Situation in Ephesus

Toward the end of his third missionary journey, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, Paul felt that his work for the cause of Christ

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among the Gentiles in and around Asia Minor had largely come to a close. After traveling to Jerusalem to deliver the collection of funds his Gentile churches had raised as a sign of their unity with their fellow Jewish believers (1 Cor 16:1-3; 2 Cor 8:20; 9:12, 13; Rom 15:28), Paul planned to sail to Rome, from where he hoped to begin a new missionary endeavor among the Gentiles in Spain (Rom 15:24, 28). Paul's plans, however, did not materialize as he had hoped.

Shortly after arriving in Jerusalem, Paul was arrested and imprisoned for nearly two years (cf. Acts 21:23; 23:34, 35; 24:26, 27). Although he was eventually transferred to Rome (cf. Acts 25:10-12; 27:1), he remained imprisoned there for nearly two more years. During his imprisonment the spiritual vitality among the Gentile churches founded in connection to his ministry had begun to suffer, due to the influence of false teachings (Col 2:8, 16-23; 3:2) and the outbreak of divisions among believers (Phil 4:1; Phlm 10-19).<sup>8</sup> Concerned about the deteriorating condition of his churches, Paul longed to revisit his churches in the East (cf. Phil 1:25; 2:23, 24; Phlm 22). Whether Paul had the opportunity to revisit his churches or not is uncertain. It has traditionally been assumed that Paul was eventually released from house arrest in Rome around the year 62.<sup>9</sup> If this is the case, the short interval between his release and eventual second arrest and execution in Rome a few years later would provide a plausible scenario in which Paul could not only have revisited his churches around the Aegean but also to have written his letters to Timothy and Titus.<sup>10</sup>

Whatever the exact circumstances, 1 Timothy makes it clear that the apostle Paul did not have the time to address in person the problems that had arisen in Ephesus during his absence. Until he could return in the future, he instead asked his colleague Timothy to deal

with the problems on his behalf (cf. 1 Tim 1:3; 3:14, 15). The situation was apparently so difficult that it could not wait. Although Paul is far more ambiguous than we would like in identifying the exact nature of the problem, on the basis of what he does say it is clear that the root of the problem was due to the influence of heretical teachings being advocated by "certain persons" within the congregation (1:3). Moreover, the problems in Ephesus do not appear to be entirely unique. They appear, rather, to be related in the broadest of strokes to the problems Paul also encountered in Crete, since the character of the individuals and teachings involved are very similar in 1 Timothy and Titus. With this basic background in mind, we now turn to the relation of Paul's letter to Timothy and the situation in Ephesus.

### II. The Context of Paul's Instructions Regarding Church Leaders

Aware of the difficulties Timothy faced in Ephesus, Paul wrote 1 Timothy with the goal of not only encouraging his younger colleague in his task but also as a way of providing him with the instructions and the authority he needed to carry out his duty. Paul did this by writing Timothy a personal letter that he clearly expected the Ephesians would also read (1 Tim 6:21).<sup>11</sup> In writing with this purpose in mind, Paul's letter mirrors a style of writing scholars classify as the *mandata principis* (literally, "commandments of a ruler").<sup>12</sup> This sort of letter was routinely sent to Roman officials who were charged with implementing imperial policy in the provinces. Although written as personal letters to specific officials, these letters were read publicly for the purpose of making the ruler's wishes known to all and as a means of empowering the local delegate to implement them.<sup>13</sup> With a similar purpose in mind, Paul asserts his authority as an apostle in the opening salutation of his letter and then

designates Timothy as his “true son in the faith” (2:2). His being identified as Paul’s legitimate representative, the believers in Ephesus were not to view Timothy’s actions as his own but as the will of the apostle Paul himself.

### A. *The Heresy in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3–20)*

Following his salutation, Paul immediately states the purpose of his letter. Timothy is to oppose the false teachers whose controversial and misguided teachings were undermining the genuine work of the gospel in Ephesus (1:3). Instead of proclaiming the power of the risen Christ that transforms human lives and that results in the manifestation of “love that issues from a pure heart and good conscience” (cf. 1:5; 12–16), the false teachers proclaimed an exclusive gospel—a gospel that consisted in nothing more than sensational ideas they claimed were based in the “myths and genealogies” they found in the Old Testament Scriptures (cf. 1:3, 4; Titus 1:14; 3:9). So caught up were they in the pursuit of winning acclaim for themselves as “teachers of the law” (1:7), that they had completely failed to recognize that the true purpose of the law was to serve as a moral agent in identifying human sinfulness (1:9, 10), and thereby pointing to the need of Christ. Losing sight of this most basic tenant of the Christian faith resulted in Hymenaeus and Alexander, apparently two former church members (cf. 1:20; 2 Tim 2:17, 18), becoming so caught up in the heretical teachings that they had been disfellowshipped (cf. 1:19, 20; 1 Cor 5:1–5).

### B. *Instructions for Dealing with the Ephesian Heresy (1 Tim 2:1–3:16)*

Having set forth Timothy’s responsibility in dealing with the false teachers in Ephesus, Paul next turns his attention in 2:1–3:16 to providing Timothy with practical instructions for actually addressing the problems within the church. Although false teachings are not

specifically mentioned, the use of conjunction *therefore* (*oun*) that begins this section (2:1) indicates Paul’s counsel is directly connected to his discussion of the heresy mentioned in the previous chapter.

**1. Focus on Mission (2:1–7).** Paul first instructs Timothy to encourage the believers to pray for “all” people (2:1, 2). The repetition of the word *all* (1:1, 2, 4, 6) indicates that the emphasis is not on prayer but specifically prayer for the salvation of “all” people. The emphasis on “all” was certainly meant to counter the exclusivist mentality of salvation implicit in the speculative teachings (1:4–6) and ascetic ideas (3:3) the false teachers proclaimed. Under their influence, the church was losing sight of its primary reason for existence—to share the good news of Christ with those outside the church. Timothy’s first task, therefore, was to remind the believers of the universal scope of the gospel message that was rooted in Jesus who “gave himself as a ransom for all” (2:7). In focusing on the mission of the church, Paul hoped the believers would see that the true gospel did not consist in esoteric ideas intended to tantalize the minds of a few select individuals but in the good news of God’s saving power available for all.

**2. Limit the Influence of the False Teachers (2:8–15).** Paul’s next step in countering the false teachers was for Timothy to limit the disruptive behavior their influence was having upon the church body. In doing this, Paul singles out specific behavior associated with both men and women.

Paul first addresses men.<sup>14</sup> He urges that they “should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling” (v. 8). Of course, the fact that the apostle singles out men does not mean that his counsel does not also apply to women (e.g., 1 Cor 11:5). It merely indicates that in context to the specific situation in Ephesus, it was mainly a group of men who were struggling

with inappropriate attitudes toward others. While Paul certainly has in mind the conflict and division that had arisen between the believers in connection to the teachings that were dividing the church, his use of the word *quarreling* suggests a specific connection with the false teachers.<sup>15</sup> He describes them later as individuals whose craving for “controversy and for quarrels about words” (cf. 6:4, 5; 1:7; 3:3) result in strife and division, rather than a spirit of harmony and unity. The divisive work of these individuals was poisoning the spirit of patience, love, and forgiveness necessary for genuine worship to be effective (cf. Phil 2:14; Eph 4:31; Col 3:8). This behavior had to change if the church was to fulfill its divine destiny as the body of Christ.

Paul next turns his attention to the disruptive demeanor of women within the church. In addition to dressing in an immodest manner, women were also involved in some sort of teaching ministry that Paul felt had to be stopped. The exact nature of what the problem entailed is a key area of dispute. Was the problem simply that these women were “teaching and exercising authority” over men, as suggested in many modern translations? Or was the problem more specifically focused on the *manner* in which these women were teaching, as implied in the “usurping” nature of their behavior as translated in the KJV.<sup>16</sup> To explain the basis of his prohibition, Paul alludes to the Creation and the Fall in verses 13 and 14. What Paul has in mind in these references to the Genesis account is another one of the major dividing questions at the heart of the disagreement within the Adventist Church regarding the role of women in ministry. Does the allusion to Genesis affirm a complementarian/hierarchical or egalitarian view of the relationship between men and women?

### *Paul and Creation—Evaluating the Arguments*

Those who favor a complementarian/hierarchical perspective understand Paul’s injunction prohibiting women from teaching or exercising authority over men to be a universal and timeless truth barring women from assuming an authoritarian position over men—a truth, they believe, rooted in Creation and the Fall. Rather than arising from a specific problem unique to the church in Ephesus, the issue is simply that in the act of teaching the women were violating the proscribed hierarchical relationship established in Creation. Whether women were involved in spreading falsehood, or were merely expounding the truth, is irrelevant. It is simply a universal truth that women are not in any circumstance to teach or have authority over men. The evidence for this, they believe, is twofold: (1) man was created before woman and was thus established as the head; and (2) the woman was deceived into assuming a headship role in the Garden, thereby introducing the sin problem.

**Man created first.** In stating that Adam was created first it is claimed that Paul grounded his prohibition in “the order of the creation of Adam and Eve as the archetypes of man and woman and the implication of this order for headship and submission in such relationships”<sup>17</sup>—namely, “male authority”<sup>18</sup> over women. Paul’s use of verb *plassō* (“to form”) in verse 13 is interpreted as a textual echo to the “whole of the creation nature”<sup>19</sup> in Gen 2, and specifically, to the two events seen as indicative of male headship over women: the creation of woman as man’s “helper” (Gen 2:18), and in Adam’s naming of women (Gen 2:23). Those advocating for this position have argued that Paul’s appeal to the pre-Fall order of Creation proves his prohibition is “unequivocally universal,” rather than “culturally motivated.”<sup>20</sup>

While Paul certainly appeals to the Creation

account in Genesis in connection to his prohibition against women, it is far from clear that in doing so he was advocating for male headship. Adam was created first, but this “first-then” terminology does nothing more than to define a sequence of time. A clear example of this is seen in Paul’s description of the sequence of events associated with the Second Coming. In describing the resurrection of the dead, Paul states the “dead in Christ will rise *first*; then” the living righteous will be caught up together with them in the air (1 Thess 4:16, 17). The fact that the dead in Christ rise first does not indicate they have any sort of functional headship over those who are then caught up in the air with them. It simply states the sequence of the two events. Moreover, as Richard Davidson’s recent TOSC paper on Gen 1–3 clearly demonstrates, a careful examination of the literary structure of the creation of humans in Gen 2 does not indicate that the creation of man before woman implied any sort of hierarchical relationship.<sup>21</sup> Instead, the account in Hebrew moves from incompleteness to completeness, with the creation of woman as the climax and equal of Adam. The full equality of the man and the woman is demonstrated in the author’s use of the same exact number of words in Hebrew to describe the creation of each of them.<sup>22</sup>

**Woman as Man’s Helper.** Since Paul does not specifically refer to the creation of woman as man’s “helper” (Gen 2:18), or to Adam’s naming of women (Gen 2:23), we would be wise not to read these events *into* the passage—nor to make the additional mistake of then basing our interpretation of the passage on events that are not actually mentioned in the text! But even if we were to assume, for the sake of argument, that Paul had these other events in mind (which I’m not convinced he does), they still fail to establish a pre-Fall male headship over women. While many assume that the description of woman as “a helper” fit

for man (ESV) relegates women into a subordinate status below men, the Hebrew word for “helper” (*‘ezer*) carries no such connotation. Of the nineteen occurrences of *‘ezer* outside of Gen 2, sixteen refer to God as the “Helper of Israel,” while the three remaining uses refer to military allies of equal status.<sup>23</sup> Rather than indicating inferior status or rank, the term is relational, and specifically that of a beneficial relationship. In connection to the Creation, Adam found no equal companion fit for him among the animals. It was only in the creation of woman that Adam finally found a partner *equal* to himself.

**The Naming of Woman.** The claim that in naming woman Adam demonstrated the inherent authority men have over women also cannot be proven. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that the act of naming is not an indication of an individual’s “authority” over another, but rather the quality of “discernment” demonstrated on the part of the name-giver.<sup>24</sup> As such, Adam’s “exclamation in Gen 2:23 is a cry of discovery, of recognition . . . rather than a prescription of what this creature built from his rib shall be.”<sup>25</sup> Understanding Adam’s declaration of “woman” as a joyful recognition of Eve as his second self rather than the demonstration of his authority over her also seems prudent, since it is questionable whether Adam actually named the woman in the first place. A careful reading of the Creation account reveals that the word *woman* (*‘ishah*) “occurs in the narrative *before* Adam ever meets her (Gen 2:22).”<sup>26</sup> This earlier use of the term suggests that the designation of Adam’s partner as “woman” did not originate with man but with God.

While Paul does appeal to the Creation account to explain the nature of his prohibition, he does not do so to establish the superiority or headship of men over women. On the contrary, Paul appeals to the *equality* of

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men and women established in the Creation account in order to counter the domineering behavior of women in Ephesus. The indication that the problem of teaching and authority being carried on by women in Ephesus was connected to a domineering behavior is found in the Greek word translated as “authority.” If Paul had wanted to ban women from holding any position of authority, he would have used the verbal form of the common Greek word that he uses elsewhere to refer to authority—*exousia* (e.g., Rom 9:21; 13:3; 2 Cor 13:10; 2 Thess 3:9). But he does not. He uses instead a verb that is so extremely rare that it not only occurs nowhere else in the NT, but it is also known to occur only four times in all of Greek literature before the Christian era. In both its verbal and cognate noun forms, *authentēō* has a negative element of force associated with it.<sup>27</sup> As a verb it can mean “to rule/reign” and “to control” or “dominate.”<sup>28</sup> Recognizing this negative aspect, the earliest translations of the NT into Latin and Syriac translate *authentēō* with words that refer to a dominating form of behavior.<sup>29</sup> Clearly, the domineering nature of the teaching and authority being carried on in Ephesus was something unusual.

In response to the women in Ephesus who were teaching and exercising authority in a domineering manner that would have reflected negatively upon men in general and their husbands in particular, Paul appeals to the Creation account to remind them that Eve was created to be Adam’s equal partner, not his boss.

### *Paul and the Fall—Evaluating the Arguments*

While Paul’s terminology in verse 13 served as an allusion to the Creation account in Gen 2, the terminology in verse 14 points to a connection to the story of the role of Eve in relation to the Fall in Gen 3.<sup>30</sup> Complementarians/hierarchicalists see in this allusion to the Fall a second reason

why all women are not to exercise authority over men.<sup>31</sup> In the act of following the words of the serpent and eating the forbidden fruit, it is claimed, “Eve substituted Adam’s authority with Satan’s.”<sup>32</sup> But even more than this, it is claimed that in giving the fruit to Adam and in his compliance in taking it from her, Eve was guilty of usurping “Adam’s headship authority.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, Eve’s sin was in assuming the headship role of man, while Adam sinned by acting in the submissive nature assigned to all women. In violating this hierarchical ordering of the sexes, Paul is said to have established his rationale for preventing women from teaching; that is, in Eve’s “transgression in her role as woman to Adam.”<sup>34</sup> In explaining the significance of this point at the TOSC meetings in 2013, one paper cited the following quotation made by the evangelical scholar Thomas Schreiner as a definitive reason for their position against women’s ordination:

The Genesis temptation, therefore, is indicative of what happens when male leadership is abrogated. Eve took the initiative in responding to the serpent, and Adam let her do so. Thus, the appeal to Genesis 3 serves as a reminder of what happens when God’s ordained pattern is undermined.”<sup>35</sup>

In response to Eve’s involvement in the fall, the TOSC paper went on to claim that in response to Eve’s sin of overreaching her appointed place, God placed a “curse on the woman.”<sup>36</sup> In addition to multiplying her pain in childbirth, God told the woman that her husband would “rule (*mashal*) over you” (Gen 3:16). The nature of Adam’s rule over his wife was further described as “a male-focused domination [over women] as a guard against the desire for future disobedience and sin: the man’s responsibility to guard against disobedience is renewed. The issue is not male dictatorial dominance but leadership

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-driven deliverance; God hereby grants Adam a second chance to obey where he previously failed"<sup>37</sup> (that is to say, in Adam's failure in both surrendering his headship over to his wife and in his inability to restrain her waywardness).

Following this line of reasoning, the ordination of women is interpreted to be the equivalent of Eve's original sin. And as such, a woman seeking ordination and exercising spiritual authority over adult men within the church would be comparable to Eve offering Adam the forbidden fruit. It is therefore the duty of the church to overcome in the very areas where Adam failed: (1) in refusing to surrender male headship to women pastors; and (2) in reigning in those individuals (whether women, unions, or divisions) who would seek to encourage Eve's waywardness from the divine ideal. Women are not fit as spiritual leaders because it would violate the Creation order of male headship. Some advocating this position also see in Paul's words the idea that a woman's gentler and more emotional nature makes her more prone to deception (like Eve), whereas the more logical nature of a man provides males with the spiritual sophistication necessary for detecting falsehood and dealing with doctrinal matters in relation to the church.<sup>38</sup>

While it is undeniable that Paul has in mind the story of Eve's role in the Fall recorded in Gen 3, the complementarian/hierarchical perspective again reads far more into Paul's allusion than is actually stated in the text. Neither the Genesis account nor Paul identifies Adam or Eve's sin as a violation of male headship. In fact, the Genesis account explicitly identifies the sin of both Adam and Eve as eating the fruit God had forbidden (Gen 3:11). Nowhere does God identify Eve's sin as a rejection of male headship, at least not in the text. While later in the account God does rebuke Adam for listening "to the

voice of your wife" (Gen 3:17), the problem "was not in 'listening to' or 'obeying' his wife *per se*, but in 'obeying' his wife *rather than* or *in opposition to* God's explicit command not to eat of the fruit."<sup>39</sup> The authority that was violated in the Garden was not man's authority over woman, but God's authority over man and woman!

It is also important to note that God's solution to the problem of sin did not involve placing a "curse" upon the woman. A careful reading of the text reveals that God *only* pronounces a curse upon the serpent and the ground (Gen 3:14, 17). This is not to say that there were no consequences for Adam and Eve's sin, for there certainly were consequences that affected the entire human race. Consequences, however, are very different than saying God specifically placed a curse upon every female for the entire span of sinful human history.<sup>40</sup> This is not just a case of semantics. Viewing God's response to Adam and Eve as a curse paints a picture of a wrathful God intent on inflicting harm on the human race that is more akin to what we find in Ancient Near Eastern creation stories than that of the loving and gracious God found in the Hebrew Scriptures.

It is far more consistent with the themes of Scripture to understand God's divine judgment upon the man and the woman as involving consequences as well as promised blessings (Gen 3:16-19).<sup>41</sup> The consequences of sin introduced four temporary situations into human history that had not existed previously: (1) pain in childbirth (3:16); (2) toil in labor (3:17, 19); and, of course, (3) death (3:19). Yet in the midst of these three negative consequences, God's grace is also evident in a fourth consequence, one that was intended to be more positive in nature. God not only offers the promise of the defeat of death in His curse on the serpent (3:15), but also in



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the words that appear in the middle of God's judgment upon the woman and the man: "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. The "desire" and the "rule" introduced here point to "a divinely-ordained, intimate (sexual) yearning of wife for husband...[designed] to sustain the union that had been threatened in the ruptured relations resulting from sin," and in the "protection, care, and love" of a husband for his wife as illustrated in the blessing of God's "rule" (*mashal*) over His followers.<sup>42</sup> Thus, instead of a revealing a descriptive account of the conflict between the sexes, God introduced a remedial provision within the relationship between wives and husbands (not between all men and all women) that was meant to preserve the harmony of their union together (PP 58). This fourth provision is the temporary move from the non-hierarchy relationship of Adam and Eve before the Fall to that of the servant-leadership of husbands within the home as a result of sin after the Fall.<sup>43</sup> Yet even in this case, the goal within every home immersed in God's grace and looking forward to the restoration of all things should not be "domination" but the "restoration" of the full equality experienced between husband and wife before the onset of sin.

While Paul does appeal to the Fall as a reason or explanation of his restriction on women, the reason is not simply because they were teaching but because of the domineering manner in which it was done. The way in which they were acting also appears to be a result of the deceptive influence the false teachers had over these women in Ephesus (cf. 2 Tim 3:6-13). This connection is not only implied in the relationship between the two references to "deception" in verse 14 and the problem of false teachings emphasized throughout the letter but also in Paul's statement that some women in Ephesus had already succumbed

to deception and "strayed after Satan" (1 Tim 5:15). In light of the circumstances in Ephesus, Paul's reference to Eve would have served as a vivid warning to the women in Ephesus of the danger of listening to the false teachers and being influenced by them. The story of Eve's involvement with the Fall illustrated in the strongest of terms just how tragic the results could be for the church in Ephesus if these women continued to allow the false teachers to influence them.

Concerned about the influence of false teachers in Corinth, several years earlier Paul also appealed to the story of Eve's deception as a warning of the danger of being deceived and disobeying God. He wrote, "I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Cor 11:3). Viewed from this perspective, Paul's proscription in Ephesus was not aimed at barring all women from the right to exercise leadership roles in church but in addressing a specific problem that had arisen in Ephesus.

Paul finishes his allusion to Genesis in this section of his letter with terminology reminiscent of the hope of salvation connected to the bearing of children (Gen 3:15, 16). Although the serpent had deceived Eve and led her into sin, God had promised the birth of a descendant, who would one day defeat the serpent. In the pain that would accompany the birth of every child, there was also to be a reminder of the hope that lay in God's promise of a Deliverer. Rather than looking disparagingly at marriage and motherhood (cf. 1 Tim 4:3; 5:9, 10, 14), Paul reminds the women in Ephesus of the value of marriage and childbearing as God-given blessings.

### III. Qualifications for Selecting Church Leaders

At first glance Paul's discussion of the

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qualifications for overseers that begins chapter 3 appears to be the introduction to an entirely new discussion. Upon closer examination, however, the section is actually a continuation of Paul's preceding instructions to Timothy on how to respond to the false teachings that were crippling the spiritual life of the church in Ephesus.

After first instructing Timothy to counter the exclusive mentality of the false teaching by reminding the church of the universal scope of the gospel mission by having them pray for all people (1 Tim 2:1–7), Paul had then instructed Timothy to limit the influence of the false teachings by stopping the disruptive behavior those teachings had encouraged among men and women within the congregation (2:8–15). In this chapter Paul now turns his attention to the selection of qualified leaders, outlining the personal qualities necessary for overseers (3:1–7) and deacons (3:8–13), who will be able to guide the church through the difficult time they are facing. This section concludes with a statement of the theological convictions that stand at the basis of all of Paul's instructions: the church is the household of the living God, a "pillar and buttress of the truth." (3:14–16).

The selection of church leaders plays an important part in Paul's instructions to Timothy. The challenge the church faced with the false teachers made the selection of the right kind of leaders a matter of great import. The church needed individuals who would be able to provide the spiritual leadership necessary for not only protecting the church from falsehood, but who also would be able to help it move forward in spreading the gospel.

If local elders had been involved in the spreading of the false teachings, as seems apparent in the repeated attention given to the role of elders in the letter, and particularly in the contrast between those who are worthy of the position and those who are not (3:1–7; 5:17–22),<sup>44</sup> Paul's counsel here would have

taken on even greater significance for the church in Ephesus. The apostasy of individuals who had once been church leaders would have been a violation of the sacred trust the congregation had placed upon those to whom they looked for spiritual leadership and direction in living the life of faith. The controversy surrounding their departure would have weakened the faith of some and probably prompted others to surrender their faith entirely. The leadership vacuum their departure caused would have left the church in urgent need of new leaders to take their places. The fall-out could have also extended beyond the congregation itself, tarnishing the reputation of the church in the eyes of unbelievers, many who would have already been skeptical about the claims of the gospel.

To guide the church in the selection of the right sort of spiritual leaders, it is important to note that Paul did not focus on the duties or skills associated with the ministry of an overseer, but on the *character* that should define a spiritual leader. He first states that an overseer must be "above reproach" (3:2). What is involved in a life above reproach is spelled out in the eleven character traits that follow in vv. 2 and 3. A person without reproach is someone who is self-controlled, not greedy, gentle, not quarrelsome, and pure in their teaching, etc. (see Table 1). Only two duties are listed: the ability to teach (v. 3), and the ability to manage a household well (vv. 4 and 5). An overseer must also be well thought of by non-believers (v. 7), but not a recent convert (v. 6).

The emphasis Paul places on virtue—not gifts and abilities—indicates that *character is the most important criterion in the selection of spiritual leaders*. Too much rides on the ministry of an overseer to entrust it to individuals of questionable character. The similarity between the traits listed and the vices of the false teachers (see Table, following page) not only connects the selection of

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| <b>Qualifications of Overseers/Elders and Connections With the False Teachers</b> |                                                |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                   | <b>Overseers<br/>1 Timothy 3:1-7</b>           | <b>Elders/Overseers<br/>Titus 1:5-9</b>                  | <b>Connections With the<br/>False Teachers</b>                                                                                                    |
| 1.                                                                                | "above reproach"<br>ἀνεπίληπτος                |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                   |
| 2.                                                                                | "above reproach"<br>ἀνέγκλητος (v 6a)          | "one-woman man"<br>μίας γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ                    | Forbid marriage (1 Tim 4:3)<br>Sexually immoral (2 Tim 3:6)                                                                                       |
| 3.                                                                                | "sober-minded"<br>νηφάλιος                     | "disciplined"<br>ἐγκρατής (v 8f)                         |                                                                                                                                                   |
| 4.                                                                                | "self-controlled"<br>σώφρων                    | "self-controlled"<br>σώφρων (v 8c)                       | Uncontrolled (2 Tim 3:3)                                                                                                                          |
| 5.                                                                                | "respectable"<br>κόσμιος                       |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                   |
| 6.                                                                                | "hospitable"<br>φιλόξενος                      | "hospitable"<br>φιλόξενος (v. 8a)                        |                                                                                                                                                   |
| 7.                                                                                | "skillful in teaching"<br>διδασκτικός          | "give instruction"<br>παρακαλεῖν ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ (v. 9) | Teach different doctrine<br>(1 Tim 1:3)<br>Teachers of the law<br>(1 Tim 1:7)<br>Teachings of demons<br>(1 Tim 4:1)<br>False Teachers (2 Tim 4:3) |
| 8.                                                                                | "not a drunkard"<br>μὴ πάροικος                | "not a drunkard"<br>μὴ πάροικος (v. 7c)                  |                                                                                                                                                   |
| 9.                                                                                | "not violent"<br>μὴ πλήκτης                    | "not violent"<br>μὴ πλήκτης (v. 7d)                      |                                                                                                                                                   |
| 10.                                                                               | "gentle"<br>ἐπιεικής                           | "not arrogant"<br>μὴ αὐθάδης (v. 7a)                     |                                                                                                                                                   |
| 11.                                                                               | "not quarrelsome"<br>μὴ ἄμαχος                 | "not quick-tempered"<br>ὀργίλος (v. 7b)                  | Quarrelsome<br>(1 Tim 6:4; 2 Tim 2:23;<br>Titus 3:9)                                                                                              |
| 12.                                                                               | "not a lover of silver"<br>μὴ ἀφιλάργυρος      | "not greedy"<br>μὴ αἰσχροκερδῆς (v. 7e)                  | Desire to be rich<br>(1 Tim 6:5, 9, 10)<br>Teaching for gain (Titus 1:11)<br>Lovers of silver (2 Tim 3:2)                                         |
| 13.                                                                               | "managing household... children<br>submissive" | "children are believers... not rebel-<br>lious" (v. 6c)  | Disobedient to parents<br>(2 Tim 3:2) Rebellious (Titus 1:10)                                                                                     |
| 14.                                                                               | "not a recent convert"<br>μὴ νεόφυτος          |                                                          | Do not be hasty in laying on<br>of hands (1 Tim 5:22)                                                                                             |
| 15.                                                                               | "outsiders think well of"                      |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                   |
| 16.                                                                               |                                                | "lover of good"<br>φιλάγαθος (v. 8b)                     | Do not love good (2 Tim 3:3)<br>Lovers of pleasure (2 Tim 3:4)                                                                                    |
| 17.                                                                               |                                                | "just"<br>δίκαιος (v. 8d)                                |                                                                                                                                                   |
| 18.                                                                               |                                                | "holy"<br>ὁσιος (v. 8e)                                  | "unholy" (2 Tim 3:2)<br>"ungodly" (2 Tim 2:16)                                                                                                    |

elders with the discussion of the false teachers, but also suggests the current problems in Ephesus had arisen to some extent out of a disregard of character in the appointing of overseers in the past.

### IV. Gender and the Ministry of an Overseer

While character is the primary criterion that should guide the church in the selection of overseers, what role, if any, should gender play in that process? Those opposing the ordination of women claim that gender does matter—an “elder/overseer must be of the male gender.”<sup>45</sup> It is claimed that Paul’s “list of qualifications is so detailed that the inclusion of gender-specific details excludes alternative qualifications.”<sup>46</sup> The gender-specific details they believe exclude women from serving as overseers boil down to three specific conclusions: (1) The indefinite pronoun *tis* in 3:1 is masculine, indicating that only “men” should aspire to the work of an overseer; (2) the phrase *husband of one wife* refers exclusively to men; and (3) the requirement of managing one’s household is “unmistakably talking to men.”<sup>47</sup> As the following study will seek to demonstrate, the examination of each of these points fails to prove in a convincing manner that Paul sought to limit the ministry of an overseer to only the male gender.

#### A. Objection 1: Aspiring to the Ministry of an Overseer (1 Tim 3:1)

“If anyone [*tis*] aspires to the office of overseer, [he] desires a noble task.” (ESV).

Paul begins his discussion of the qualifications of overseers by affirming the ministry of an overseer. As Fee notes, the use of the conditional sentence in Greek with a generalizing indefinite pronoun (“if anyone”) indicates that Paul’s emphasis is “less on the person than

on the position.”<sup>48</sup> In other words, Paul is not trying to introduce gender into the discussion but simply commending the ministry of an overseer as a work worthy of aspiration. This is also evident in the main clause, where Paul not only designates the position as a “noble task,” but in how he emphasizes its importance in Greek by fronting the noun phrase a *noble task* before the verb *desires* (*kalou ergou epithumei*). The importance Paul places upon the ministry of an overseer before even discussing the qualifications for the position implies that not all of the believers in Ephesus were convinced the position was desirable. These sorts of feeling may have emerged from either a negative stigma associated with the ministry of an overseer due to the influence of the false teachers, a reluctance to deal with the difficult task of confronting the false teachers, or simply because other forms of ministry were more attractive.<sup>49</sup> Whatever the case, the ministry of an overseer had clearly fallen into such disrepute that Paul had to reaffirm its positive contribution to the life of the church and the honor associated with it.

It was argued at the 2013 TOSC meeting that the “anyone” in Paul’s initial comments about aspiring to the ministry of an overseer refers exclusively to men and thereby excludes women from consideration.

“The pronoun *τις tis* (“a certain one”) carries a masculine parsing . . . although grammatically the form could be feminine. While other phrases might be taken generically . . . the gender-specific oscillation between men and women in 1 Tim 2:8–15 mandates an exclusively masculine reading. . . . In the specific employment of a sentence, this indefinite pronoun takes on one gender only [i.e., masculine].”<sup>50</sup>

This statement claims far too much. By definition, the indefinite pronoun is used in

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Greek to refer to one or more unspecified beings, objects, or places. When in reference to humans in the New Testament, it refers almost exclusively to both males and females without distinction.<sup>51</sup> The fact that the pronoun is masculine in gender in 1 Tim. 3:1 also proves little, since the *masculine gender was the default gender when speaking collectively of both men and women*. The only valid reason to limit the indefinite pronoun to a specific gender is if the context clearly indicates that such an interpretation is warranted. For at least two reasons, the claim that the “gender-specific oscillation between men and women in 1 Tim 2:8–15” not only suggests but even “mandates an exclusively masculine reading” cannot be substantiated.

In an attempt to render the indefinite pronoun in 1 Tim 3:1 as exclusively masculine in reference, it is claimed that the context of the passage moves from masculine (2:8) to feminine (2:9–15) and then back to masculine (3:1–8). While Paul certainly discusses men and women in 1 Tim 2:1–3:16, it does not move on a foundational level from male to female to male but from problem to solution within the context of the church at worship and the selection of its leaders. If Paul had intended an exclusive masculine reading of the indefinite pronoun, then one would assume that the parallel use of the indefinite pronoun *ei tis* (“if anyone”) in Titus 1:6 would also contain some sort of limiting contextual reference associated with gender. But it does not. There is no movement in the nearly identical passage in Titus that moves from women to men, leading up to the discussion of the qualification of elders. The assumption would be that when Paul says “anyone,” he actually means what he says.

A second problem with claiming that the indefinite pronoun in 1 Tim 3:1 requires a masculine reading is that the passage does not conform to Paul’s standard way of limiting the indefinite pronoun to a particular gender.

When Paul wants to specify the gender of an indefinite pronoun, he does so by the inclusion of gender-specific nouns or pronouns alongside the indefinite pronoun. For example, in 1 Tim 5:4 Paul restricts the use of *ei tis* (“if anyone”) only to women by the inclusion of the feminine noun for widow: “But if any widow (*ei de tis chēra*). He does the same in 1 Tim 5:16 by the inclusion of the feminine adjective for believing (“if any believing woman”). This is Paul’s standard practice, not only in 1 Timothy but also in his other writings (cf. 1 Cor 7:12, 13, 36).<sup>52</sup> If Paul had only men in mind, one would certainly have expected him to include a specific masculine noun or pronoun in direct connection to the indefinite pronoun, but he does not. In fact, there is not even one masculine pronoun in the entire passage in Greek.<sup>53</sup>

Additional evidence that Paul does not have a specific gender in mind in 1 Tim 3:1 or 5, can be seen in the ten other uses of the indefinite pronoun in 1 Timothy that are not accompanied by a gender-identifying noun or pronoun. In each of these ten cases, the indefinite pronouns simply function as a generic reference to humans (1:3, 6, 8, 19; 4:1; 5:8, 24; 6:3, 10, 21). This would lead one to conclude that the corresponding use of the indefinite pronoun in 1 Tim 3:1 would also not refer to a particular gender.

The argument that the indefinite pronoun “mandates an exclusively masculine reading” claims a stronger degree of gender exclusivity than can be substantiated with the use of the indefinite pronoun in 1 Tim 3:1, and in the process it ends up distorting Paul’s emphasis on a general commendation of the value of the ministry of an overseer by reading into the text a specific emphasis on the issue of gender.

### ***B. Objection 2: A One-Woman Man (1 Tim 3:2)***

“Therefore an overseer must be . . . the husband of one wife.” (ESV)

The primary argument of those opposed to the ordination of women is the belief that the second criterion of Paul's list for overseers applies only to men: "An overseer must be...the husband of one wife" [literally, "a one-woman man"]. Regardless of what Paul means by a "one-woman man," the use of the word *man* (*anēr*) is seen as exclusive terminology that clearly prohibits women from serving as "overseers."<sup>54</sup> For this reason, it was claimed at the 2013 TOSC meeting, "The text does not offer the flexibility of reading this phrase generically, 'the spouse of one spouse.'"<sup>55</sup> Another paper argued similarly: "The fact is that the Greek is gender specific. Even those who literally translate 'one woman man' must admit that according to the text itself the elder/overseer must be of the male gender because the text does not read 'a one man woman.'"<sup>56</sup> Incredulous that this criterion could be interpreted in any other manner, the paper rhetorically states: "After all, is it so difficult to understand the phrase 'husband of one wife'?"<sup>57</sup>

As it turns out, the ambiguity of the phrase "a one-woman man" has actually been more difficult to understand than was recognized. Attempts to define specifically what Paul had in mind with this criterion have led to a long and contentious debate. Part of the problem is that the phrase is extremely unusual. While it occurs three times in Paul's writings (1 Tim 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6), it appears nowhere else in extant Greek literature. The ambiguity of the phrase has led to five primary interpretations: (1) An overseer must be married; (2) an overseer must not practice polygamy; (3) an overseer must never divorce, or remarry after the death of a spouse; (4) an overseer must practice marital faithfulness; and finally, (5) an overseer must be male. As logical as some of these interpretations may appear, they all are not equally valid interpretations.

### 1. An Overseer Must be Married.

According to this interpretation, Paul is emphasizing the importance of marriage for church leaders. It is beyond argument that marriage provides life experiences that can support, strengthen, and enhance the ability to minister effectively in a congregation. To a certain extent, this interpretation also makes sense, since Paul's opponents appear to have taken a rather disparaging view of marriage (cf. 4:3; 5:14). But while Paul speaks strongly in favor of marriage as a divine institution (1 Cor 7:1-16; Eph 5:22, 33; Col 3:18, 19), it is hard to imagine that his main point was to require that church leaders be married. Why would Paul require something that was a traditional expectation of men at the time and also the reality for the vast majority of men? Since at the time most everyone was married at an early age, it would have made little sense to require marriage as one of the criteria for ministry. It would be virtually meaningless.

In addition, if being single really disqualified an individual from serving as a church leader, Paul (and likely Timothy too) would have been disqualified, since Paul certainly appears to have been single at least during the last two decades of his life (1 Cor 7:7, 8; 9:5).<sup>58</sup> For these reasons, the emphasis behind Paul's counsel must surely lie elsewhere.

**2. An Overseer Must Not Practice Polygamy.** The belief that Paul's primary intent was to prohibit polygamy also fails to offer an entirely satisfying interpretation. While being the "husband of one wife" certainly excludes polygamists from the ranks of church leaders, Paul most likely had a more precise prohibition in mind. This seems to be the case for two reasons. First, although there are traces of polygamy among Greek myths, monogamy was the regular practice in the Greco-Roman world of Paul's day.<sup>59</sup> While men had considerable sexual freedom, they were not married to more than one woman at a time. Within

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Palestinian Judaism in NT times, polygamy was practiced in an extremely limited sense among aristocratic leaders and most notably, Herod the Great.<sup>60</sup> The practice was in serious decline, however, and was eventually outlawed in a growing body of legislation.<sup>61</sup> As Lea and Griffin note, "Such a practice would be so palpably unacceptable among Christians that it would hardly seem necessary to prohibit it."<sup>62</sup> This suggests that unless Paul envisioned something beyond polygamy, his counsel would have been largely superfluous. Moreover, to be consistent, Paul's similar terminology in 1 Tim 5:9 requiring a widow to be a "one-man woman" would have to imply also the practice of polyandry among some women in Ephesus—an implausible conclusion since polyandry was a custom entirely foreign to the Greco-Roman world.

**3. An Overseer Must Never Divorce/Remarry.** Some claim that Paul's counsel requires that church leaders never divorce, or as some argue, never even remarry after the death of a spouse. Compared to the previous explanations, this interpretation has more evidence in its favor. Divorce was an all-too-common problem in the ancient world, both among Jews and Gentiles (cf. Matt 5:31, 32; 19:8, 9). The New Testament makes it clear that the early church was not exempt from having to deal with this societal problem. Jesus clearly spoke out against the practice of divorce, except on the grounds of marital infidelity. Paul echoed those same sentiments in his counsel to the Corinthians (1 Cor 7:10, 39). And for those who could endure it, Paul even encouraged a life of celibacy after the death of a spouse for the sake of full-time ministry (1 Cor 7:7-9). Recognizing the difficulties associated with divorce among church leaders and some of the statements made by Jesus and Paul, this interpretation was commonly advocated by early Christians after the death of the apostles.<sup>63</sup>

The problem with this viewpoint is, however, that it often fails to apply the entire testimony of Jesus and Paul on the issue of divorce and remarriage. While divorce is spoken against strongly, Jesus and Paul do allow for remarriage in certain circumstances (cf. Matt 5:31, 32; 1 Cor 7:15). And while Paul does speak of the benefits of a life of celibacy, he also allows—and in some contexts, even encourages—individuals to remarry after the death of a spouse (cf. 1 Cor 7:8, 9; 1 Tim 5:14). Although it is not impossible that elders were to be held to a higher standard, it still seems unlikely that these concessions would have been denied to church leaders. Thus this interpretation also appears to fall short of identifying Paul's primary intent.

**4. An Overseer Must Practice Marital Faithfulness.** Another interpretation argues that Paul's statement requires that an overseer live a life marked by unquestionable sexual purity. Since the vast majority of people were married at the time, sexual purity would be expressed in the terms of a monogamous relationship, though in a general sense it certainly could apply to single individuals. This view would not prohibit a church leader from remarrying after the death of a spouse, or even after divorce (depending on the circumstances, of course). It would, however, prohibit all forms of sexual promiscuity, such as same-sex relationships (cf. Rom 1:26, 27; 1 Cor 6:9, 10). The similar phrase in 1 Tim 5:9 requiring a widow to have been a "one-man woman" would seem to corroborate the idea that marital faithfulness is likely in mind. Requiring marital fidelity of church leaders not only affirms the institution of marriage (as opposed to the view of Paul's opponents), but it also affirms the importance of sexual purity as a prerequisite for those responsible for leading out in the life of the church. Highlighting the importance of sexual purity among church

leaders was not a needless concern. Promiscuity was the norm in the ancient world, and as Paul's letters indicate, it was a far-too-common problem among Gentile converts (e.g., 1 Cor 5:1, 2; 6:15–18; 1 Thess 4:3–5). In light of the problem of promiscuity among Gentile believers, it certainly would be strange for Paul to have excluded *any* reference to sexual purity among the criteria for selecting overseers. Of all the views so far, this interpretation is the strongest.

**5. An Overseer Must Be Male.** Although those opposing the ordination of women are willing to concede that the phrase a "one-woman man" likely requires that overseers be monogamous, they still maintain that the "text clearly states that they [overseers] must be monogamous *men*."<sup>64</sup> This gender-exclusive reading of the passage is, however, highly problematic. As already demonstrated, the exact meaning of the phrase a *one-woman man* is anything but clear. Since it is difficult to substantiate that Paul's primary intent was to require that overseers be married, we need to be cautious in assuming on the basis of an overly literalistic reading that his intent was to require that overseers be exclusively men.<sup>65</sup> After all, if Paul had wanted to limit the work of an overseer to men, he could have said it directly: "An overseer must be above reproach, a *man*, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach." Yet Paul did not. Instead, he chose the far more ambiguous expression, a *one-woman man*.

If this phrase should not be understood in a gender-exclusive manner, how should it be understood? The unusual nature of this expression and the difficulties associated with translating it literally suggest that it is probably better understood as an idiom—an expression where the words together have a meaning that is different from the individual words themselves. As anyone who

has studied a foreign language knows, idioms are notoriously difficult to understand. The problem is that "when we use an idiom we say one thing, but we mean another."<sup>66</sup> Although the individual words are easily understood, the actual meaning of the expression is more obscure. The Bible is full of these sorts of expressions. Notable examples from Paul's letters include phrases like, "heap burning coals on his head" (Rom 12:20); "a door was opened" (2 Cor 2:12); and "a thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor 12:7). In each of these statements, a literal reading makes little sense, though the words themselves are clear. The expression as a whole—not the individual words—vividly portrays a particular point Paul was trying to emphasize. In these examples, the point Paul was trying to convey appears to have been a sense of remorse leading to repentance (Rom 12:20), a significant opportunity (2 Cor 2:12), and a particular annoyance (2 Cor 12:7).

What particular aspect then was Paul seeking to portray more vividly with the expression a *one-woman man*? The key to understanding the particular emphasis Paul is seeking to convey is found in the way he orders the words in Greek. As already noted in our discussion of 1 Tim 3:1, an author can place special emphasis on a word within a sentence in Greek by a practice called "fronting"—placing a word in a prominent place earlier in a sentence, rather than at its customary place. In the expression a *one-woman man*, the emphasis is not on "men," but on the word *one*. If Paul had wanted to emphasize that the overseer be a man, he could have placed that word first—"a man of one woman." As Mueller notes, the fact that Paul does not do that "clearly excludes a position claiming that Paul focused on the maleness of the bishop/elder."<sup>67</sup> To claim that Paul's focus was on the maleness of an overseer would be tantamount to claiming that in the similar phrase in 5:9 ("one-man woman")



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Paul was emphasizing the femaleness of widows! That would be absurd. The expression focuses rather on the “oneness” of the candidate, that is, the issue of sexual purity—again understood in Paul’s day in the context of a monogamous relationship.

### *C. Deacons and Women (1 Tim 3:8–13)*

Although the emphasis of the expression a *one-woman man* is on sexual purity rather than gender, the question remains whether it still precludes women from consideration. Paul’s use of this same phrase in his discussion of deacons in 1 Tim 3:8–13 strongly suggests the answer is no.

Having set forth the qualifications for overseers in 1 Tim 3:1–7, Paul next turns his attention to a second group of church leaders—deacons. The section follows the same basic pattern of the preceding one by listing a similar set of qualifications for deacons that focus on character. What is interesting is that sandwiched between references to deacons in 3:8–10 and 3:12, 13 is a reference to women in verse 11. What relation do women have to the discussion of deacons? There are two primary interpretations.

**1. Woman As Wives.** Some claim that the women Paul has in mind are the wives of the deacons, who would supposedly need to be evaluated along with their husbands. Since the Greek term *gynē* can refer to either a “woman” or a “wife” it is thought that a reference to the “wives” of the deacons would fit logically with the description of marriage and children of deacons in the following verse (3:12).

While identifying the women as wives makes some sense in relation to the individual terms, it makes little sense within the larger context. If the behavior of the wives of deacons was so important to warrant discussion, why is there no corresponding discussion of the wives of overseers in the previous section

(3:1–7)? It seems clear Paul was not advocating celibacy. Moreover, if the wives of the deacons had to meet certain standards, why is nothing said about the qualifications for the wife of an overseer? Since the reputation of overseers had significant implications for the way the church was perceived within the local community, it would certainly have been important to also insure that their wives were godly women. Also, if “wives” were really in mind, Paul would have indicated this by the addition of a possessive pronoun or a definite article, as he does elsewhere (cf. 1 Cor 7:2, 3; Eph 5:22; Col 3:18).<sup>68</sup> The absence of such critical elements indicates Paul likely had something other than the wives of deacons in mind in verse 11.

**2. Women As Deacons.** A more likely interpretation is that the “women” mentioned in v. 11 are a reference to female deacons. This is not only implied in the structural context of the passage but it is evident in the terminology that connects the ministry of a deacon in v. 8 with the women in v. 11. The adverb *likewise* that introduces the discussion of deacons in v. 8 with the preceding discussion of overseers indicates a parallel relationship between the two. That parallel connection is the set of qualifications necessary for each ministry.<sup>69</sup> While there are requirements for the ministry of an overseer, there are “likewise” qualifications for the ministry of a deacon. The fact that the word *likewise* also begins the discussion of women in v. 11 indicates that what follows is another set of qualifications for a ministry function within the church—in this case qualifications for a group of female deacons. As Payne points out, if Paul merely had wives in mind “the verse would not be similar either in identifying a church office or in listing qualifications for those office holders themselves.”<sup>70</sup> Moreover, the entire passage deals with qualifications for church ministries, not with qualifications for wives.

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An additional indication that female deacons are likely in mind is the qualifications Paul sets forth for them. As the Table on the next page indicates, the first four qualifications listed of the women in v. 11 parallel those listed of deacons in v. 8. If Paul simply had the wives of the deacons in mind, why would he require women who held no official position within the church to meet the same requirements and even in the exact same order as those of deacons in v. 8? If these requirements were given with the assumption that these women were wives who would join their husbands in the task of ministry, then these women would in effect be deacons nonetheless!

If Paul intended for these women to be understood as female deacons, why did he not simply address them as deaconesses in the first place? If the word had existed at the time, he certainly would have. But the first recorded reference to a feminine form of the word *deacon* (*diakonos*) does not appear until nearly 300 years later with a reference to “deaconesses” (*diakonissa*) in connection to the Council of Nicea in 325. With no such word available to him, Paul’s reference to women (*gynē*) in the middle of his discussion of deacons would have signaled he envisioned the *work of a deacon was broad enough to include a role for both males and females.*

Paul’s reference to the woman Phoebe in Rom 16:1 as a deacon provides an example that in actual practice women did serve in an official capacity as deacons within the early church. “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a *diakonos* (deacon/servant) of the church at Cenchreae.” If Paul had merely intended to affirm Phoebe’s helpful service to the church, he would have expressed it either by the use of the verb “*diakoneo*” (Rom 15:25), or with the actual word for service “*diakonia*” (1 Cor 16:15). Instead, he uses terminology in Greek that makes it “virtually certain”<sup>71</sup> that Phoebe

served as a deacon in the church of Cenchreae. Paul describes her as “being a deacon of the church at Cenchreae” (*ousan diakonon tēs ekklēsiās en kenchreais*). It is the use of the participle form of the Greek verb *to be* that indicates the focus is not on the service she performed, but on the “recognized ministry” or “position of responsibility” she held “within the congregation.”<sup>72</sup>

While Phoebe holds the distinction of being “the first recorded deacon in the history of Christianity,”<sup>73</sup> she certainly was not the last. Although the nature of their ministry varied from place to place, women continued to serve as deacons throughout the earliest centuries of the Christian church. The earliest evidence of their ministry outside the New Testament is probably in the writings of Pliny the Younger. In a letter written to the emperor Trajan in 112, Pliny reports having tortured two Christian slaves “who were being called Deaconesses [*ministrae*].”<sup>74</sup> Over the course of the second and third centuries, references to female deacons appear in the writings of Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 150–220), Origen (A.D. 185–254), and in a work entitled the *Didascalia Apostolorum*. The account in Origen is particularly significant, since in commenting on Rom 16:1, 2, he explicitly connects the ministry of Phoebe as a female deacon with the women in 1 Tim 3:11. During the fourth century, deaconesses are mentioned during the proceedings of the Council of Nicea and in a writing known as the *Apostolic Constitutions*, as well as in all the prominent Greek Fathers in the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>75</sup>

What is significant in connection to the ministry of Phoebe and other female deacons during the earliest centuries of Christianity is that the requirement that a deacon be a “one-woman man” *was not seen as an obstacle to the ministry of female deacons.* Although

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| Qualifications of Deacons and "Women" in 1 Timothy 3:8–13 |                                                                        |                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
|                                                           | Deacons<br>1 Timothy 3:8–10, 12, 13                                    | The "Women"<br>1 Timothy 3:11               |
| 1.                                                        | "worthy of respect"<br>σεμνός (v. 8)                                   | "worthy of respect"<br>σεμνός               |
| 2.                                                        | "not double-tongued"<br>μὴ δίλογος (v. 8)                              | "not slanders"<br>διάβολος                  |
| 3.                                                        | "not addicted to much wine"<br>μὴ οἴνω πολλῷ προσέχοντας (v. 8)        | "sober-minded"<br>νηφάλιος                  |
| 4.                                                        | "not fond of dishonest gain"<br>μὴ αἰσχροκερδής (v. 8)                 | "faithful in all things"<br>πιστὰς ἐν πᾶσιν |
| 5.                                                        | "holding fast to the faith"<br>ἔχοντας τὸ μυστήριον τῆς πίστεως (v. 9) |                                             |
| 6.                                                        | "being blameless"<br>ἀνεγκλητοὶ ὄντες (v. 10)                          |                                             |
| 7.                                                        | "one-woman man"<br>μῆς γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ (v. 12)                           |                                             |
| 8.                                                        | "managing their children and<br>household well" (v. 12)                |                                             |

the phrase may suggest that Paul primarily had male deacons in mind, as Mounce notes, it certainly "does not require all deacons to be men."<sup>76</sup> Even the staunch complementarian Douglass Moo acknowledges that it "would be going too far to argue that the phrase clearly excludes women."<sup>77</sup> Thus in actual practice the expression a *one-woman man* served more as a reference to sexual purity than it did to gender. Since this exact same expression serves as a qualification for elders, its use here indicates that it should not be seen as a prohibition barring women from serving as overseers. So although the expression itself may be gender specific, it certainly is not gender exclusive.

### D. Objection 3: Managing a Household (1 Tim 3:4, 5)

"He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone [*tis*] does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?" (ESV).

The final objection raised against the ordination of women is the belief that women are disqualified from leading/managing a church because they are unable to meet the criterion of providing leadership within a household. An overly literalistic approach to this passage led advocates against women's ordination to maintain at the 2013 TOSC meeting that the requirement of managing a household is not only gender-specific of men, but that it also requires an overseer be married with children. "The Lord, as Head of His church (Eph 5:30), is interested in having His church under husbands and fathers who have a proven record of successful leadership in their homes."<sup>78</sup> Adopting this same line of reasoning, another TOSC paper claimed, "Strictly speaking, a male without family would thus not qualify for eldership."<sup>79</sup>

While it is certainly true that in Greco-Roman society the father of the family, the *paterfamilias*, held ultimate authority over the affairs of the household (at least in name), it does not mean that women/wives played

absolutely no leadership role in the family themselves. In actual practice, outside of the father's role in conception, the duty of rearing a family largely rested upon the wife, who was also responsible for managing all the daily affairs of the household (cf. Prov 31:10–31). Societal changes in the ancient world provided women in Paul's day with "extensive authority and management"<sup>80</sup> opportunities in both the home as well as in the public forum.<sup>81</sup> Women could own their own property, run businesses, hold public offices, direct the activities of household slaves, as well as providing for the needs of their children.<sup>82</sup>

To claim that women could not serve as elders or deacons due to this criterion makes little sense (1) in light of the day-to-day realities of the life of women in Paul's day, (2) the fact that managing one's household was not seen as an obstacle for the ministry of female deacons in earliest Christianity, and even more significantly (3) due to the fact that the apostle Paul actually instructs women/wives to "manage their households" in 1 Tim 5:14. The verb that translates the entire phrase "manage their household" is *oikodespoteō*, meaning "to be master of the house" or "to rule the household."<sup>83</sup> Although used only here in the New Testament, it is the cognate form of the more common noun *oikodespotēs*, which means "master of the house" (cf. Matt 21:33; 24:43; Luke 12:39; 13:25; 14:21). Although this responsibility is applied to a woman/wife in relation to her domestic duties, Towner notes "there is no reason to lessen significantly the sense of authority involved in the role."<sup>84</sup>

Not only does a gender-exclusive reading of this passage ultimately fail to provide a convincing argument against allowing women to serve as overseers and deacons, but taken to its logical conclusion, it also disqualifies both single men and married men without at least two believing children from serving as

overseers or deacons. And according to the parallel passage in Titus, an elder's children would also have to be believers (Titus 1:6). This is unlikely to have been Paul's intent, since his comments in 1 Cor 7:7 imply that at least at this stage of his life he was single, and for the reason that he also encourages some individuals to remain single in order to serve the Lord more fully in ministry, including individuals never married (1 Cor 7:27, 28, 32–35).<sup>85</sup>

Although some of those advocating against the ordination of women apparently failed to recognize the difficulties associated with a gender-exclusive reading of this particular criterion, others attempted to qualify the requirement that overseers and deacons must be fathers, though in a less than convincing fashion. Backtracking on the statement in the original TOSC presentation that elders had to have children, the published version of the paper argued that the participle in the phrase "having [*echonta*] children in subjection with all respect" should be understood as a conditional participle, meaning "if an elder has children."<sup>86</sup> While the phrase "if an elder has children" may sound entirely plausible at first, it actually makes little sense. If this reasoning were followed, the passage would read, "He must manage his own household well, if an elder has children in submission with all reverence." No modern translation of the Bible translates the passage in that manner. The participial clause is best left as a participle of attendant circumstance describing the way in which an individual is seen to be a good household manager—that is, in the way the children in the home are treated and how they act in turn.

Instead of trying to find a way to read the passage in an overly literalistic manner that also avoids the conclusion that overseers must be fathers, it is far easier to realize that Paul's primary point is not that an overseer has

children. His point is that an overseer must be the kind of person who knows how to manage a household well. In the Greco-Roman world of Paul's day, marriage—and the children that followed—was the common experience for the vast majority of men and women. Rather than making a criterion out of a societal reality, Paul was using a societal reality as a way of evaluating an individual's ability to manage a household well. It was a criterion that could be applied to both men and women. How can you tell if a person will be a good leader? Consider that individual's familial relationships. How do they treat their children, and how do their children (whether minors or adults)<sup>87</sup> treat them in return? In those situations where an individual has children, this criterion can still be applied. Rather than disqualifying someone from serving as an overseer, the lack of a spouse or children would simply require that that individual's ability to manage would have to be evaluated in a different manner, perhaps in their relationship with others, whether at work or with other family members.

As we have seen in the previous arguments against the ordination of women, the objection that women or single individuals cannot serve as overseers cannot be substantiated. This sort of overly literalistic approach to the text ends up focusing the primary criteria for overseers and deacons on issues of gender rather than the type of character traits that are clearly Paul's primary concern.

### V. Paul's Prohibition and the False Teachings

Rather than basing Paul's exclusion of women from all teaching and leadership roles within the church on the basis of a permanent subordination of all women to all men that cannot be proven from either the account of Creation or the Fall, it is better to view Paul's instructions as a response to the immediate

context of his letter to Timothy itself—the inroads the false teachings were making in Ephesus, and particularly among women (cf. 5:15; 2 Tim 3:6, 7).

The extent to which the false teachings were negatively influencing believing women in Ephesus can be seen in the prominent attention Paul gives to women in the course of his dealings with the false teachings. He is concerned about the behavior of women in worship (2:10–15), their behavior as widows (5:5, 6, 10, 11, 14), and the fact that they have been going from house to house (likely a reference to the house churches in Ephesus), saying things they should not (5:14). That Paul's concern involved much more than merely the spreading of gossip is evident in his identification of the behavior of these women as straying “after Satan” (5:15). The fact that these women were “sayings things they should not” also points to a connection with the “certain persons” Timothy was charged to keep from teaching a “different doctrine” (1:3), and with the women prohibited from engaging in a teaching ministry within the church (2:12). The influence of the false teachings on these women can also be seen in the fact that their behavior mirrors the heretical ideas being taught. Their desire not to marry and bear children (5:11–16), for example, coincides with the false teachers' advocacy of celibacy (4:1–3; 5:9, 10).

What was it about the false teachings that attracted a following among a number of the believing women in Ephesus? On the basis of the details that can be gleaned from Paul's comments, it seems highly probable that some women were attracted to ideas that devalued the traditional role of marriage and motherhood and encouraged ideas of female superiority and dominance (2:12, 13). Although Paul does not state this explicitly, it seems highly probably for the following reasons:

First, the disdain with which the false teachers

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viewed the institution of marriage (2:3) certainly would not have encouraged a favorable view of the traditional role of women as wives and mothers. With this sort of mentality being advocated, it is no wonder that Paul had to encourage young widows to remarry, manage their households, and to speak positively about bearing children (cf. 5:14; 2:15).

Second, the problems in Ephesus appear to mirror some of problems that had plagued the believers in Corinth, although the details in both situations are somewhat different. The problem in both churches was rooted in the rejection of a future physical resurrection in favor of a spiritual resurrection in the present (cf. 1:20; 6:20, 21; 2 Tim 2:16–18; 1 Cor 7:1–7, 25–38; 15:12, 35). The arrival of the promised age to come led to distorted views of sex and marriage (cf. 4:1–3; 5:14; 2:15; 1 Cor 7:1–16), and a tendency among women to disregard traditional aspects associated with dress (cf. 2:4; 1 Cor 11:5–16).<sup>88</sup>

The belief that the age of the Spirit had already arrived in all of its fullness would certainly explain why some women in Ephesus would have felt free to set aside their traditional roles as wives and mothers to adopt a more “spiritual lifestyle” that included ascetic ideas involving singleness, celibacy, and that also led to behavior that would have been seen as domineering and suggestive of a belief in the superiority of the female gender (cf. 4:3; 2:15; 5:14).

These sorts of ideas would certainly have been given even more currency in the minds of some in light of the prominent role women played in the worship of Artemis as the mother-goddess in Ephesus, as well as the social trends in the Roman Empire that had opened the door for women to play greater roles in the public sphere.<sup>89</sup> It may even be the case that these ideas drew upon “an unbalanced emphasis on Paul’s own teachings that Christians

were ‘raised with Christ’... and that in Christ there is neither ‘male nor female’” (cf. Eph 2:6; Col 2:12; 3:1; Gal 3:28).<sup>90</sup>

Such radical theological views would not only have brought these women in conflict with their husbands, not to mention men in general, but they would have also risked damaging the reputation of the church within the larger community—the very people the church was called to reach with the gospel. These ideas were also diametrically opposed to the testimony of Scripture as proclaimed in Paul’s gospel message that rooted salvation in the definitive work of Christ (Rom 3:21–31), and the belief that males and females were equal in Christ (Gal 3:28).

The fact that a number of women in the church in Ephesus were misled by these false teachings should really come as no surprise. Women were often the targets of charlatans, especially wealthy widows. This was because women were seen as easily fooled.<sup>91</sup> It is not that women were by nature less intelligent than men or that they lacked the capability to think rationally. It was simply that in Paul’s time most women received only a rudimentary formal education. They had little time for further formal education, since they would have started preparing for marriage and motherhood by the time they reached the age of 10 or 11.<sup>92</sup> Undereducated and often disempowered, women were placed in a position that made them especially vulnerable to charlatans who were, as Johnson describes, “unscrupulous manipulators of desperate human need.”<sup>93</sup>

The vulnerability of these sorts of women to false teachings would have been even more magnified among those who were Gentile converts to Christianity. As even a cursory reading of Paul’s letters testify, Gentile converts often struggled to understand the most basic tenets of their newly found faith (1 Thess 1:9, 10;

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4:13–18; 2 Thess 2:1–3; Gal 1:6; 3:1–5; 1 Cor 15:12, 13, 29). With little practical experience in Christianity and only the most minimal background in the Old Testament Scriptures, Gentile believers were always susceptible to being led astray by false teachings (1 Cor 11:3, 4). Faced with these sorts of challenges, it is no wonder that Paul spoke of the importance of providing women in his churches with proper instruction in the fundamentals of the faith (cf. 1 Cor 14:34, 35; 2 Tim 2:11).

The likelihood of the influence of the false teachers upon believing women in Ephesus would certainly explain why Paul felt compelled to issue an injunction barring those same women from exercising a teaching ministry within the church. Under the influence of the false teachers, these women were teaching in a manner that was seen as domineering over the men in the congregation. *They were not fit to teach because they were women, but because they had been deceived by the false teachers*, just as Eve had been deceived by the alluring words of the serpent. Under these circumstances, these women were in no position to continue as teachers; they first needed to become learners (2:11).

Understanding Paul's prohibition against women in Ephesus as being a temporary and local response to a unique situation eliminates the otherwise apparent contradiction between his instructions in 1 Timothy and the affirming manner in which women are portrayed in his ministry in Acts and his letters as equal colleagues in the task of proclaiming and teaching the gospel (cf. Acts 18:26; Phil 4:2, 3; Rom 16:3, 6, 12; 1 Cor 11:5; Titus 2:3, 4). The recent involvement of the women in Ephesus with the false teachers also explains why Paul would not have overtly included a reference to women in his discussion of the qualifications for the selection of an overseer, as he does in his discussions of deacons.

Due to the domineering manner that had become associated with the teaching of women in Ephesus, the believing women in Ephesus were not ready at that time to serve as overseers. They needed to be free from the influence of the false teachers. They had to be trained more fully in the true gospel before they could begin teaching again. The fact that none of the requirements actually prohibited a woman from serving as an overseer, however, would have left the door open for women in Ephesus to have served in that capacity in the future, without actively having encouraged it in the present.

### VI. Conclusion

Our decision on the best way to understand Paul's counsel in 1 Timothy is not inconsequential. As followers of the God of Scripture, we are called to apply His Word to the way in which we order our lives, and not only our private lives as individuals, but also the life of the church as well. While differences of opinions on some issues have little to no real significant difference on how we actually order the life of the church, the way in which we interpret Paul's prohibition against women is not one of them—at least not if we take his counsel seriously. Thus, our decision on this issue will lead us in one of two very different directions.

If Paul's counsel in 1 Timothy regarding women is viewed as a temporary and local response to the false teachings confronting the believers in Ephesus, then by application the passage has a universal and timeless application to *similar situations* within the church today where falsehood threatens to undermine the proclamation of the true gospel. In a postmodern world where there is no such thing as absolute or universal truth and where the gospel of pluralism proclaims that every perspective is equally valid, 1 Timothy behooves us to be more diligent in protecting

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the Church from the influence of falsehood, whether it originates from without or within the church. Rather than evaluating the health of the church on the size of its membership or in the amount of tithes and offerings it generates, the spiritual condition of the church should be measured in terms of its faithfulness to its divinely ordained task of proclaiming the gospel message that is at the heart of the three angels' messages in Revelation. While the church certainly needs to allow for diversity of expression in non-essentials, it also needs to be concerned about encouraging a united voice on the cardinal doctrines of our faith as rooted in the good news of Jesus. Rather than choosing spiritual leaders solely on the basis of their gifts and abilities, Paul's letter should remind us that the most important criterion is the character of a person. And in some cases, as was the situation in Ephesus, it also reminds us that protecting the church from falsehood requires that at times "certain individuals" need to be prohibited from exercising a teaching role within the church.

The application for the life of the church is very different, however, if we interpret Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy from the perspective that all women are prohibited from teaching or exercising authority over men within the church due to a permanent subordination of women to men that is rooted in Creation. Accepting this point of view would not only require us as a denomination to (1) decide decisively against the ordination of women once and for all, but it would require even far greater actions on the part of the church. Action would need to be taken to (2) officially censure and denounce the behavior of those unions and conferences that have proceeded to ordain women over the course of the last few years without General Conference approval. Of course, this would also require (3) invalidating the ordination status of any women ordained

during that time. Such a decision would also need to (4) require that commissioned women ministers not function in any role where they would be exercising authority over a man. This would bar women from not only serving as senior pastors, but it would also prevent female associate pastors from assuming duties where male headship would be violated, such as preaching and teaching from the pulpit—at least when adult men were present. (5) It would also require, of course, all female religion teachers at our seminaries and colleges and universities to be restricted to teaching women. And (6) if "women do not qualify for the position of elder/minister"<sup>94</sup> then all female pastors, whether ordained or not, would simply have to be dismissed from denominational employment. Finally, our denomination would also need to (7) rescind the decision at the General Conference Spring Meeting in 1975 that voted to authorize the ordination of women as local elders, as some already suggested at the 2013 TOSC meeting.

If we were seriously and consistently to adopt the ideological perspective of those advocating against women's ordination, women would not be the only individuals affected. Men would also be affected. The only men who would qualify to serve in a position of spiritual leadership within the church would be those who are married and have at least two children, since "strictly speaking a male without family would . . . not qualify for eldership."<sup>95</sup> And according to a similar reading of the parallel passage in Titus, those children would also need to be believers (Titus 1:6). Single members of the clergy would need to find a spouse and either bear or adopt children or find different employment.

While some may feel that I've overstated the application, I would simply respond by saying that if God ordained that women should not serve in an authoritative role, then we have no



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other choice. Reading the passage in what I would call an overly literalistic manner does not give us the privilege to pick and choose to what extent we want to accept the inspired instructions in Scripture—at least not if we are consistent and honest with the text. Making distinctions between teaching and preaching, or trying to qualify Paul's statements by allowing a woman to teach and exercise authority as long as she is under the authority of a local male pastor are entirely artificial and hardly convincing. While at the same time our current practice of choosing not to ordain women to the gospel ministry but allowing them to serve as a "commissioned" ministers with virtually the same authority as an ordained minister also seems rather disingenuous on our part. If women are truly subordinate to men on the basis of Creation, how can we then make these sorts of exceptions and still claim to be true to the text?

In light of the tremendous benefit this church has received through the prophetic ministry of a female, Ellen White, I pray that our own experience would teach us that an individual's spiritual teaching authority is not rooted in a person's gender but in God's divine calling. If Ellen White's calling as a prophet qualified her as a woman to teach and exercise authority over men, which she certainly did and continues to do today through her writings, in the very least, why then should we also not recognize that God's calling upon a woman to engage in pastoral ministry also qualifies her for that task?

### Endnotes:

1. Eugene Prewitt, "Response to Critiques on 'Brief Bible Thoughts on Women's Ordination.'" *Advocate* (October 30, 2012), n.p. [cited 28 August, 2013]. Online <http://advocate.com/articles/2179>.

2. Ibid.
3. The question of the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is a controversial topic. Although there are difficult questions associated with the Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy, in the opinion of this author the difficulties related to the non-Pauline authorship are far greater. Accordingly, this paper assumes the Pauline authorship of these epistles.
4. Ingo Sorke, "Adam, Where Are You? On Gender Relations" (paper presented at TOSC, July 2013), 37. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
5. Stephen Bohr, "A Study of 1 Peter 2:9, 10 and Galatians 3:28" (paper presented at TOSC, July 2013), 26. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
6. P. Gerard Damsteegt, "Headship, Gender, and Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White" (paper presented at TOSC, July 2013), 30. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
7. Sorke, 33.
8. Whether Paul wrote Philippians and Philemon from his imprisonment in Caesarea or Rome matters little in relation to the point being made here. In either case, problems broke out in these churches during Paul's absence that resulted in his desire to revisit them.
9. Since Acts ends with a relatively positive description of Paul under house arrest in Rome, many scholars conclude that Paul must have been released and continued in ministry for several more years before a second arrest and execution in Rome. While a release from prison is not mentioned in Acts, it concurs with Paul's other encounters with Roman justice in Acts (16:35-40; 18:12-17), and perhaps is even suggested with the sentiments expressed by Agrippa on Paul's case (26:32). See J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on The Pastoral Epistles* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 9; Gordon Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 1-3; Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 2nd ed., TNTC 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 28-30; George Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 15-20; William Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000), liv-lvi.
10. Although some early Christian sources claim Paul did visit Spain (1 Clement 5:6, 7; *Acts of*

- Peter* 1:1; Muratorian Canon), it is impossible to know if they represent an independent tradition or are merely a conclusion drawn from Paul's plan outlined in Romans. The latter is more likely the case, assuming the historical validity of the movements of Paul implied in 1 Timothy and Titus. It would have been impossible for Paul to travel to Spain and Asia Minor within the brief time between his first and second Roman imprisonment. Ellen White is silent on the issue of whether Paul actually visited Spain.
11. The fact that the "you" of the final greeting is plural rather than singular indicates Paul certainly envisioned from the very beginning that his letter would be read by more than only Timothy (1 Tim 6:21).
  12. See the discussion in Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, AB 35a (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 140, 141.
  13. Paul's adoption of this writing style explains the reason for the impersonal tone and lack of warmth in 1 Timothy as compared to his other personal letters (e.g., 2 Timothy and Philemon).
  14. Although the word translated as "men" (*andres*) can refer to either a single or married man, Paul's adaptation of the household code and the discussion of women in what follows suggest that he primarily has husbands in mind. This would certainly not have been a surprise, since the vast majority of men at the time would have been married.
  15. Philip Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 202.
  16. For a fuller discussion on the situation in 1 Tim 2:8–15, see Carl P. Cosaert, "Paul, Women, and the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy 2:8–15" (paper presented at TOSC, July 2013), 21–37. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
  17. Knight, 142.
  18. Mounce, 130.
  19. Knight, 143.
  20. Sorke, 23; Damsteegt, 30.
  21. Richard M. Davidson, "Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations" (paper presented at TOSC, July 2013), 6. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
  22. Davidson, 6.
  23. *Ibid.*, 8, 9.
  24. *Ibid.*, 10, 11; George W. Ramsey, "Is Name-Giving an Act of Domination in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere?" *CBQ* 50 (1988): 24–35; Rick R. Marrs, "In the Beginning: Male and Female (Gen 1–3)," in *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Carroll D. Osburn, 2 vols. (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), 2:17, 18.
  25. Ramsay, 34.
  26. Davidson, 11.
  27. Henry Baldwin's recent examination of every use of *authentēō* in the *Thesaurus Lingua Graece*, revealed 314 references, including 85 uses of the verb itself. Baldwin identified a range of four basic meanings: (1) to rule/reign; (2) to control, to dominate; (3) to act independently; and (4) to be the originator of something. Although Baldwin argued that the root meaning of *authentēō* is authority without any particular negative connotation, the evidence suggests otherwise. Baldwin not only quickly discounts the nuance of exercising autocratic power as not applicable to 1 Timothy, but he also discredits Chrysostom's clear use of *authentēō* to mean "to domineer" or "play the tyrant" by labeling it as an "unique usage." Such a use is hardly unique. Contrary to Baldwin's conclusions, an examination of the four earliest verbal forms of *authentēō* that are either contemporary with or prior to Paul's use of the verb all have an element of force associated with them.
- In an attempt to avoid any negative connotations associated with *authentēō*, Baldwin also refuses to acknowledge the domineering abuse of power that would have naturally been associated with the verb due to the negative meanings of its related nouns. For example, the cognate noun *authentēs* was used in early Greek literature to refer to a (1) "murderer." During the Hellenistic age, it also came to refer to an (2) "author, perpetrator," as in the "original authors" behind a murderous plot, or as in an (3) absolute "master." The cognate *authentia* also means "absolute authority." (See *LSJ* 275). It seems difficult to believe that the basic idea of the verb would have been entirely free from the idea of violence and force associated with these cognate nouns. See H. Scott Baldwin, "A Difficult Word: ἀθηντέω in 1 Timothy 2:12," in *Women in the Church*, ed. A. J. Köstenberger, T. R. Schreiner, and H. Scott

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- Baldwin (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 65-80, 269-305; "An Important Word: Ἀθηνρέω in 1 Timothy 2:12," in *Women in the Church*, ed. A. J. Köstenberger and T. R. Schreiner, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 39-51; Marshall, 456-460; See Cosaert, 30-32.
28. BDAG 150; Louw-Nida, 37.21.
  29. Both the Old Latin (fourth century in the Pauline Epistles) and the Vulgate translate *authenteō*, with the Latin verb "*dominari*" meaning "to rule over," "to domineer." D. P. Simpson, *Cassell's Latin Dictionary* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 201. It certainly is not neutral. This same word is used to translate other New Testament words where a negative or absolute form of authority is in view (e.g., 1 Pet 5:3; Acts 19:16; Mark 10:42; Rom 6:9, 14). The same is true in the earliest Syriac copies of Paul's letter. Dated to the fifth century, the Peshitta translates *authenteō* with the verb "*mra*" It means, "to venture, dare, be rash, hasty" or "headstrong." In relation to 1 Tim 2:12, *mra* is defined as "to lord it (over)." William Jennings, *Lexicon to the Syriac New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1926), 131.
  30. The connection is seen in Paul's use of the verb *apataō*, which means "to deceive" or "mislead." This verb occurs in the LXX only in Gen 3:13.
  31. Sorke, 25.
  32. *Ibid.*, 25.
  33. *Ibid.*, 27. "Sin came into our world as a result of man neglecting and women disregarding the husband's leadership role." Doug Batchelor, "Women Pastors: A Biblical Perspective." Sacramento Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, 6 Feb. 6, 2010.
  34. *Ibid.*
  35. Thomas Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15: A Dialogue with Scholarship," in *Women in the Church*, ed. A. J. Köstenberger and T. R. Schreiner, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 115; Sorke, 27.
  36. Sorke, 26.
  37. *Ibid.*
  38. E.g., Doug Batchelor argues that men "have more neurons in their brain, and some of that is because we have more mass and that may mean more nerve endings.... According to the *British Journal of Psychology*, [men] on an average score five points higher on an IQ test." Kelly claims, "His [Paul's] point is that since Eve was so gullible a victim of the serpent's wiles, she clearly cannot be trusted to teach" (*A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 68; Raymond F. Collins, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 71, 72; Mounce, 136-138. Daniel Doriani takes a slightly different perspective. Rather than interpreting the woman's deception as a negative indication of her lack of mental acumen, he sees it as evidence of the different strengths and weaknesses associated with each of the sexes. In this case, he claims men are more inclined to doctrine while women have an ability to nurture and develop relationships" ("Appendix 1: A History of the Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2," in *Women in the Church*, ed. A. J. Köstenberger, T. R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996], 265-267).
  39. Davidson, 23.
  40. It is interesting that Ellen White also avoids directly describing God's judgment of Eve as a "curse." When discussing Eve's subjection to Adam after the Fall, she only refers to her subjection as "part of the curse" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948], 3:484). In preparing this material for later publication in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, she drops the language of curse entirely. She instead refers to it as "this sentence" which was intended to be a "blessing to them" (White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005], 59).
  41. Davidson, 26; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961-1964), 1:63.
  42. For a fuller account of the various ways Gen 3:16 has been interpreted, see Davidson, 26, 27.
  43. Ellen White describes this movement from the non-hierarchical relationship of Adam and Eve before the Fall, to the subjection of Eve "to her husband" after the Fall, as a temporary relationship in response to sin and for the express purpose that "their union could be maintained and harmony preserved" (PP 58). It is significant to note that she strictly limits this relationship to the home, and does not apply it to the relationship between men and women in church. See PP 58, 59; 3T 484.
  44. According to Acts, Paul had foreseen years earlier (Acts 20:29, 30) the problem affecting the local leadership in Ephesus. Additional indications of

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- the connection of the local elders with the false teachings can be seen in: (1) Paul's identification of those responsible for spreading the error as "teachers" (1:3, 7; 6:3), since "teaching" is also mentioned as one of the primary tasks of elders (3:2; 5:17); and (2) in the fact that the vices associated with the false teachers mirror the very traits specified as unbecoming of church elders (Cf. 1 Tim 3:2-7; 1:7; 5:6; 6:4, 5, 9, 10). This suggests that it was the faulty character of the erring elders that prompted Paul to discuss the type of qualities that should characterize the life of church leaders.
45. Stephen Bohr, 26. In fact, the emphasis they place upon the issue of gender and a willingness in practice to minimize some of the other criteria suggest gender, not virtue, is for them the single most important criterion in the selection of overseers/elders (see Sorke, 37).
  46. Sorke, 32.
  47. Ibid., 37.
  48. Fee, 79.
  49. I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 475.
  50. Sorke, 32, 33.
  51. Without considering its use in 1 Tim 3:1 and the parallel passage in Titus 1:6, the indefinite pronoun *ei tis* ("if anyone") occurs fifty-eight times within the New Testament in relation to humans. Out of those fifty-eight times it only refers exclusively to either the male or female gender nine times.
  52. The only example where Paul uses an indefinite pronoun in relation to a specific gender without a corresponding noun or pronoun is in 2 Cor 2:5. This passage, however, is an anomaly, since Paul is trying deliberately to avoid identifying the name of the specific offender in the church who had repented. For this reason, Harris notes that *ei tis* is "conditional only in form; in sense it is equivalent to  $\delta\varsigma$ , "the person who" (Murray Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 223.
  53. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 448.
  54. Sorke, 34.
  55. Ibid.
  56. Bohr, 26.
  57. Ibid., 3, n.6.
  58. To claim that Paul would not have been disqualified because he had been married at an earlier stage in his life, because he was apparently not married at the time, undermines the very nature of this interpretation. If it means an elder must *be* married, then the criterion of marriage must not be explained away.
  59. *NIDNTT* 2:575.
  60. At various times, Herod was married to at least ten different women (Josephus *Ant* 17.14; *War* 1.477). Although many of these were serial marriages, some of the later marriages were certainly polygamous. *NIDNTT* 2:578.
  61. Although monogamy was made the official law of the Romans in A.D. 212 (*lex Antoniana de civitate*), the law included a special exemption for Jews. The Emperor Theodosius, however, eventually outlawed the practice among Jews in a decree issue in 393. Eugene Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1975), 20, 21).
  62. Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr. 1, 2 *Timothy, Titus*, NAC 34 (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 109.
  63. See, for example, Tertullian's comments to his wife on this issue in *To His Wife* 1:6, 1:7.
  64. Bohr, 25.
  65. Ekkehardt Mueller, "Husband of One Wife—1 Tim 3:2," *Biblical Research Institute* (June, 2005), 4.
  66. George M. Lamsa, *Idioms in the Bible Explained and A Key to the Original Gospels* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), ix.
  67. Mueller, 4.
  68. Although some modern translations include the possessive pronoun "their" in 3:11 (e.g., KJV, NKJV, ESV, NET), it is not present in the Greek text.
  69. This can be seen in the fact that vv. 8-11 are dependent on the verb *it is necessary* (*dei*) in v. 2.
  70. Payne, 455, 456.
  71. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., ICC 31 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 2.781.
  72. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, WBC 38b (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 886, 887.

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73. *Ibid.*, 887.
74. Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96, cited in Cecilia Robinson, *Ministry of Deaconesses* (London: Methuen, 1898), 81, 82. Since Pliny was stationed in Greek-speaking Bithynia, his description of these women's position in the church is likely a Latin translation from Greek. Although he does not refer to them in Latin as *diāconi*, his choice of the word *ministrae* seems to be synonymous "for a *diāconus* can be defined as a "minister of the church, a deacon." (Elizabeth McCabe, "A Reexamination of Phoebe as a "Diakonos" and "Prostatis": Exposing the Inaccuracies of English Translations." *SBL Forum*, n.p. [cited 26 Aug. 2013]. Online: <http://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?ArticleId=830>.)
75. Mounce, 210–212.
76. *Ibid.*, 204. He also states, "There is nothing in this paragraph that would prohibit women from being deacons ('one-woman man' assumes male deacons but does not necessarily require it)..."
77. Douglas Moo, "The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11–15: A Rejoinder," *TJ* 2 (1981): 211.
78. Damsteegt, 30.
79. Sorke, 37. Although this statement was made without qualification in the paper presented at the TOSC meeting in July, 2013, the published version backtracked somewhat by going on to claim, "However, the text does not need to be read in an absolute sense" (*Ibid.*). This statement is surprising since it conflicts with the absolute sense that is applied to the rest of the passage.
80. S. M. Baugh, "A Foreign World," in *Women in the Church*, 2nd ed., ed. A. Köstenberger and Thomas Schreiner (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 50, 51.
81. See Cosaert, 15–20.
82. Jewish inscriptions dating as far back as the second century also reveal that some women were identified with an array of dignified titles associated with the life of the synagogue: head of the synagogue, leader, elder, etc. Unfortunately, whether these titles were merely honorific or indicate the actual influence and authority of these women in religious matters is difficult to determine with certainty. The challenge lies in the fact these titles are at times also used in relation to children. While this does not rule out the fact that some women in various locations held positions of religious authority, the titles alone do not prove they did. Lynn Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 210–214; Günter Mayer, *Die jüdische Frau in der hellenistisch-römischen Antike* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1987), 90f.
83. BDAG 695; NIDNTT 2:509, 510; LSJ 1204
84. Towner, 356.
85. Sorke states that Paul was in fact both married and a father. His claim, however, is based solely upon Ellen White's statement that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin (White, *Acts of the Apostles* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005], 112) and a passage in the *Desires of Ages* where she states that members of the Sanhedrin "must be married men, and fathers" (White, *Desire of Ages* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2006], 133). To connect these two passages together is to state more than White actually says. While it is true that members of the Sanhedrin seem to have been married, since the New Testament is silent on this issue, and the Jewish leaders were certainly capable of disregarding traditional practice when it suited them, it is impossible to know for certain the extent of Paul's connection with the Sanhedrin. The New Testament also says nothing about Paul's marital or parental status. In light of so many unknowns in this regard, it seems best not to mistake assumptions for evidence.
86. *Ibid.*, 37.
87. Rather than making a distinction between minors or grown children, the terminology suggests that Paul likely had in mind all the children that make up the family unit as a whole. If he had wanted to specifically identify minors, he could have used a number of different terms. A small child up to the age of 7 was referred to as a *paidion* (e.g., Matt 2:8ff; John 16:21; Matt 11:16; Mark 7:28), and the related word *paidarion* could also referred to little children, or even a young man (John 6:9). A diminutive form of *teknon*, *teknion* was a nursery term used of little children, and by application a term of affection used by Jesus or the apostles to their spiritual children (John 16:33; Gal 4:19; 1 John 2:1). *TDNT* 5:636–638. Instead, Paul uses the term *teknon*, a word that simply refers to children in relation to their parents. It is used of children not yet born (Gen 3:17; 17:16 LXX) and even of adult children (Gen 27:13 LXX). Since the authority of a father extended over the lives of even his adult children, the concept of submission does not require that

small children are only in view (cf. 2:11). Regardless of age, the relationship of children to their parents in the closely connected family units in Paul's day would testify to the character of the leadership exercised in the home.

88. Towner, "Gnosis and Realized Eschatology in Ephesus (of the Pastoral Epistles) and the Corinthian Enthusiasm," *JSNT* 31 (1987): 98-103; Douglas Moo, "What Does it Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2:11-15," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 181, 182.
89. Cosaert, 6-20; Nancy Vyhmeister, "Proper Church Behavior in 1 Timothy 2:8-15" in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. N. J. Vyhmeister (Berrien Spring, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 339, 340; Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Roman Women in the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).
90. Moo, 181.
91. Women are often characterized in this manner in ancient literature (cf. 2 Tim 3:6; Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet* 6; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.13.3, 6.). While some of it is certainly nothing more than the standard rhetoric of the day, it likely has some basis in reality considering the vast educational disadvantage women had in antiquity.
92. Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 100-105; David Matz, *Daily Life of the Ancient Romans* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2008), 1, 2.
93. Johnson, 413.
94. Damsteegt, 30.
95. Sorke, 37; see also, Damsteegt, 30.



## MY PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Some Pastoral Reflections

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DO YOU KNOW WHAT I find so awkward about our collective conversation? It is that I have personal friends—dear personal friends—who have embraced diametrically opposite points of view from each other—fervently loving the same God, faithfully obeying the same Bible, and serving the same church. And not only are my friends opposed to each other—some of them are opposed to me. Oh, I understand that they are not opposed to me personally, nor I to them—these friends of mine—but sometimes it almost feels like that, doesn't it?

I wish there were a simple way out of this debate we are having. Years ago I read about Senator Everett Dirksen (Illinois), who used to handle controversial issues this way. When confronted by a constituent, "Where do you

stand, Senator, on this issue?" he would take the voter's hand and reply: "Some of my dear friends are vehemently opposed to this matter—and some of my close friends are very much in favor of it—and I don't know about you, but I believe a man ought to stand with his friends—so that's where I stand." And he would walk off before the constituent could sort out just what it was the Senator had just said.

The truth is, some of my dear friends today are vehemently opposed to this matter, and some of my close friends are very much in favor of it. And I would love to stand with my friends. And according to Ps 133:1 it is possible to do just that: "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" (NIV) That is why Jesus prayed on the eve of Calvary, "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity" (John 17:22, 23 NIV). Jesus prayed for our unity, and I believe His prayer will be answered. And we will be friends for eternity.

The fact of the matter is, I have stood in the pulpit of the Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University and preached my heart out in defense of male headship from Holy Scripture. The sermon was so passionate that a prominent Adventist family (I later learned from my friend Richard Leshner, president of the university at the time) withdrew their daughter from that school in protest. I believed in male headship—what my male headship friends believe today—fervently.

But in the subsequent two years of continued Bible study, I came to the conclusion that the Word of God, rather than forbidding the ordination of women to gospel ministry, in fact actually opens the door to it. And so it was my humble, pastoral duty to return to the same pulpit and reverse myself. To change



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one's mind is not a sign of weakness, but is rather the fruit of a personal commitment to continue to search deeply in Holy Scripture for divine truth.

As a member of the General Conference's Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), I joined with the others in reading, listening, studying, and praying. This paper presents biblical evidence that informs my personal and pastoral conclusion regarding God's will for the church.

### Creation

At the heart of all the revealed truth that you and I embrace together is the shining and resplendent truth about our triune, communal God. In fact, as in all matters spiritual and ecclesiastical, it is the truth about God that is the most compelling evidence of all—this God who first revealed Himself in these words: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man [*ha adam*, humanity] in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Gen 1:26).<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White's magnum opus, *The Conflict of the Ages* series, opens and ends with the three words, "God is love." All universal truth, all divine revelation, all inspired human understanding is refracted through the prism of the solitary truth that God—when all is said and done—always has been, always is, and always will be love. "God is love."

So the opening salvo of Holy Scripture portraying the Creation of the human race comes as no surprise, given the triune, communal God who is our Creator. From time immemorial Love has always sought to expand its embrace and extend its circle to include. For "inclusion" has always been the *modus operandi* of Love. Perhaps you remember the epigram Edward Markham wrote a century ago:

*He drew a circle that shut me out—  
Heretic, a rebel, a thing to flout.*

*But Love and I had the wit to win:  
We drew a circle that took him in!*<sup>2</sup>

Calvary's outstretched arms were nailed in a wide-open embrace so that we would never forget that even for sinners, divine love always seeks to include. Love took us in. Thus, inclusion, rather than exclusion, has been the defining truth about God from "in the beginning."

Thus Genesis 1–3 rings with the jubilant note of Love's inclusion "from the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate."<sup>3</sup> And in His gift of the seventh-day Sabbath, our community-building, relationship-seeking Creator bound Himself to the human race with ties that would never be broken.

So I must tell you that I have not been able to see what my male headship friends have suggested; namely, that this God of inclusive love, in fact, is a God of hierarchy and subordination even within the Trinity. I understand—we all do—that given the fall of the human race the Member of the Godhead who became the Incarnate One, Immanuel, would by necessity live out His days on this planet, humbly subordinated to the Father. As a Son "He learned obedience through the things He suffered" (Heb 5:8). But God's emergency response to the human crisis can hardly become the template for defining the ontological reality of this God who has already ruled this universe for eternity past.

Thus Richard Davidson in his careful examination of Gen 1–3 rightly concludes:

It is crucial to recognize that in describing the divine interrelationships ("Let Us") which form an analogy with human relationships ("male and female"), the narrator gives no indication of a hierarchy within the Godhead, no reference to the asymmetrical submission of one Person (the Son) to the Other (the Father).

In describing the interrelationship among members of the Godhead, the emphasis in this text is upon the deliberation and fellowship of Equals. If there is any submission implied, it is a *mutual submission* of Equals as the members of the Godhead discuss and deliberate together concerning the creation of humankind. The divine "Let Us" implies that One is not commanding, and Another obeying; all are equally engaged in the deliberation.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, there is not a single hint of divine headship or subordination within the Trinity in the Creation account. Thus, there is no divine a priori or precedent for the notion that male headship is cryptically embedded in between the lines of Gen 1 and 2. It simply is not there. Davidson concludes:

Such equality without any top-down hierarchy, by analogy, is thus emphasized with regard to the *mutual* submission in human (male-female, husband and wife) relationships, who are made relationally in the image of God. . . . According to Gen 1, male and female are regarded holistically, as equal without hierarchy. The full equality of man and woman—in resemblance/constitution, in relationship, and in representation/function—is unhesitatingly proclaimed in the first chapter of the Bible, and is evaluated by God Himself as "very good" (Gen 1:31)!<sup>5</sup>

I have listened with great interest to my male headship friends try to establish a male hierarchy within the Creation account. While they are quick to assert a basic or ontological equality between man and woman, husband and wife, they side-step that equality by suggesting that it is in the divinely assigned "roles" of our first parents that male headship finds its primordial basis. Really? Consider the logic of that assumption:

If "role" is no longer a temporary, secondary feature of being a woman or man, but involves a permanent subordination of women to men because of their very personhood, then "role" is not the appropriate word to describe this situation. It may be a nice-sounding term, but it is misleading, since, as [Kevin] Giles points out, for gender subordinationists "The issue is not *gender roles* but essential *gender relations*. God has set men over women because they are women. The word *role* only has the effect of obfuscating this fact."<sup>6</sup>

Roles by definition are temporary. To suggest that women were assigned by the Creator to a subordinate position in the human race by virtue of their womanhood is hardly the establishment of a "role," but rather the creation of a "caste." I agree with Richard Davidson: "This is nothing less than a caste system in which there is permanent subordination of the female gender to the male gender."<sup>7</sup> The word *role* may soften and perhaps make more palatable the theory of male headship, but it cannot hide its logical conclusion—the permanent subordination of all women to all men. The suggestion that our Creator intended that kind of gender subordination from the beginning cannot be substantiated. I do not find it in Scripture.

Ellen White observes: "No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one by redemption."<sup>8</sup> Moreover, "caste is hateful to God. He ignores everything of this character."<sup>9</sup>

Then what shall we do with God's pronouncement to the woman after the Fall? "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen 3:16). The very language makes it clear that this is a post-Fall provision by God for marriage. God speaks

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of “your husband,” not “your neighbor.” Thus it was not a permanent provision for all male and female relationships; it was not even a permanent provision for marriage. After all, the Creator’s egalitarian blueprint for marriage in Gen 2—“She came from my side”—is hardly negated by the Creator’s provision for marriage after the Fall in Gen 3. Clearly Gen 3:16 is a temporary post-Fall accommodation for all our marriages. It is not a divine proviso to pull rank. And any husband who champions this post-Fall accommodation as divine permission to exert the power of rule in his marriage has already abused the provision!

Moreover, it is an exegetical mistake to extrapolate from God’s post-Fall marriage provision a decree that declares this marriage remedy a divine requirement for the world, for society, and for the church. My male headship friends seek to get around that fact by suggesting that the church is like a family, and therefore the rules of the family (or marriage) are the rules of the church. But that is simply wrong. Males are not the heads of the church. The church has only one Head, and His name is Jesus. We are all subordinated *to Him* in the church, not the women to the men. Period.

One would not expect any less from this God of inclusive love.

### Jesus

Was it any different when the Creator became flesh and dwelt among us? Given the mission of divine love to draw a circle to take us in, is it any surprise that Jesus’ ministry among us was one of “inclusion” rather than “exclusion”? The gospel record depicts the Savior proactively going about dismantling the walls that had grown up among His people—walls between the rich and the poor, between the Jews and the Samaritans, between the saved and the lost, between the religious and the irreligious, between the Jews and the

Gentiles, between the young and the aged, between men and women. “Whoever comes to me I will never drive away” was His invitation (John 6:37 NIV).

Gilbert Bilezikian identifies nine direct inclusions of women in Jesus’ life and ministry: (1) the intentional insertion of four women, along with Mary, into the Messiah’s genealogical record (Matt 1); (2) a woman receives the first news of the incarnation (Luke 1:32–35); (3) a woman, with her wedded husband, provided the occasion for the first divine sign of Jesus’ eschatological glory (John 2:1–11); (4) a woman was the first Samaritan convert (John 4:7–42); (5) a woman was the first Gentile convert (Matt 15:21–28); (6) a woman received the first resurrection teaching (John 11:23–27); (7) a woman manifested the first perception of the Cross (Mark 14:3–9); (8) a woman was the first individual to witness the Resurrection (Matt 28:9; John 20:16); and, (9) the first group of witnesses to the Resurrection were women (Matt 28:10; John 20:18).<sup>10</sup>

Bilezikian observes:

This list of exceptional roles played by women in the crucial events of the life of Christ suggests that he made deliberate choices concerning the place of women in the economy of redemption. The message conveyed by those decisions is not to be found in mere chronological primacy (which according to Jesus is of no advantage; see Matt. 20:16), but rather in the fact that Jesus himself gave women a foundational and prominently constitutional role in the history of redemption. Any subsequent reduction of the conspicuous involvement of women in the community of redemption could be perpetrated only in violation of the will of its divine founder.<sup>11</sup>

In his book-length examination of Paul’s attitude and practice toward women in the early

Christian church, Philip Payne notes Paul's example of the Lord:

Paul affirms "I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). Christ's example in all his deeds and words was to treat women as persons equal with men. He respected their intelligence and spiritual capacity as is evident in the great spiritual truths he originally taught to women [Samaritan woman, Martha, et al]. . . . Although a woman's testimony was not recognized in the courts, Jesus demonstrated his respect for their testimony by appearing first to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection (John 20:14-18) and instructing her to tell the others. After Jesus taught the Samaritan woman, she acted as the first missionary to her people and many of her people believed (John 4:39-42).<sup>12</sup>

Payne further observes:

Jesus gives no hint that the nature of God's will for women is different than for men. He made no distinction in the righteousness demanded of both. . . . He calls a crippled woman a "daughter of Abraham" (Luke 13:16), a linguistic usage seventy years prior to the first recorded rabbinic equivalent (Str-B 2:200). He says, "You are all brothers" (Matt 23:8), and he treats obligations to father and mother equally (Mark 7:10-12).<sup>13</sup>

But what about Jesus' choice of only males as His disciples and apostles? Isn't Christ's all-male apostolate a template and example for us today? In reality, Jesus' inner circle of disciples was not only all-male—it was all *free-Jewish-male*. I.e., the first formal leaders of His church on earth included no slave, no freed slave, no Gentile, no person of color, nobody period *except* for free Jewish males. So shall the third-millennial church follow suit?

Moreover, to suggest that an all-male inner circle of disciples was Jesus' subtle embrace of the all-male priesthood of the Old Testament is illogical. For to be faithful to the Old Testament model, Christ would have had to select only Levite males for His inner circle of priests/disciples. So to press Jesus' selection of His all-Jewish-free-male disciples as a model for third-millennial ordination practice makes no sense to me.

And to all those who counter—Look, He had women ministering to Him throughout His ministry; why didn't He include one of them in His inner circle?—consider this response:

It is one thing for a number of women to be mentioned as following Jesus from time to time in his preaching in the towns (Mark 15:40, 41; Luke 8:1-3), but traveling full time for three years with late night meetings such as at the Garden of Gethsemane and spending periods of time in the wilderness are quite another thing. Strong cultural objections and moral suspicions would undoubtedly be raised not only about Jesus, but also about the men whom he chose to be with him. Married women could hardly leave their families for such a long period, and single women would have been even more suspicious. To have chosen women disciples would have raised legitimate suspicion undermining the gospel.<sup>14</sup>

The truth is that a careful examination of the life of the Creator lived out in "the Word made flesh" reveals the dignity, courtesy, and mercy Jesus extended to both men and women, the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, the Jew and the Gentile. In His living, His ministering, His saving, it is compellingly clear that the very tenor of Jesus' life and ministry was inclusion, not exclusion. In Christ there was neither Jew nor

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Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female—for in all, He saw “heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:29).

Thus it was the mission of the church He raised up to determine how the walls separating them might yet be brought down.

### EKKLESIA

#### Paul

Paul, who championed the life and the way of Christ, perpetuates the example of Jesus in his own ministry with women throughout both the church and the Empire. More than any other apostle, Paul both examines and teaches the role of women within the mission and ministry of the community of faith.

The passage of Romans 16 is a veritable treasure trove regarding Paul’s attitude toward women in ministry—an attitude unabashedly revealed in the titles he gives his female partners in ministry: “servant” or “deacon” (*diakonos*), v. 1; “helper” or “benefactor” or “leader” (*prostatis*), v. 2; “fellow worker” (*sunergos*), v. 3/Phil 4:3; and “apostle” (*apostolos*), v. 7. Moreover, Paul describes these women “as fulfilling functions associated with church leadership: they ‘worked hard in the Lord’ (Rom 16:6, 12) and ‘contended at my side in the cause of the gospel’ (Phil 4:3). More than two-thirds of the colleagues whom Paul praises for their Christian ministry in Rom. 16:1-16—seven of the ten—are women.”<sup>15</sup>

Then what is the meaning of Paul’s declaration, “And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence” (1 Tim 2:12)?

The central theme and overriding concern that runs throughout Paul’s pastoral letter to Timothy is the havoc raised by false teachers and their heretical teachings in the church of Ephesus. Paul had warned the Ephesian elders at his farewell, “For I know this, that

after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:29, 30). The book of 1 Timothy is evidence that his prediction had come true. The first six verses lay out Paul’s urgent concern for Timothy’s confrontation of these false teachers, with the rest of his letter interspersed with explicit counsel on how to deal with them.<sup>16</sup> In fact, so concerned is the apostle with the false teaching that “nearly every verse in this letter relates to it.”<sup>17</sup>

That women in the church were caught up with the false teachers and their teachings explains why “no other book of the Bible has a higher proportion of verses focused specifically on problems regarding women: 21 out of 113 verses (1 Tim 2:9-15; 4:7; 5:3-7, 9-16).”<sup>18</sup> Because 1 Timothy is a pastoral letter from the apostle to his young associate, the counsel necessarily reflects the pastoral and congregational context of the Ephesian church. To suggest that Paul intended his context-specific admonition prohibiting women from teaching in the church in Ephesus to be applicable to the universal church overlooks Paul’s clear recognition in 1 Cor 11:5 that women may both pray and prophesy in worship.

Furthermore, Paul extols the teaching ministry Timothy as a youth received from his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Tim 1:5; 3:14-16). As already noted in Romans 16, Paul’s listing of seven women who served with him in ministry and leadership in the churches belies the suggestion that here in 1 Tim 2:12 Paul is universally prohibiting such authoritative ministry and leadership. What is more, at around the same time Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, he wrote to Titus, another pastoral associate, with the instruction that “older women” serve the church as “teachers of good things” (Titus 2:3).<sup>19</sup> Elsewhere, Paul

commanded the church in Colossae, including its women, to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you [plural] teach [no gender distinction is made] and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you [plural] sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God” (Col 3:16 NIV). And in the wider New Testament witness, the observation that “by this time you ought to be teachers” in Heb 5:12 was clearly addressed to both the men and women in the church and offers no gender restriction. Thus to suggest a universal mandate prohibiting women from authoritative teaching in 1 Tim 2:12 contradicts both the practice and teaching of Paul.

But what about his proviso in 1 Timothy 3 that an elder/overseer and deacon are to be “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2, 12)?<sup>20</sup> Is not such a designation incontrovertible evidence that the spiritual leadership offices of elder and deacon are reserved for only men?

The Greek phrase is *μίας γυναικὸς ἄνδρα*—literally, “one-woman man.” Besides the obvious exclusion of polygamists (multiple women/wives) and adulterers (multiple sexual partners), what other exclusions does this single phrase cover? Some have isolated a single word from this phrase and used *ἄνδρα* (“man” or “husband”) to function as a separate, stand-alone qualification. But if it were acceptable to piecemeal this list of spiritual requirements, then one could just as logically dissect “one who rules his own house well” (v. 4) and reduce it to the phrase *his own house* in order to conclude that spiritual leaders must be house owners. Nobody would countenance such a reduction. Yet when a single word is isolated from the phrase *one-woman man* in order to insert an additional gender requirement, such reductionism is immediately logical to its proponents.

However, what is not logical are the implications of such a literal one-word reduction,

when applied to the entire list. Along with marital relations (“husband of one wife” v. 2), Paul also lists requirements concerning children—“having his children in submission with all reverence” (v. 4), “ruling their children and their own houses well” (v. 12), and “having faithful children” (Titus 1:6). On the basis of a literal reading of these four phrases, the following categories of men would be disqualified: “single men; married men with no children; married men with only one child; married men with children too young or too indifferent or obdurate to profess faith; married men with believing but disobedient children; married men with children who are believing and obedient but not respectful in all things.”<sup>21</sup> What is more, it must be stated that this literalistic exclusion of single men would begin with Christ Himself:

Jesus Christ—since he was single—would have been unqualified to exercise leadership among the people he taught before and after the resurrection. Paul and Barnabas, who both served as missionaries and occasional leaders of local churches (Acts 13:1), would have been violating Paul’s marriage requirement since they were both working as single persons (1 Cor 9:5). Finally, should this requirement for the Ephesian church be absolutized, men who accept Jesus’s radical challenge to celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of God (Matt 19:12), thus exemplifying obedience to his call to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him (16:24)—the very men who should be upheld as exemplars of commitment before the Christian community—would be systematically and universally rejected from the most influential positions in church leadership. The personal sacrifice

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they would have made to serve the community with total dedication would be held against them as an impediment to such service.<sup>22</sup>

But what about women in ministry? Does Paul's list of requirements for spiritual leadership and ministry (which in the Greek contains not a single masculine pronoun) exclude women from this calling of God? The nine Greek words or expressions that Paul applies to overseers/elders in 1 Tim 3 are all applied to women elsewhere in this pastoral epistle: "good works" (3:1/5:10); "blameless" (3:2/5:7); "husband of one wife" (3:2/5:9—"wife of one man"); "temperate" (3:2/3:11); "self-controlled" (3:2/2:9, 15); "respectable" (3:2/2:9); "reverent" (3:4/3:11); "condemnation" (3:6/5:12); "good testimony" (3:7/5:10).<sup>23</sup>

Thus the very traits once thought to be exclusively applied by Paul to men, as it turns out, were also applied by Paul to women *in this same epistle*. When the *one-woman man* phrase is correctly interpreted as excluding polygamous or adulterous individuals from ministering in spiritual leadership, there is no embedded or exegetical reason in 1 Timothy 3 to prohibit Spirit-gifted women from serving in the same overseer/elder offices that in the post-NT church eventually became reserved for men alone. As Darius Jankiewicz has concluded:

"... the gender of a bishop or deacon was not on Paul's mind. If gender was truly important to him, we would have a clear statement in 1 Timothy or elsewhere, such as 'a bishop must be a man.'"<sup>24</sup>

The compelling evidence is that Paul never advocated an all-male clergy. His teaching and practice imitated the inclusive ministry of his Lord in purposefully widening the circle of spiritual leadership to include called and qualified disciples of either gender.

### Peter

And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.<sup>25</sup>

On the Day of Pentecost when Peter began that first gospel sermon by quoting from the ancient prophet Joel, under the inspiration of the Spirit either Peter or Luke inserted a new opening phrase to Joel's prophecy—in *the last days*. Peter was not speaking of epochs but rather of imminence. He would eventually write: "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Pet 4:7). But before the Day of the Lord—and this was Peter's point on Pentecost—there would be an eschatological, an apocalyptic outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon "all people." And in that outpouring God would dismantle three walls that have kept the human family divided and separated from its beginnings: the wall of gender (men and women); the wall of age (young and old); and, the wall of class (free and servant). And in that apocalyptic unleashing the spiritual gifts of prophesying, visioning, and dreaming would be bestowed upon "all flesh."

Of interest is that the spiritual gift Joel and Peter identify in that end-time outpouring is the gift of prophecy, a gift that is ranked second in Paul's hierarchy of spiritual leadership gifts: "And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues" (1 Cor 12:28). This is the same gift that Revelation predicts will be operative within the remnant community in the same last days: "the spirit of prophecy."<sup>26</sup>

Of note too is that this gift which God will bestow upon our sons and our daughters, His menservants and maidservants, is a gift that ranks second in the Bible's hierarchy of spiritual authority gifts,<sup>27</sup> higher even than the gift of teaching, the very gift my male headship friends have concluded should be reserved only for men.

The point? If both genders are chosen by the Holy Spirit to receive the second-highest gift of spiritual authority in the church, the same would surely be true for the lesser gifts, including the third-highest gift of spiritual authority—the gift of teaching. Thus, the Bible predicts God's end-time calling and gifting of *both* genders, all ages, and all classes for the sake of His strategic endgame.

### *Ellen White*

That is why for me one of the great ironies of this conversation we are having regarding the role of women in ministry is that the debate is taking place within a denomination co-founded by a woman! I am incredulous over how those who are as vigorous as I am in upholding the Spirit of Prophecy find no guiding, historical precedence in the life, ministry, writings, and leadership of Ellen White. Cannot the God who led the New Testament church from a Jews-only paradigm to a paradigm with both Jews and Gentiles sharing the same gifts and the same spiritual authority do the same in this end-time church? Even as He united Jews and Gentiles, can He not also unite men and women by the same Holy Spirit gift and with the same ecclesiastical and spiritual authority? Does not the ministry of Ellen White portend just such a divine paradigm shift?

Here is how my friends respond to my question: Well, yes, she is a prophet—and prophets indeed do have very significant spiritual authority (to argue otherwise would be to argue against her gift)—but it is

not “headship authority”—and this is why Deborah, who was recognized as both a prophetess and a great leader, was not a great leader, because she actually did not lead, but rather deferred to the male leadership of her nation. (And I have one friend who says that while she was a great prophetess with spiritual authority and leadership, it was a derived authority, since her husband is somewhere mentioned in the background of the passage in order to show that she was still under his headship).

Do we really need to go to these lengths in order to prove that Ellen White really did not have spiritual headship authority in our community of faith?

The fact is that Ellen White was a great spiritual leader with all the divinely delegated headship authority necessary to raise up this remnant community “for such a time as this.” Did she agree with the theory my male headship friends are advocating today? Denis Fortin wrote:

I find it interesting that in her 70 years of ministry Ellen White never referred to or commented on 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 or 1 Timothy 2:12 to limit the ministry women can do in the church or society. . . . If somehow Ellen White believed that the concept of male headship is to be prescribed for ministry positions in the church, she had plenty of opportunities to clarify her thought. She never did.<sup>28</sup>

One hundred thousand manuscript pages she penned, and not a single reference to these proof texts for male hierarchy in the church?

No wonder Ellen White unhesitatingly called young women to prepare themselves for gospel ministry. “The experience thus gained [in canvassing] will be of the greatest value to those who are fitting themselves for the ministry. It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men



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and women, to become pastors to the flock of God.”<sup>29</sup> The messenger of the Lord knew of no male headship theory that would preclude women entering the gospel ministry and exercising spiritual authority alongside their male counterparts.

Could the following words of hers be applied, as well as the male headship theory? After describing the Holy Spirit’s baptism upon the pagan Roman centurion Cornelius and his family, she wrote: “Thus, without controversy, prejudice was broken down, the exclusiveness established by the custom of ages was abandoned, and the way was opened for the gospel to be proclaimed to the Gentiles.”<sup>30</sup> In these words Ellen White reflects the heart of her Lord, who Himself chose inclusion rather than exclusion, who in this Cornelius moment revealed to the church that the time had come to abandon “the exclusiveness established by the custom of ages.”

### The Jerusalem Council and the Third-Millennial Church

That was precisely the decision that faced the Jerusalem Council—to abandon “the exclusiveness established by the custom of ages.”

What is so stunning in the often referenced church council in Acts 15 is the way in which the Holy Spirit guided the leaders of the fledgling church to their eventual decision. The debate began when the circumcision party (defined by their male-only premise) insisted: “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). This insistence immediately brought this wing of the infant church into direct conflict with the apostles Paul and Barnabas, who were witnesses to the explosive growth of the Christian faith among pagan Gentiles. Neither of these front-line missionaries would countenance this notion of overt exclusion. They bore in their own bodies the stripes of Christ’s

gospel mission of inclusion rather than exclusion. Luke describes the resultant conflict: “This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp debate with them” (Acts 15:2 NIV). Apparently, heated debate is not antithetical to the divinely guided process of decision making.

The narrative of the convening of this church council to resolve this conflict is well known. On the one hand there were the Judaizers who championed a “Thus saith the Lord” to defend their insistence on the Old Testament divine provision of circumcision. On the other hand there were the apostles—Peter, Paul, Barnabas—who were invited to the podium to tell the stories of what in fact the Holy Spirit was doing among Gentile pagans. Rehearsing the conversion and baptism of the pagan Roman centurion Cornelius, Peter declared: “God who knows the heart showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us” (Acts 15:8 NIV). Then the two missionary apostles stood up. “The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them” (Acts 15:12 NIV).

What is striking is that when the church council takes its vote, as it were, the decision that prevails is one that is established without a clarion “Thus saith the Lord.” The Judaizers clearly were able to assemble the most proof texts to support their view that circumcision is a divine command thoroughly established in the Old Testament and clearly linked by the Lord God with His “everlasting covenant” (Gen 17:13). But their defense in fact did not carry the day. Rather, the church council opted to place conclusive weight on the anecdotal evidence provided by the three apostles.

True, the apostle James, as leader of the council, stood up and quoted Amos 9:11, 12 as divine support for the anecdotal evidence

Peter, Paul, and Barnabas had just presented. But nowhere in Amos 9 is there a divine abrogation of the previous divine command of circumcision. It is not there.

What is in Amos 9 is the divine promise that one day Gentiles would seek the Lord and bear His name. But not even the Judaizers are contesting that point. All agreed. The Gentiles are coming to Christ. “We, however, insist that to be saved they must be circumcised.” But the council votes in favor of inclusion, not exclusion—and so they vote no to the male-only provision of circumcision. And they do it without a plain “Thus saith the Lord.”

Why? Because the arc of God’s centuries-long guidance of His faith community has finally led to these explosive narratives of Holy Spirit gifting among uncircumcised, pagan Gentiles. And I believe that same divine arc of guidance stretches from the NT church to the third-millennial church today, revealing to us God’s unfolding will through the compelling narratives of Holy Spirit gifting among women pastors.

I have had the privilege of serving alongside three very effective women pastors on our senior leadership team at Pioneer Memorial Church. I also have women pastor friends today who are serving as lead or senior pastors in their own parishes. And I can personally testify to the Holy Spirit’s ministry through their gifted exercise of spiritual authority in the midst of God’s people. And by the way, just ask the people of God that they are leading—they, too, will also testify to the imprimatur of divine spiritual authority that radiates from these women pastors’ teaching, shepherding ministries.

I firmly believe the anecdotal evidence of the Holy Spirit’s gifting of women pastors today is as persuasive and convincing as the anecdotal evidence Peter and Paul and Barnabas cited in the Jerusalem Council—evidence that can

lead the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the third millennium to make the same decision as the Jerusalem Council made: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us . . .” (Acts 15:28). And why wouldn’t following the arc of God’s inclusive guidance seem just as good to the Holy Spirit and to us today?

In fact, Peter himself, when called onto the carpet by the Jerusalem hierarchy, could muster only a single defense of his breaking down the ancient wall between Jews and Gentiles. He offers no proof texts—he has no pretext. All he can exclaim to the leadership are these words: “If God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?” (Acts 11:17 NIV).

The Jerusalem Council and that single line from Holy Scripture, I believe, are all the evidence this third-millennial church needs to follow the same God who has poured out the same Holy Spirit and has called to the same gospel ministry these women who have answered His same call.

“If God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?”

### Endnotes:

1. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are from the NKJV.
2. <http://www.theotherpages.org/poems/mark01.html>. Accessed 3/8/2015.
3. See Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1999), 678.
4. Richard M. Davidson, “Should Women Be ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations,” *Theology of Ordination Study Committee*, chapter 8 in this book, 144.
5. Davidson, 144, 145.
6. Richard M. Davidson, “Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors: Old Testament

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- Considerations,” as presented to the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), July 2013, 14. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
7. Ibid.
  8. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2003), 386.
  9. White, *Conflict and Courage* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 297.
  10. Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman's Place in Church and Family* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 71–76.
  11. Bilezikian, 76.
  12. Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 57.
  13. Payne, 58.
  14. Payne, 59.
  15. Payne, 68.
  16. 1 Tim 1:18–20; 4:1–8; 5:11–15; 6:9, 10
  17. Payne, 296. Here Payne identifies in 1 Tim 1:3–11 these five aspects of false teaching: myths and endless genealogies, controversies, causing people to leave the faith, meaningless talk, and in appropriate application of the law.
  18. Payne, 300.
  19. Some suggest that Paul's description of older women as “teachers of good things” does not refer to public teaching but rather to some form of in-home ministry. However, an “examination of all the words Paul uses with the root ‘teach’ shows that in every other instance teaching had verbalized content, and in this case the content is enumerated for older women just as it is for Titus. Thus, those who would interpret Titus 2:3 as teaching solely by example do so in opposition to Paul's universal use of this word in any form (noun, verb, participle, compound, root derivative) in this and every other context. They strip ‘teacher’ in [Titus] 2:3 of its basic meaning (one who verbally imparts knowledge of skills) in only this one instance simply because women are the teachers” (Payne, 329).
  20. Some are surprised to learn that in these Greek passages (1 Tim 3:1–12; Titus 1:5–9) there is not a single masculine pronoun. Rather, it is the English translations that insert the masculine pronoun up to fourteen times (NIV, NASB) in Paul's list of requirements for the offices of overseer/bishop/elder and deacon. See Payne, 445.
  21. Bilezikian, 139.
  22. Bilezikian, 144.
  23. See chart in Payne, 450.
  24. Darius Jankiewicz, “Authority of the Christian Leader,” TOSC, July 2013, 19. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
  25. Acts 2:17, 18.
  26. Rev 12:17; 19:10.
  27. 1 Cor 12:28.
  28. Denis Fortin, “Ellen White, Women in Ministry and the Ordination of Women,” paper presented at TOSC, July 2013, 7, 9. See also Jifi Moskala, “Back to Creation: Toward a Consistent Adventist Creation—Fall—ReCreation Hermeneutic,” paper presented at TOSC, July 2013, 12: “Is it telling that Ellen White never once refers to the crucial passages like 1 Tim 2:8–14 and 1 Cor 11:3, which provide the foundational argument for those who oppose women's ordination?” TOSC studies are available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
  29. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 6:322.
  30. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 142.

# **THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN IN LIGHT OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD<sup>1</sup>**

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IN EARLIER CHAPTERS in this book we have seen that women served in various areas of ministry in New Testament times, and that those few texts which might, at first glance, seem to prohibit such service are actually dealing with other problems and do not address the subject of ministry directly. We have also seen that women served in both leadership and ministerial positions in the early history of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination and have continued to serve—although in relatively few numbers—up to the present time. In other words, the Adventist Church has never barred women from any form of ministry, including the pastorate.

Given this state of affairs, the questions arise: Is it proper to ordain those women who have demonstrated their calling to ministry? If

so, on what basis? Is it possible to find a biblical rationale for ordaining women ministers? Is the move to ordain women only the result of cultural pressure, or are there deeper theological considerations?

The ordination of women is a controversial and emotional topic, and I have no desire to raise the temperature. I do not wish to be dogmatic or suggest in any way that those who might disagree with me are not sincere Christians or able Bible students. I do not believe that either my Christian understanding or my conscience are superior to those of people who take a different view. I also write as a North American, and I freely confess my ignorance of societal conditions in many other parts of the world. I acknowledge that, like everyone else, I am influenced in my understanding of any issue by my culture and background.

Still, I would invite you to consider the arguments that I will present. If after a fair hearing you are not convinced, we can go our ways as friends. But I do represent the thinking of many Bible-loving Adventists who live in a society where men and women are equal under the law, in business, in education, and in other social enterprises.

In this chapter, then, we will explore the questions I have raised by consulting the Bible, the writings of Ellen White, and our God-given reasoning abilities on the overarching theme of the character of God. We start by recognizing the rather awkward position in which Adventists find themselves.

## **The Adventist Dilemma**

Many Christian denominations have wrestled with the issue of the ordination of women; and, in a good proportion of the cases, their theologians have, like Adventists, attempted to find support for their positions, pro or con, from the Scriptures. Their task, while formidable enough, is not nearly as difficult and

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complex as that faced by Adventists. This is because in most Christian bodies *servicing* in the pastoral office and *being ordained* to that office are one and the same thing.

For example, when Paul Jewett set out to define ordination, he noted that there is an office of ministry and "ordination is the way one is inducted into that office. One is set apart for and enters upon the Christian ministry by way of ordination." Again, "There is a consensus that ordination is [ordinarily] necessary if one is to function as a minister in Christ's church with the authority of one divinely called to the task" (brackets in original).<sup>2</sup> Thus, in these denominations the question is: May women serve in pastoral ministry? If the Bible allows this, they can be ordained; if it does not, they cannot.

But Adventists cannot take this approach without serious difficulty, because this is not how ordination is employed among us. In Adventism ordination has been and is today an affirmation of ministry accomplished rather than the entry into it. Adventist policy typically requires a candidate to serve in pastoral ministry for a number of years (at least four) and demonstrate his calling by certain marks of success (e.g., number of converts) before the ceremony of ordination takes place. During this trial period the unordained minister may preach, win converts, baptize, solemnize marriages, celebrate communion, and administer churches.<sup>3</sup> This is true of both men and women pastors,<sup>4</sup> except that at the conclusion of this probationary stage, men who have been successful are rewarded with ordination; women are not.

Given the Adventist understanding of ministry, then, I will not attempt to argue that women may serve in the pastoral office but will accept it as a given. That they may and do so serve has been shown in other chapters of this book, and that decision has been reaffirmed by

recent Annual Councils and world sessions. Of course, I realize that some believe the church to be in error in allowing this and that previous actions should be rescinded and new policies adopted that would prohibit women from serving in the pastoral office. That is an important issue but not the burden of this chapter. Here we consider: If the church does permit women to serve as pastors, are there biblical reasons why they should not be ordained at the close of their probationary period?

We are led, therefore, to studying ordination directly. But here we run into another problem. The ordination of women is not mentioned in Scripture. The reason we do not find the problem addressed in the New Testament is the same reason we do not find other modern church dilemmas discussed—it was not a concern of the period, and no one ever raised the issue. In fact, while the qualifications for ministry are listed in the New Testament, a discussion of ordination in general is absent.

Confronted by the lack of direct scriptural evidence on the subject, both proponents and opponents of the ordination of women have reverted to using texts that deal with the service and functions of women. But since pastoral service and ordination are two different things (at least in Adventism), we cannot settle the ordination question with these texts.

Does this mean that there is no way to make the Bible relevant to this problem? I believe that the Bible does provide guidance in this matter, as it does for every modern concern. But it does not do so directly. Rather, it is necessary to discover the great themes of Scripture, which had local application in the first century, and prayerfully, under the guidance of the Spirit, seek to apply them to the conundrums we face today. While the Bible contains many timeless themes and principles, I

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would like to explore what I consider perhaps the major theme of Scripture and one that best illuminates the question of the ordination of women—the character of God.

### The Great Controversy and the Character of God

Seventh-day Adventists believe that “all humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God.”<sup>5</sup> The whole tragedy of sin began when Lucifer in heaven questioned the fairness of God’s character.

From the beginning it has been Satan’s studied plan to . . . misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself,—as arbitrary, severe, and un-forgiving,—that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men.<sup>6</sup>

The controversy was transferred to this earth when Lucifer, speaking through the serpent, insinuated that God was not fair in withholding superior knowledge from Eve (Gen 3:1–5). These assaults on God’s character could undermine the stability of the universe by destroying trust in Him. Therefore, in his master strategy for the recovery from sin it has been necessary for God to deal with the character issue. The plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was . . . to vindicate the character of God before the universe.<sup>7</sup>

The conflict over the character of God becomes especially intense as the end nears and Satan intensifies his efforts. Rev 18:1 predicts a final manifestation of God’s glory (character) as an important factor in the climax of the great controversy. Ellen White wrote: “Those who wait for the Bridegroom’s coming are to

say to the people, ‘Behold your God.’ The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love.”<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, the outcome is sure. The whole universe will come to see that God’s character is just, loving, and fair. For, “when the great controversy shall be ended, . . . the plan of redemption having been completed, the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences.”<sup>9</sup>

### God’s Justice and Fairness

No wonder, then, that a major purpose of the Bible is to reveal God. The Scriptures are His self-disclosure. While the most defining feature of His character is love (1 John 4:7–21), He also reveals Himself as a God of justice and fairness. Indeed, these characteristics are inseparable, for if God was not just and fair, He could hardly be loving.

The Bible states that “the LORD is a God of justice” (Isa 30:18).<sup>10</sup> The Hebrew word *mishpat* has rich connotations. Stephen Mott points out the following:

Justice is founded in the being of God, for whom it is a chief attribute. As such, God is the sure defender of the poor and the oppressed (Jer 9:23–24; Ps 10:17–18). . . . Since the justice of God is characterized by special regard for the poor and the weak, a corresponding quality is demanded of God’s people (Deut 10:18–19). When they properly carry out justice, they are the agents of the divine will (Isa 59:15–16). . . . The focus is on the oppressed with particular attention given to specific groups, such as the poor, widows, the fatherless, slaves, resident aliens, wage earners, and those with physical infirmities (Job 29:12–17; Ps 146:7–9; Mal 3:5). . . . Justice is a deliverance, rectifying the gross

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social inequities of the disadvantaged (Ps 76:9). It puts an end to the conditions that produce the injustice (Ps 10:18).<sup>11</sup>

Synonyms given are "equity," "fairness," and "impartiality." All these nuances appear in texts such as Ps 99:4: "The King is mighty, he loves justice—you have established equity; in Jacob you have done what is just and right." Isaiah is inspired to lament: "Judgment is turned away back-wards, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street and equity cannot enter" (Isa 59:14 KJV).

This theme was especially strong among the Old Testament prophets. Amos, for example, denounced Israel because they had oppressed the innocent and taken advantage of the powerless. God would not accept their worship; He despised their religious ceremonies. "But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (5:24) was the formula Amos announced for renewing the covenant relationship. Likewise, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Micah showed strong concern for just treatment for the marginalized of society.

The purpose of the Proverbs was to aid the reader in "doing what is right and just and fair" (1:3). The wise counsel is: "If the king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will always be secure" (29:14).

The New Testament continues the theme. Matthew quoted Isa 42:1-4 as being fulfilled in and constituting the very essence of the ministry of Jesus:

*Here is my servant whom I have chosen,  
the one I love, in whom is my delight;  
I will put my Spirit on him,  
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.  
He will not quarrel or cry out;  
no one will hear his voice in the streets.  
A bruised reed he will not break,  
and a smoldering reed he will not snuff out,  
till he leads justice to victory. (Matt 12:18-20)*

Later, Jesus reproved the religious leaders because in their meticulousness in tithing the practically worthless, they had "neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness" (Matt 23:23).

Justice and fairness were important in the early church too. The occasion for the appointing of the "seven . . . known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3) was an allegation that the Greek-speaking widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of assistance. Ellen White commented: "Any inequality would have been contrary to the spirit of the gospel."<sup>12</sup> After describing the apostles' solution, she continued: "The same principles of piety and justice that were to guide the rulers among God's people in the time of Moses and of David, were also to be followed by those given the oversight of the newly organized church of God in the gospel dispensation."<sup>13</sup>

A major theme of the New Testament is the struggle of the early church to grasp the truth that God would not have them discriminate between Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ. After the Spirit led him to the home of Cornelius, Peter saw the light and exclaimed: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism" (Acts 10:34). The Greek word *προσπολεμπτες* appears only once in this form in the Bible<sup>14</sup> and means literally "acceptor of faces." The KJV has "God is no respecter of persons," and the NRSV renders it "God shows no partiality."

Satan claimed "that God was not just in imposing laws upon the angels; that . . . He was seeking merely the exaltation of Himself. It was therefore necessary to demonstrate before the inhabitants of heaven, and of all the worlds, that God's government is just, His law perfect."<sup>15</sup> Thus, the whole Bible should be read as a testimony to the love, justice, and fairness of the character of God. Each individual story, vision,

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or letter of instruction is only an application of that theme as it is worked out in the particular cultural context in which it is given. In seeking to understand any portion of Scripture, we must always ask: What is this particular passage revealing about the character of God?

### Reflectors of God's Character

The Holy Scriptures reveal the justice and fairness of our God. But lest we misunderstand this revelation, God sent his only Son. "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father," Jesus declared (John 14:9). In a study of His ministry we gain insight into how God regards every human diversity.

Christ recognized no distinction of nationality or rank or creed. . . . [He] came to break down every wall of partition. . . . The life of Christ established a religion in which there is no caste, a religion by which Jew and Gentile, free and bond, are linked in a common brotherhood, equal before God.<sup>16</sup>

In listing a few examples of the walls Christ came to demolish, Ellen White did not specify gender. Yet her phrases *every wall* and *no caste* suggest that the application of the principle goes far beyond her examples to encompass every characteristic which would divide the body of Christ.

Before Jesus ascended back to heaven, He commissioned His followers to do the same work He had done: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). "It is the work of the Christian in this life to represent Christ to the world, in life and character unfolding the blessed Jesus."<sup>17</sup>

The purpose which God seeks to accomplish through His people today is the same that He desired to accomplish through Israel. . . . By beholding the goodness, the mercy, the justice, and the

love of God revealed in the church, the world is to have a representation of His character.<sup>18</sup>

This purpose is reflected in Adventist Fundamental Belief 13: Unity in the Body of Christ. It reads, in part:

The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us.<sup>19</sup>

The New Testament church evidently had some problems with discrimination, as James found it necessary to address the situation. Some were inclined to curry favor of the rich and ignore the poor. To these James wrote: "As believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. . . . Have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? If you show favoritism, you sin" (Jas 2:1, 4, 9).

Adventists have frequently used verse 10—"Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking it all"—to show that those who do not observe the seventh-day Sabbath are not keeping God's commandments. This may be an appropriate application, but it is interesting to note that in its context this passage referred to demonstrating favoritism based on social differences.

Ellen White also stressed this message. "Those who are connected with God will not only shun all injustice, but will manifest his mercy and goodness toward all with whom they have to do. The Lord will sanction no respect of person."<sup>20</sup> The major theme in all this is that as Christians we represent the character of God. "When one who professes to serve



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God wrongs or injures a brother [or sister], he misrepresents the character of God to that brother [or sister].<sup>21</sup>

### But What Is Justice?

Probably no one will object to what I have written above. All thoughtful people favor justice, fairness, and equity. The difficulty comes when we try to decide what constitutes justice. Is it the same in all times, places, and circumstances? Or does it vary with the situation? We would probably agree that there is an absolute standard of fairness and justice. But if our purpose as Christians is to reveal the character of God, I would like to suggest that the actions of His people must be perceived as just and fair by the community in which those actions occur.

This is analogous to the recommendations of child psychologists who tell us that discipline of a child will not be effective unless the child perceives the discipline as fair and deserved. It also corresponds to the reason why God did not immediately destroy Lucifer upon the onset of sin. God permitted rebellion to work its course so that the watching universe might be convinced that His way is loving and just.<sup>22</sup>

A helpful text at this point is Titus 2:10: "Shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (KJV). The NIV reads: "So that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive." Or "they may be an ornament to the doctrine of God our Savior" (NRSV). This passage is intriguing because it was addressed to slaves, telling them to be faithful, respectful, and honest to their masters. We would think that justice and fairness would call for the abolition of slavery, and the impact of the gospel did eventually lead to that position. But that was not Paul's message in the social context of that time. If he had called for the slaves to rise up and

claim their freedom, Christianity would have been scandalized as an anarchist cult. Thus, the Christian God would not appear attractive to the Roman world. This suggests that we as Christians have a part to play in the vindication of the character of God. To put it somewhat bluntly, our job is "to make God look good" to the world who does not know Him and who may have a distorted view of His character because of Satan's misrepresentations.

Now if the revelation of the character of our God as loving, just, and fair is a major theme of the Scriptures, an important sub-theme of the New Testament is "adorning" the doctrine of God. Inspired writers showed concern for what the pagan world would think about this new Christian religion and the God it revealed. For example, believers were urged to "shine like the stars in the universe" before "a crooked and depraved generation" (Phil 2:15). They should "live such good lives among the pagans" that the latter might be led to "glorify God" (1 Pet 2:12). It would be an embarrassment to the cause to have church members going to law against one another "in front of unbelievers" (1 Cor 6:1-6). If a meeting featured a chaotic speaking in tongues, unbelievers were likely to conclude: "You are out of your mind" (1 Cor 14:23).

This same sub-theme may offer a reason for texts such as 1 Cor 14:34 and 1 Tim 2:12, which call for order and submission on the part of women. That is, Paul had a concern that something that was happening among the members might bring disgrace upon the church and, by extension, upon the God whom the church represented. While these passages have been discussed in previous chapters, we might pause here to note this connection. It has been said that those against the ordination of women read the Bible literally, while those for it interpret it in the light of principles. This is not accurate. Neither view takes a literal

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approach, for the texts do not even hint at the subject of ordination. A literal reading would cause us to forbid women to teach or even speak in church. Only the most radical fringe would take that position.

Actually, both groups adopt a similar methodology. They decide what principle is behind these particular applications, and then they apply that principle, in a way that makes sense to them, to a modern problem—in this case the ordination of women. The difference is in the theme that is discovered—in the *content* of the interpretation—and not in the *method*. Opponents find the overarching theme in these and similar passages to be male headship and decide that females cannot be ordained because God desires them to be submissive to males. Although I do not agree with this interpretation, even if they *are* right, that would be no reason for excluding women from the ordained ministry—unless, of course, one believes that ordination places the minister *over* other members in some way different from the position of the unordained minister.

On the other hand, proponents of ordination have generally seen these passages as additional examples of the counsel to make the teachings about God attractive. Whatever the problems in Corinth and Ephesus, they were giving Christianity and its Author a bad name. They were making God look bad. While the local situation may be different, the message is timeless: we are God's representatives; our actions impact on what the world thinks of Him.

Then do these New Testament passages often used by opponents of ordination for women really have nothing to do with the subject? Not directly, but if we look at them in light of our major theme of the vindication of the character of God, we may find an application. If ordaining women will reveal God as unjust, unfair, and arbitrary, then we ought not to do

it. But if such a step will present His character as fair, just, and loving, then, by all means, we should move ahead. The question is always before us: How will our actions influence the watching world's opinion of the God we serve? Let's examine this thought a bit further.

### A Just God and the Ordination of Women

The revelation of God's character and our understanding of that character are progressive. What is deemed permissible at one time may eventually come to be understood as not in God's ideal plan for His children. For example, polygamy, though not in God's original design, was permitted in the Old Testament. By New Testament times the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife (1 Tim 3:2). Today, in many areas of the world field, having multiple spouses would be cause for disfellowshipping. The standard did not change, but God's children have come to a better understanding of that standard as His character has been gradually unfolded to them.

As has been noted above, the same is true of human slavery. Though New Testament writers did not call for its abolition, Paul laid out a long-range plan for gospel transformation, when he wrote: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). Here, he set down the principle that the gospel, in its own time, transforms all human relationships.

Much of the New Testament period was devoted to breaking down the barriers between Jew and Gentile. In this struggle God's character was enhanced. Other barriers, such as slavery and gender were to tumble later, though Paul did admonish Christian slave owners to "provide your slaves with what is right and fair" (Col 4:1).

To our modern minds, the right and fair

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course would have been to free those slaves. But Christianity proclaimed its message within its social context then and still does. The time for such a bold advance of justice was not yet, for such concepts of equity were not generally recognized. Still, in the just and fair character of God resided the seeds of the destruction of slavery. Someday, Christians would come to see that they could not hold fellow humans in bondage and still be true to the gospel. They would lead out in championing the liberation of all peoples—a future perhaps hinted at by Paul in Phlm 13 and 14.

When centuries later, the time was ripe for this new revelation of Christian fairness and justice, “Exact and impartial justice is to be shown to the Negro race,” Ellen White wrote. “The religion of the Bible recognizes no caste or color. It ignores rank, wealth, worldly honor.”<sup>23</sup>

The word *caste* is significant here. “A caste system is a social arrangement in which access to power and socioeconomic benefits are fixed, typically from birth, according to certain ascribed characteristics of the individual.”<sup>24</sup> We are familiar with the caste system of Hinduism, and, certainly, racial distinctions comprised the caste system which Ellen White condemned. But by this definition, gender might also constitute a caste system. If the privileges of a particular society were restricted to those who were born with characteristics over which they had no control—and gender is certainly one of those—then a caste system would exist. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to document the fact, it is generally acknowledged that throughout much of human history women were placed in a position subservient to men simply because they were born female. How would a just God regard a gender caste system?

No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the maker of all mankind. All men

[generic term] are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God.<sup>25</sup>

To the ancient query: “What does the LORD require of you?” the prophet replied: “To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6:8). What does it mean to “act justly” in our human relationships? For one thing, that we do not show partiality in our treatment of individuals. We do not make decisions that limit or advance the potentialities of people on the basis of external characteristics over which they have no control. Of necessity, some persons must be leaders and others followers. But these distinctions are to be based on abilities, on character, on spiritual calling. If they are determined by race, parentage, social class, or gender, so that some humans have no chance at opportunities simply because they had the misfortune to be born Black, poor, or female, then justice is not served. Worse yet, if this discrimination is practiced within the Christian community, God’s character is besmirched.

The Adventist Church in most parts of the world has come to see that it is not justice to bar Blacks from membership in “White” congregations or from attendance at “White” schools—though it once did those things. The church has slowly had its eyes opened to the truth that fairness and equity call for the opening of top leadership positions in the denomination to the variety of ethnic peoples who constitute its membership. The church, at least in some parts of the world, has even accepted the revelation that it is justice to pay equal wages to men and women who both perform the same tasks—though it needed a little legal pressure in coming to this understanding. Now what about equal

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treatment for men and women who have both been called to the sacred task of gospel ministry?

Please remember that in this chapter we are not discussing whether or not women can serve in the pastoral ministry. The Adventist Church has always accepted the concept of women as pastors and has reaffirmed this most recently in actions taken by the 1996 General Conference Annual Council meeting in Costa Rica. At this session the Council voted to amend policy GC B 17, "Human Relations," by adding language that strengthened the equal treatment of women. Notice the italicized language which indicates the changes:

B 17 10 Official Position The world church supports nondiscrimination in employment practices and policies and upholds the principle that both men and women, without regard to race and color, shall be given full and equal opportunity within the church to develop the knowledge and skills needed for the building up of the church. Positions of service and responsibility (except those requiring ordination to the gospel ministry)\* on all levels of church activity shall be open to all on the basis of the individual's qualifications.

2. The appointment of *individuals to serve as Bible instructors or chaplains, or in departmental or pastoral responsibilities*, shall not be limited by race or color. *Neither shall these positions be limited by gender (except those requiring ordination to the gospel ministry).*<sup>\*26</sup>

Thus the world Seventh-day Adventist Church has taken a stand that rejects any system or philosophy that discriminates against anyone on the basis of race, color, or gender. Certainly, the doctrine of God has been adorned; the teaching about God has been made more attractive. Many thoughtful people

will have a higher regard for both the Adventist Church and the God whom it represents.

Since pastors are ordained after the trial period, some may feel that the phrase in parentheses, *except those requiring ordination to the gospel ministry*, bars women from serving in the pastoral office. This interpretation would be incorrect, as it would contradict the rest of the action. Rather, it refers to the fact that church policy states that the occupant of a few offices (such as conference president) must be an ordained minister. Since the church had not ordained any women, these positions obviously could not be filled by them. If, however, there would later be ordained women ministers, they would be eligible for such positions, since the restriction is based on ordination, not gender. There are very few positions in Adventism with such a requirement.

To make it even clearer, the \* at the end of the exception phrase refers to a footnote which reads:

*The exception clause and any other statement above shall not be used to re-interpret the action already taken by the world church authorizing the ordination of women as local church elders in divisions in which the division executive committees have given their approval.*<sup>27</sup>

Without question, the world Adventist Church has come a long, long way in recognizing gender equality. Given this position, the query of this chapter is: Why wouldn't justice and fairness lead to the next step and permit ordination for those women who have demonstrated their call to pastoral ministry? On what basis would we remove all discrimination in allowing people to serve as pastors but discriminate in how we acknowledge or affirm that service? Certainly, not on any command of Scripture. And certainly not by any logical reasoning process.

But, the objection is heard, couldn't men

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and women be equal and still have different functions in God's work? Of course, but ordination, at least as practiced in the Adventist Church, is not a function. If a man enters the Adventist ministry, is assigned to pastor a church, is successful, and is finally ordained, his functions change little or not at all. As we have earlier noted, the unordained male minister, with permission from his conference, may essentially perform all the functions of ministry.<sup>28</sup> What changes? He achieves a new status of respect (the title *elder*), a recognition on the part of the body of believers that he has passed the "qualifying test"—his "board examinations," if you please. Ordination refers not primarily to *functions* performed but to *status* accorded.

With the woman pastor the situation is different. We permit her to serve like the male pastor but will not accord her the same status and affirmation. A woman and a man both serve as pastors. Both have the same seminary training. Both perform the same duties equally well. Both carry the same responsibilities. Both give proof of their calling by winning souls. But he is rewarded with the official recognition of ordination. She is bypassed for this perceived honor and for advancement solely because she is female. Is this really fair?

This simple sense of fairness is not limited to Western mentality, the academically educated, or social liberals. All people, whatever their cultural conditioning, have an innate sense of fairness. We see it even in little children. We know that to arbitrarily treat some people better than others solely on the basis of ethnicity, economic status, or gender is wrong. We instinctively sense that God wouldn't behave that way.

Recently, I was listening to a sermon by Charles D. Brooks on the *Breath of Life* television program. The subject was hell. "What would you think of a judge," Brooks asked,

"who said to the accused standing before him: 'You have been found guilty of stealing a candy bar. Therefore, I sentence you to life imprisonment without opportunity for parole'? You would say that the punishment didn't fit the crime. The judge was completely unfair."

Moving to make the application, Brooks continued. ]Then what about a man who lived a sinful life for 70 years, and for punishment God caused him to burn in hell for 70 billion years?" Considering such an action, we all, the preacher stated, would exclaim: "It wouldn't be right; it wouldn't be fair; it wouldn't be just."

As Adventists, we would all agree. Even though there are a few Bible texts which, if interpreted in isolation, might suggest an ever-burning hell-fire, one good argument against that doctrine is that it does not square with the character of a loving and just God. Therefore, we reject that interpretation in the light of other biblical evidence and construct a theology of hell that will allow us to see God as both fair and merciful.

The parallel is clear. While there are a few texts that, taken out of context, might be employed to discriminate against women in ministry, we reject that interpretation as being unworthy of the character of God. Rather, we use the body of Scripture, which sheds light on God's fairness and loving acceptance, to develop a theology of women that accords with that character.

But the objection might be raised that as Christians we should humbly accept our position and not fight for our rights. We should do the Lord's work and not be concerned with status. Notice, I have never talked about "rights." No one has a "right" to be ordained. Ordination comes not because a person desires it or craves more distinguished status but because the church under the leading of the Holy Spirit affirms gifts. If the controversial problem of female ordination had its roots in

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the fact that some “pushy” women thought they had a right to be ordained, it could have been dismissed long ago, because their numbers are too few to make a ripple on the denominational surface. The discussion continues because many members who have nothing to gain personally from the outcome believe that the church should be fully committed to do the right thing—to be fair and just in all its dealings.

But if ordaining women is a matter of justice, does this mean it should be instituted everywhere, regardless of local custom? This is a difficult question, because fairness and justice are required of God’s people everywhere, but tact and consideration of community mores are part of representing God’s character. However, let us turn the abstract question into a practical one.

In most places in the world field where opposition to the ordination of women prevails, no women are serving as pastors. Of course, if there are no female pastors, then discussion of whether or not to ordain them becomes entirely theoretical and essentially valueless. We can conclude that where there are no women pastors, we should not ordain them. These places might as well withdraw from the discussion with which this chapter is concerned, though an ongoing dialog on whether it is biblically proper for a woman to serve as a pastor might be profitable. Although the church has already decided on that one, some are not in agreement with the decision and would like to revisit the subject.

It is also feasible that some women are serving as pastors in societies which would accept a woman as pastor but protest her ordination, though I must confess that I am not personally aware of such places. But if there are areas in today’s world where to ordain women who serve as pastors would create community antagonism, hinder the spread of the gospel,

and make Adventists look radical and disorderly, it would not be wise to plunge ahead, for God’s character would not be glorified. Just as New Testament writers had to bide their time on the question of slavery, so we today must patiently introduce gospel truth, tailoring our approaches to the “readiness” of the prospective hearers.

On the other hand, in the United States and various other places, the equality of the sexes has come to be a given. Government, business, publishing, and television all give at least lip service to gender equality. In this climate a church that discriminates in ordination is widely regarded as unjust and unfair. When inhabitants of these societies discover that our favoritism is based on religious grounds, they turn away in disgust. Our God looks bad. His character is not vindicated in the Great Controversy. How can they find such an unfair God to be appealing?

### Conclusion

Some may ask: Are justice and fairness only subjective then? Do they constitute one set of behaviors in one time and place and a different set in another era and location? Is there no objective standard for fairness? Let us remember that the *concept* of justice appeals to morally upright people universally. The *defining details* result from a process of growth and education. Therefore, we should not attempt to push the implementation of these details in areas of the world that are not ready for them. But neither should we deny them in locations where they are readily acknowledged as a part of justice and fairness and thus would enhance the view of God’s nature. A scriptural passage that I have found helpful is that in which Jesus unfolds the character of his Father:

Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will

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give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him (Matt 7:9-11).

Some earthly parents might be so cruel and heartless that they would ignore the needs of their children, but the best fathers and mothers would sacrifice everything for the good of their children. Then God must be even more loving and generous, for He always exceeds the highest ideals of humanity.

Personally, I find this to be most persuasive and moving on the subject of our chapter. Of course, Jesus was speaking of answered prayer rather than equality for women. But the principle stated here has a wide application. In its interpretation of v. 11, the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* says: "Jesus takes human nature at its best, and then points men to the incomparably greater character of God."<sup>29</sup> Verse 12 states: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." The Golden Rule is the epitome of justice!

The application made by the *Commentary* provides a great deal of food for thought. Imagine human nature at its best. Are not fairness, justice, and lack of favoritism (Jas 2:1, 4, 9) part of that nature? Then God must be even more so. Where do we imperfect humans get our high ideals, anyway? From whence comes the belief that all mortals are created in the image of God and thus deserve to be treated with worth and dignity? Who gave us the lofty vision of impartial consideration for all, regardless of the circumstances of birth such as race or gender? Do we concoct them in our own feeble brains? Do we spin them out of nothing? I do not believe so, for we are not capable of high and noble thoughts apart from our Creator. God Himself has planted them in our minds, for we were created in His image.

He has gradually unfolded these truths to us as He has allowed us glimpses of His character of fairness and justice. "Every gleam of thought, every flash of the intellect, is from the Light of the world."<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, it would seem that when we as Christians live by these principles, we have the opportunity to give the world a clearer glimpse of the character of God. While we would not want to force the ordination of women on any area that is not convinced of its biblical justice, we do believe that in many areas it would be a positive testimony to our faith and a means of breaking down prejudice.

### Endnotes:

1. This study first appeared in Nancy Vyhmeister, ed., *Women in Ministry: Biblical & Historical Perspectives* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 399-416. Used by permission.
2. Paul K. Jewett, *The Ordination of Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 13, 14.
3. While unordained pastors around the world preach, win converts, and administer churches, it is recognized that each world division decides whether they may baptize, solemnize marriages, and celebrate communion. Where unordained ministers obtain permission to perform the last three services, they have usually been ordained as local elders of their congregations and function in that capacity.
4. Not all world divisions have women pastors, so the question of ordaining them does not arise.
5. Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1988), 98, Fundamental Belief 8.
6. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 5:738.
7. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 68.

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8. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2003), 415.
9. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2006), 764.
10. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references in this chapter are quoted from the New International Version.
11. Stephen C. Mott, "Justice," *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, ed. {Paul J. Achtemeier, et al. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 519, 520.
12. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 88.
13. *Ibid.*, 95.
14. The closely related noun appears four times and the verb once.
15. White, PP 42.
16. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2003), 25.
17. White, 5T 743.
18. White, 6T 12.
19. Ministerial Association, 170.
20. White, *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, 4 vols. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2006), 3:1101.
21. White, *Thoughts from the Mountain of Blessings* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1999), 58.
22. See White, PP 41, 42.
23. White, 9T 224, 223.
24. Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1981), 98.
25. White, COL 386.
26. "Human Relations—Policy Amendment," *Adventist Review*, (Jan. 9, 1997): 26, 27. Italics in the original.
27. *Ibid.*, 27.
28. In some world divisions the functions of the unordained pastor might be more restricted by action of the appropriate committee, but the world church has made provision for this wider service, and it is in those areas where male unordained ministers do have such privileges that females are more likely to serve as pastors.
29. "Matthew," in Francis D. Nichols, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 5: 356.
30. White, *Education* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2002), 14.





# THE CASE FOR A GENDER-INCLUSIVE ORDAINED MINISTRY

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### Introduction

THE TOPIC UNDER consideration has become an extremely divisive one and should be properly handled in order to avoid unnecessary conflicts. It is not a new item on the Adventist agenda but one that goes back to the time of the pioneers and Ellen White. Unfortunately, they never resolved it, leaving it for us to struggle with it in the search for a final solution. This is a privilege and above all, a great challenge. It seems to me that the two years used to study the topic and to pray about it has prepared the church for a final decision. We should always believe and affirm that the Spirit has not abandoned the church and that He is working from within our studies, prayers, struggles, and disagreements,

opening a way for His church to move forward. What is encouraging to me is that we are all very much interested in doing whatever the Lord wants us to do. Here I will share with you the case put forward by most of those who believe that women should be ordained to the ministry. I will begin with what I consider to be a statement of fact and then proceed to build the case.

### I. Statement of Fact

By a statement of fact, I mean a statement that is biblically sound and that no one would in principle deny. Here it is: The Scriptures do not explicitly *command* and neither do they explicitly *forbid* the ordination of women to the gospel ministry. In other words, we have not been able to find a clear “Thus says the Lord” that would support either of the two main positions being advocated. Otherwise, we would not be here today. But that is not the whole story. In the absence of an explicit, divine command we can build up a case to support either of the two positions. And this is exactly what has been done.

We put passages together and draw theological inferences from them in order to demonstrate that, although there is not an explicit “Thus says the Lord,” there is enough biblical evidence to indicate that the Bible opposes or supports the ordination of women to the ministry. Both sides do their best in order to persuade the church that it should go this or that way. But in the absence of an agreement on what the general teaching of the Bible is on the topic at hand, the result is debate. Here, I will present to you a case for the ordination of women to the ministry.

### II. Cosmic Order

The nature and role of the ordained ministry is primarily about church order—order that nurtures the *unity* and facilitates the

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*mission* of the church—and as such, it should reflect the principles of order that rule the cosmic kingdom of God. The unity of the Godhead is and will remain forever an impenetrable mystery for all of His intelligent creatures. We know that God is love and that the inter-Trinitarian relationships are a constant expression and outflow of that love. Beyond that, we should humbly bow ourselves before Him in silence.

Order as such belongs to the diversity of God's Creation and is indispensable for it to function properly. Within His cosmic kingdom order is simply the Creation's reflection of the love of God.

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. . . . To all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service.”<sup>1</sup>

Let me make several observations about this quote. First, love is the foundation of the divine government, not an impersonal law. The character of God itself is the law that rules the universe. Second, the well-being of intelligent beings is dependent on their subjection to God. In other words, the center of order is God Himself. Third, the love of the creatures finds expression in their service to God. Nothing is arbitrarily imposed on them, but on the contrary, having been created free, the Creator only expects from them voluntary service.<sup>2</sup>

Through this law of service God holds the universe together. It is this law of service out of love that rules among the angels. Ellen White suggests that positions of leadership among the angels were assigned to them on the basis of service. “The more studiously the intellect is

cultivated, the more effectively it can be used in the service of God. . . . Talents used are talents multiplied; experience in spiritual things widens the vision of saints and angels, and both increase in capability and knowledge as they work in their respective spheres.”<sup>3</sup>

We know that angels are assigned new responsibilities, which means that they were not created to fill a particular one without the possibility of new opportunities for service.<sup>4</sup> Since positions were assigned by God on the basis of service, the submission of angels to new angelic leaders was voluntary, in the sense that they could understand why the Creator assigned to them their new roles of service. Their submission to angelic leaders was in fact a submission to God. As time passed the functions would change as a result of God bestowing new honors to other angels. No one was limited to a particular role within the Kingdom of God. There was a harmonious order within which each intelligent creature could freely develop the potential God gave them without any predetermined and arbitrary restriction (such as, for instance, who was created first; for sure, not on the basis of gender).

### III. Order in Eden

Order permeates the Creation narratives in Gen 1 and 2. In fact, after the Creation ex nihilo, God's creative activity consists to a large extent in ordering things. He separates things from each other and assigns specific roles to the different components. Everything fulfills a purpose within the created phenomena. And then He created humankind: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish . . . , the birds . . . , the livestock . . . , over all the earth . . . ’” (1:26). We find here three important ideas. First, they both bear the image and likeness of God—they have the same nature. There is gender differentiation, but it is

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compatible with being in the image of God. Second, a particular function is assigned to both of them—the same function. They both are to rule over nature. In other words, the rest of Creation is placed under submission to Adam and Eve. Third, no human being is placed under subjection or submission to another human being. These extremely important principles of order were instituted by God when He created the couple and were partially modified after the Fall.

For Ellen White the equality of Adam and Eve is unquestionable.<sup>5</sup> “In the creation, God had made her the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with His great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each other.”<sup>6</sup> Equality and order are clearly affirmed and the harmonious relationship between Adam and Eve—order within Creation—is grounded on living in harmony with God’s great law of love. What would have held them together as a couple was the same principle that ruled the rest of the cosmos; namely, the law of love expressed in service to God and to others. This picture of cosmic harmony only changes after the Fall. This is again confirmed by Ellen White:

Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with His great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord, and *now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other*. Eve had been the first in transgression; and she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was now placed *in subjection to her husband*. Had the principles joined in the law of God been cherished by the fallen race,

this sentence, though growing out of the results of sin, would have proved a blessing to them; but man’s abuse of the supremacy thus given him has too often rendered the lot of woman very bitter and made her life a burden.<sup>7</sup>

Notice that, first, the new arrangement was necessary because sin brought discord in the *wife-husband* relationship. There is no indication in the biblical text or in Ellen White that women were from now on to be under subjection to man in general. It is restricted to the home. Second, it is clear that Adam’s headship is a post-fallen condition, but it is not an arbitrary decision. In a world of sin, order or unity could be maintained at home by the submission of one to the other. Third, the divine intention was for this arrangement to be a blessing to the human race, but human hubris has almost transformed it into a curse for women.

The submission of women to their husbands after the Fall leaves open the possibility that a woman could occupy important leadership positions outside the home, in society, and among God’s people, particularly top leadership positions.

### IV. Order in Israel

The truth is that as far as we know, no woman was in the OT ordained to leadership positions. But ordination in the OT was, in the case of the priesthood, limited to one tribe, excluding the other eleven, and within that tribe only one person was anointed, excluding all the other families in Israel (Lev 8:12; Num 8:10).<sup>8</sup> No reason is given for excluding the female members of the tribe from functioning as Levites. We can only speculate. We also find the successor of Moses, Joshua, being set apart and dedicated to the Lord through the laying on of hands (Num 27:23). As far as we can tell, this was a unique event. Even if we

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were willing to include among those ordained the anointing of kings—the evidence is lacking—the fact is that the divine ideal was to be actualized only through the family of David, excluding all other tribes. Ordination in the OT was not a matter of gender, because the vast majority of the Israelites, males and females, would have never been ordained to any specific leadership role.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the vast majority of the leaders of Israel were males. We can interpret this fact to mean that women were excluded from such positions because God placed them under subjection to the husband, but the evidence is lacking. Two examples will indicate otherwise.

### *A. Prophetesses in Israel*

In Israel and in the church, the gift of prophecy is gender-inclusive. The significance of this fact deserves much more attention than we can provide here. But let it be clear, first, that the highest and most influential spiritual leader in Israel was the prophet, not the priest or the king. They traveled throughout the land instructing the people and the king and when necessary condemning sin and rebellion. They had words of salvation and judgment against the nation, the king, and even the priests. They condemned the abuse of the poor and the needy and idolatry in all its forms. Their main concern was the spiritual condition of the people and their leaders. Second, their authority was unparalleled in Israel. The authority of other leaders in Israel came from a particular set of circumstances. They had institutional authority. The king was elected on the basis of dynastic concerns or political intrigues, but his position as king invested him with legal authority that was to be accepted by all. The priest had authority based on family lineage. The prophets did not belong to any social or religious institution.

They were chosen by God independent of their genealogical records or any legal basis. Their call and commission revealed God's free election. In the exercise of His freedom and in total independence of social institutions and concerns, God called men and women to the prophetic ministry. They were answerable to Him and not to the king or the priests. They had a unique type of authority—a God-given authority that was to be recognized by all; namely, prophetic authority. Had God intended to seriously restrict the leadership role of women in Israel by subjecting them to men in general He would have broken His own law by calling and appointing them as prophetesses.

Third, the fact that the prophets proclaimed to the people what God had personally revealed to them and not their own ideas does not weaken their authority but strengthens it. Their authority was determined by their personal commitment to the word of the Lord without any regard for their own well-being. The word of a male or female prophet was authoritative, because it was the expression of the word of the Lord. This is what true spiritual leadership is about. The authority of *any* leader among God's people is dependent on his or her commitment to the word of God. The principle is the same for all. It was this lack of commitment to God's revealed will that led to the collapse of kingship in Israel and to the destruction of the temple. Ultimate authority always resides in the word of the Lord, and we, as leaders, participate in it to the extent to which we are faithful to it and clearly proclaim it. The fact that the prophet has access to that word in a unique way does not diminish his or her authority but on the contrary invests it with greater significance and urgency. The gender of the prophet does not become invisible or irrelevant because he or she is receiving the message directly from the Lord. The divine election makes them more visible as spiritual leaders.

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Finally, the prophet is a person directly ordained by the Lord to the prophetic ministry. We only have a case in which a prophet is to be anointed as such. Elijah was commanded by the Lord to anoint Elisha as his prophetic successor (1 Kgs 19:16). It could be that in this case the verb *to anoint* is used in the sense of setting apart for the prophetic ministry. Ellen White, referring to her prophetic call, states, "In the city of Portland the Lord ordained me as His messenger, and here my first labors were given to the cause of present truth."<sup>9</sup> This is the highest ritual of ordination that any human being could experience. God Himself placed His hand on His prophetic instrument and ordained her.

### B. Deborah the Judge

Another case in which the Lord chose a woman to occupy two of the most important responsibilities in Israel is found in the experience of Deborah. She is identified as a prophet and a judge in Israel (Judg 4:4, 5).<sup>10</sup> No other judge in the book of Judges is called a prophet. In fact, very few prophets in the Old Testament are called judges and prophets. As far as I can ascertain, these two roles are ascribed to Moses (Exod 18:16) and Samuel (1 Sam 7:6, 15-17)—two of the most important leaders of the people of God. This would suggest that in her role as prophet and judge, Deborah was the top leader of Israel at that time. The judges were the leaders of Israel in pre-monarchical Israel (Judg 2:11-19), and they had judicial functions.

The residence of Deborah was located in the north of Israel but not too distant from the south, making it easier for all Israel to come to her for guidance as judge and prophet. At the moment of national crisis, she was God's instrument to deliver His people. Ellen White comments: "There was dwelling in Israel, a woman illustrious for her piety, and *through*

*her the Lord chose to deliver his people.* Her name was Deborah."<sup>11</sup> The phrase *to deliver his people* is used in the book of Judges to describe the primary function of the judges (e.g., Judg 2:16). Guided by the Lord, she asked Barak to be the military leader, but she was directly involved in mustering the troops (5:13, 14). People came from all over the land in response to her call to arms. She had "authority over" men as prophet and judge. The list of tribes that participated in this military action shows that Deborah was recognized as the leader. This explains why Barak wanted her to accompany him. Ellen White supports this description of Deborah, when she writes, "He [Barak] refused to engage in such a doubtful undertaking unless Deborah would accompany him, and thus support his efforts by her influence and counsel."<sup>12</sup> Her influence over the people was that of a wise prophet and judge. We have no reason to believe that she was directly involved in the actual battle, but this was also the case with other military leaders who occasionally used their generals while they stayed at a distance. Her leadership role is so impressive that when Barak hesitates and wants her to be in the battlefield with him, Deborah points out that this would be against the traditional role of women and culturally damaging to Barak—he will experience shame. But he does not care, because he wants the best leader of Israel to accompany him.

A final quote from Ellen White: "She [Deborah] was known as a prophetess, and in the absence of the usual magistrates, the people had sought to her for counsel and justice."<sup>13</sup> This statement is important in our discussion. It makes clear that although it was not common for a woman to hold the role of judge/leader over Israel, she held it. Consequently, we can conclude that there is nothing morally or spiritually wrong with having a woman in top leadership positions

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among God's people. The statement indicates that although at times it may not be necessary to have women in such positions, if the need is there, it is correct to do it.

The two examples we have discussed demonstrate that the subjection of the wife to the husband, as recorded in Gen 3, did not have the purpose of restricting the role of women in Israel to the home. God reveals Himself in these stories as willing to use women as top administrative and spiritual leaders among His people, even if He had to ordain them Himself.

### V. Order in the New Testament<sup>14</sup>

The church was instituted by Christ, who called twelve apostles to lead it. As the church grew, ecclesiastical order was further developed. In order to emphasize unity and order in the church, different images were used. Most prominent among these is the image of the church as the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-31; Rom 12:1-8; Eph 1:22), whose only Head is Christ Himself. While unity and the headship of Christ are Paul's main concern, his discussion of the church as the Body of Christ is framed within the context of spiritual gifts. These gifts were given to all believers and contributed to building up the church and to the fulfillment of its mission (Eph 4:1-13). Besides the spiritual gifts, there were also two main offices in the church; namely, eldership and deaconate. In spite of the fact that in the NT there are just a few passages in which ordination through the laying on of hands is mentioned, Christians have generally accepted that at least elders and deacons were to be ordained to their offices. It is also recognized that the gifts of the Spirit were given to male and female members of the church. The question is whether the offices of deacon and elder were gender exclusive, i.e., to be exercised only by male members of the church.

### A. Christian Ministry

Let me begin with a brief discussion of the nature of Christian ministry. Christian ministry is modeled after the ministry of Christ: "Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant [*diakonos*] and whoever wants to be first must be slave [*doulos*] of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'" (Mark 10:42-45; see also Matt 20:24-28). Jesus is using the model of cosmic order instituted by God at Creation in which love expressed itself in service to others. This reflects a theology of ministry that is based on service, self-sacrifice, and humility, not on higher rank and status. *According to Jesus, positions of leadership in the church are not assigned on the basis of gender but on the quality of the service of the believer.* New Testament writers envisioned ministry as service (*diakonia*) and applied the term to the service of all believers, both those who exercise leadership roles, as well as those who fulfill other ministerial roles in the church (Rom 16:1; Col 1:7; 1 Pet 4:10). Rather than being conceived in terms of "ruling over," or "having authority over" (Mark 10:42), the purpose of all Christian ministry is to encourage, empower, and provide a vision "so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph 4:12) and its mission brought to completion.

### B. The Spirit and the Gifts

The type of ministry envisioned by Jesus was possible through the presence of the Spirit within the church and the gifts He brought to it. Through Him, Christ made provision for each believer to participate in

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His ministry, empowering them to edify and serve the Christian community and to facilitate its missionary endeavor (Rom 12:6-9; 1 Cor 12:6-11; Eph 4:7, 11-13). In giving loving service to each other and to the world, believers demonstrate their obedience to Jesus' command (Matt 22:37-39; 28:18-20). As indicated above, the gifts of the Spirit are not given on the basis of gender. The exercise of the gifts contributes to preserve and strengthen ecclesiastical order. Each follower of Christ, without exception, therefore, has a special and unique contribution to make to the well-being and mission of the church.

### B. Gift and Offices

The specialized offices or ministries in the church are not radically different from the gifts of the Spirit. In order to fulfill His mission on earth, God chose some of His followers to serve as leaders in the church according to the spiritual gifting they received by the Holy Spirit (Rom 12:8, Eph 4:7, 11).<sup>15</sup> Their appointments were confirmed or symbolized in various ways, and not all of them were by means of the "laying on of hands." In all cases of ministry, however, God is the one who initiated the call, qualified the person for their ministry, and gave them authority to perform their duties and functions. Among those who exercised gifts of leadership were the appointive leaders—elders/overseers and deacons—elected by the community and affirmed by the apostles. Recognizing the gift of leadership in these individuals and the infilling of the Holy Spirit in their lives (Acts 6:3), the church chose them for the task of spiritual oversight, protection of the community (shepherd), teaching, and preaching (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 5:17). A laying-on-of-hands is clear in some instances (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6).

In Ephesians 4:11 the list of spiritual gifts includes the one for pastor and teacher. In

the New Testament, the elders were not only spoken of as overseers, or bishops (*episkopos*, which literally means supervisor; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5, 7; 1 Pet 5:1-3) but also as pastors or shepherds (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 5:1-4), and teachers (1 Tim 2:2; Titus 1:9). *In other words, elders were appointed to their office on the basis of having received gifts that qualified them for that position.* A person with the gift of pastorate (which is gender inclusive) could be appointed by the church to the role of an elder. In fact, the gift of pastorate would find its fullest expression in the work of an elder. Originally, these roles were not distinguished and were interchangeable. The spiritual gift of pastor/teacher, which is gender inclusive in our teaching of spiritual gifts, is thus equivalent with the appointed position of elder or overseer. As Seventh-day Adventists, we have always recognized that women can serve as pastors/teachers, and since this gift is gender inclusive, it seems natural to follow the biblical direction to also consider them for the office of elders or overseers.

## VI. Ministry, Ordination, and Women<sup>16</sup>

It is usually pointed out that there is no evidence in the New Testament indicating that women were ordained to the offices of elder and deacon and that the qualifications for these offices disqualify them from exercising them. We will begin with the office of deacons.

### A. Female Deacons

Concerning female deacons, the New Testament provides clear hints to the effect that women were appointed as deacons. There are three lines of argumentation that support this conclusion. First, in the discussion of the qualifications for deaconate, Paul inserts a brief list of qualifications for the "wives" of the deacons (1 Tim 3:11 NIV). The Greek simply



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says, "Women likewise dignified . . ." In other words, Paul does not seem to be referring here to the wife of the deacons but to women who were apparently appointed to the role of deacons. Second, a female deacon is explicitly mentioned by Paul in Rom. 16:1: "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant [*diakonos*] of the church in Cenchrea." What we have here is the common elements of Greco-Roman epistolary commendations:<sup>17</sup> It includes the name of the person who is being commended (Phoebe), the relationship with the person ("our sister"), the status/role of the person ("a *diakonos* of the church in Cenchrea"), and a request ("receive her in the Lord, . . . and give her any help she may need").

Third, Ellen White supports the reading of these passages as referring to female *diakono*i who were ordained through the laying on of hands to that office. She writes,

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church.<sup>18</sup>

Church leaders, including her son W. C. White, interpreted this statement to mean that women could be ordained to the office of deaconate. Consequently, they began to ordain women as deaconesses.<sup>19</sup> What was hinted at in the New Testament has been made explicit through the prophetic ministry of Ellen White.

### B. Female Elders

The passage discussing the qualifications for the ministry of elders (1 Tim 3:1-7) is not gender exclusive. Here is the evidence that supports that claim.

First, it is important to note that the introduction to Paul's list of qualifications begins with the statement, "If *anyone* [Greek *tis*] aspires to a position of oversight [*episcopē*]. . ." not "If a *man* [*anēr*] desires. . ." (1 Tim 3:1). In Greek, *tis* is an indefinite pronoun that as such is not interested in defining gender. The use of this pronoun indicates that Paul is not interested in gender but that he is commending the office of an overseer as worthy of aspiration. This finds support in the fact that the apostle is primarily interested in the character of the overseer as a spiritual leader, rather than on his duties. Therefore, when Paul says "anyone," he means "anyone." This is the plain meaning of the text. It is true that the noun *elder* in Greek is masculine, but this is also the case with *diakonos*. Therefore, even though the term is gender-specific, it is not gender-exclusive.

Second, the phrase *husband of but one wife* is a highly unusual phrase found only three times in the Bible (1 Tim 3:1, 12; Titus 1:6). Its meaning is far from clear. Does it mean that the person should not be a polygamist, or that he should be married, or that he should not be a divorced person? If the requirement is that an elder should be a married man, then single men and even widowers would be excluded from the ministry. We do not have biblical evidence to support this position. Paul seems to have been unmarried, at least for some time during his ministry.<sup>20</sup>

We should also notice that the emphasis of the phrase is not on gender. The order of the words places the emphasis on "one" thus indicating faithfulness and moral purity. The idiomatic phrase points to the character of the elder and not to gender exclusiveness. The

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best textual evidence to support this suggestion is found in 1 Tim 5:9, where Paul writes concerning a widow that she should have been "a one-man woman." In this case a literal reading of the phrase emphasizing gender specificity would be practically meaningless or stating the obvious: "The widow should be a woman and married to one man . . ."

Besides, we have biblical evidence indicating that the phrase is not gender exclusive. A deacon was also expected to be "the husband of but one wife" (3:12). If the phrase is gender exclusive, only males could be deacons. Fortunately, as we have already indicated, the New Testament and Ellen White speak about female deacons. The obvious conclusion is that even though the language is gender specific, it is not gender exclusive. This being the case, the phrase *a one-woman husband* does not exclude women from being deacons or elders.

Third, the fact that the elder is expected to manage his household well does not exclude women from this office. In the instructions to deacons it is stated that the deacon was also expected to "manage his children and household well" (1 Tim 3:12), but this requirement did not exclude women from the deaconate. Neither should it exclude women from the office of elder. Besides, Paul expected not only men but also women to "manage their household" (*oikodespoteō*, "to manage one's household;" 1 Tim 5:14). A good example of this is found in the conversion of Lydia. She was such a good administrator of her household that when she was baptized, "the members of her household were baptized" (Acts 16:15). She could have been ordained as an elder! It is a well-known fact that women held important administrative positions at home and in society during the time of the New Testament. But perhaps we should keep in mind that the main interest of this specific qualification is that the elder should be a person with good

administrative and spiritual experience which in most cases would have been demonstrated by the way he administered the household.

### C. Women As Coworkers of the Lord

It would take too long to demonstrate the important role of women in the apostolic church. I will only refer to one of their most important responsibilities in the church. There are a number of important passages in which Paul mentions different coworkers serving the Lord in the churches. Often these individuals are considered to be persons who worked under Paul or who were his helpers, but Paul considers them to be working under God.<sup>21</sup> They were, like Paul, workers of the Lord. Talking about Apollos and himself, he says, "We are God's fellow workers [*sunergos*]" (1 Cor 3:9). Apollos was a well-educated man who knew the Scriptures and taught others about Jesus (Acts 18:24, 25). Prisca (or Priscilla) and Aquila instructed him in the gospel of Jesus, he accepted it, and went on to proclaim it (vv. 26, 27). Other fellow workers mentioned by Paul are Urbanus and Stachys (Rom 16:9), Timothy (v. 21; 1 Thess 3:2), Titus (2 Cor 8:23), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), Clement (4:3), Aristarchus, Barnabas, Jesus/Justus (Col 4:10, 11), Philemon (Phlm 1), Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke (v. 24). They are all, like Paul, proclaiming the gospel of salvation and strengthening up the churches.

Among the fellow workers Paul mentions several women. He includes Prisca and her husband (Rom 16:3; *sunergos*) and Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2, 3; *sunergos*). The important role of these fellow workers is evident in the way Paul refers to them and their responsibility. He speaks highly of them and when in need of reprimanding some of them, he is tactful and considerate. This is the case with Euodia and Syntyche, who apparently were having

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personal problems that could have damaged the unity of the church. Paul appeals to them to resolve the problem and asks another fellow worker to help them (Phil 4:3). What we have here is fellow workers helping each other to resolve a problem that could have divided the church. These ladies occupied an important leadership position in the church.

What were the responsibilities of the fellow workers? They are primarily servants (*diakonoi*) of the church: "What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed" (1 Cor 3:5). In 3:9, Paul adds, "We [Apollos and Paul] are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building." Since they are servants, they are not to lord over church members (2 Cor 1:24). They proclaim the message of salvation with missionary fervor and strengthen the faith of believers in their communities (Acts 18:27). Like Epaphroditus, they could be located in one particular church from which they would go out to serve (Phil 2:25). This is also the case with Euodia and Syntyche. The function of the fellow workers of God was so important that Paul urged the members of the church at Corinth, to be "in subjection to [*hupotassō*] such men [the household of Stephanas] and to everyone who helps in the work [Greek, "to every fellow worker"] and labors [laborer]" (1 Cor 16:16).<sup>22</sup> It would be difficult to argue that the submission to fellow workers is to be limited to males when Paul explicitly calls some women coworkers. We find here women functioning in important leadership roles to whom *church members were to be in subjection*.

### VII. "I do not permit a woman to teach" (1 Tim 2:12)<sup>23</sup>

There are some passages in the NT that give the impression that women were not to have important leadership roles in the church. We will briefly examine some of them.

### A. 1 Tim 2:11-15

In the discussion of this passage we should start with its main idea: "A woman should learn." This is a positive idea. We should also ask why Paul is asking the church to make sure that the female members are to be properly instructed. The epistle (the immediate context of the passage) makes clear that this is necessary because of false teachings being promoted among church members. Women have the right to learn the Christian message, but they should be taught by reliable teachers in the church.<sup>24</sup> Then Paul proceeds to discuss how this teaching is to take place. They are going to learn "in silence and in full submission." This is an excellent pedagogical advice. Notice that "in full submission" is not followed by the name of the person to whom they submit. The *context* clearly indicates that they are to be submissive to the teacher. In v. 12, Paul develops both ideas—in silence and in submission. Learning in silence means that they are not yet ready to teach, and therefore Paul clearly states that he does not permit those who are learning to function as teachers. "In full submission" means that they are not to have authority over man. The question is who this man is, and the context indicates that this is the teacher. The teacher could be an elder or a person with the gift of teaching. Paul closes v. 12 the way he began in v. 11: Women are to be silent.<sup>25</sup> This is the expected attitude of a true student. The command to be silent indicates that the women were not assuming the attitude of students and were disrupting the teaching process, making it necessary for Paul to order them not to discuss with the teacher but to learn in silence. They were to be submissive to both the teacher and to the content of the teachings.

The meaning of the verb *authentēō* ("to have authority over" NIV) is a matter of debate. Its use in documents from around the time of

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Paul indicates that it refers to a negative type of authority expressing the idea of a domineering and abusive use of power. Paul's use of this verb indicates that he is dealing with a situation of conflict in the church and provides the grounds for his desire for women to be in silence. Its use also implies that women were disrupting the educational process. The verb is never used to describe the authority of a church elder.

It is clear that Paul is addressing a local situation<sup>26</sup> otherwise the order to be in silence would not only be universal in nature but absolute. Women would be permanently forbidden by him to speak in church, without any exception. We know that this was not what Paul meant to say (see 1 Cor 11:4). The implications of the universal, permanent, and absolute nature of the order can only be avoided if Paul was dealing with a particular problem in a particular church or churches. Once this is established, we can then proceed to identify the universal principles being promoted in the text. Several things are of universal value. First, the church is responsible to teach the message of salvation and its implications to Christian women. Second, this is to be done by people who are qualified to teach. Third, those who are studying the message should not function as teachers or challenge the teacher or the content of the teaching. They should not be allowed to teach. Fourth, the students are expected to learn by showing proper respect to the teacher and by not disrupting the educational process. Any attempt to control the process is to be rejected. These guidelines would apply to both men and women who are students of the gospel in any church, anywhere in the world, and are to be enforced by local church leaders.

Verses 13 and 14 are the most difficult to interpret in the passage. Paul mentions the priority of Adam but he does not interpret it.

He simply states a biblical fact, Adam was created before Eve. He does not explicitly develop an argument using the phrase. Whatever interpretation we provide, it would be our way of filling in gaps in the text. If we follow the Genesis Creation account, the "first-then" sequence would point to their equality and to the importance for both of them to work together against a common enemy. They failed, and the same is happening in Ephesus. We could even argue that the priority of Adam in Creation is being contrasted with the priority of Eve in sin, in order to demonstrate that deception is not inevitable. However, Paul's main point in his argument is not Adam but the experience of Eve. The reference to her fits the context very well. (1) In both passages women are involved. Paul is advising them, and he feels that the experience of Eve could be helpful to them. (2) In both narratives we face the problem of false teachers. In Ephesus women were listening to false teachers promoting their views within the church, while in the garden there was an intruder, a false teacher, teaching falsehood to Eve. (3) The fundamental concern of Paul flows out of the experience of Eve. The enemy deceived her, and Paul fears that the women in Ephesus were being deceived and, like Eve, could become instruments of deception. He says that "some [women] have in fact already turned away to follow Satan" (1 Tim 5:15). Contextually, the main interest of Paul is not on the matter of headship but on the danger of false teachers and deception.

First Timothy 2:15 is a notoriously difficult passage. The best way to analyze it is to place it within the general discussion of Paul in the epistle. He is most probably attempting to affirm the value of marriage and childbearing as a response to some of the false teachings being promoted by some (cf. 4:3; 5:9, 10, 14). Women will be saved—this is important for Paul—if they persevere in faith, love, and holiness—

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that is to say, by not listening to false teachers and remaining committed to the Christian message.

### *B. 1 Corinthians 14:33, 34*

There is not a significant difference of opinion on the meaning of this passage among those who support the ordination of women to the ministry and those who oppose it. The passage is dealing with the speech of both men and women in church that disrupts the service. This type of behavior dishonors the Lord and creates confusion in worship. The silence required by Paul consists in self-restraint that contributes to the edification of the church. In such a context, to be silent and submissive are offered as the solution for the disruption of worship. In other words, the submission is shown in silence during worship and applies not only to women but also to men (14:28, 29–31).

### *C. 1 Corinthians 11:2–16*

The idea that male headship excludes women from the ordained ministry is usually grounded in 1 Cor 11:2–16. Probably the most debated question in this passage is the meaning of the Greek term *kephalē* (“head” NIV). It could mean “head,” in a literal sense (a part of the body) or in metaphorical one (“leader; one having authority over someone”), “source,” and “preeminent.” The translation “source” is contextually defensible (vv. 8, 9, 11, 12). In this case Christ is the source of men, men are at least partially or indirectly the source of the woman, and God is the source of Christ.<sup>27</sup> The sequence is the creation of man, then woman, and then the incarnation of the Son of God who is sent from the Father. The translation one chooses may not be as important as what Paul is aiming at throughout the passage.<sup>28</sup>

First, the passage is regulating male and female participation in prayer and prophesying

in church (vv. 4, 5). *It is not about restricting the role of women in church.* It provides instructions about gender differentiation, expressed through a cultural practice and about making God the center of worship. Men are not to wear a veil, while women should wear a veil when leading in prayer or in the proclamation of the Word of God through a prophetic message. Thus is gender differentiation, established by the Lord at Creation, reaffirmed in the church among its leaders.

Second, the practice is supported by a theological reason. When men pray or prophesy, they glorify God by not wearing a veil, and women glorify God, not their husbands or the men in church, by wearing the veil. By wearing a veil that covers their hair, women also set aside their own glory, which, according to Paul, is displayed through their long hair (11:15). Women should not allow men to deprive them from giving glory to the Lord.<sup>29</sup> When leading in worship, they both should point to God and not to each other or to themselves.<sup>30</sup> In a sense this idea is a development of 1 Cor 10:31: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” The rest of the arguments revolve around these fundamental ideas.

The veil frees the woman to only give glory to God. In fact, when she does this, she “has authority on her head” (v. 10). The Greek reads: “the woman ought to have authority on/over/her head.” This is about the authority a woman has and not about the authority someone else has over her.<sup>31</sup> It could be that “her head” means “her own person.” This means that she is authorized to pray and prophesy in the church by wearing a veil that covers all human glory and her own glory, making God’s glory the most important thing in the church.<sup>32</sup> The angels also rejoice when both men and women come together to give all glory to God. This is about equality in both essence and function.

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First Corinthians 11:2–16 is not about the headship of male church leaders (elders) over women in church. There is nothing in the context of the passage about the headship of elders in church.<sup>33</sup> Besides, there is nothing in the passage about who should be or not be ordained to the ministry.

### VIII. Ellen White and Women in Church<sup>34</sup>

We should begin with a statement of fact: Ellen White does not explicitly command or oppose the ordination of women to the ministry. That she supported the involvement of women in various forms of ministry is well known and documented. However, a careful consideration of Ellen White's thought on the role of women in the church supports the case for allowing the ordination of women today. The perspective we draw from Ellen White's writings encourages us to move ahead and stretch the boundaries of our understanding of ministry and ordination, to step out in faith and to respond to God's leading in the full participation of women in all aspects of ministry.

#### A. Women in Ministry

Ellen White believed in including women in all aspects of service and ministry. In 1893, even if some men did not feel comfortable with women doing ministry alongside their husbands and being fairly remunerated for this work, she argued, "this question is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled it." God is calling women to engage in ministry, and in some instances they will "do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God." Emphatically, she stated, "There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry."<sup>35</sup>

In 1879, she addressed a difficult situation in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, and stated,

It is not always men who are best adapted to the successful management of a church. If faithful women have more deep piety and true devotion than men, they could indeed by their prayers and their labors do more than men who are unconsecrated in heart and in life.<sup>36</sup>

In this inclusive statement her understanding of ministry embraces *church management*, a ministry that women can perform.

In 1880 she invited young people to do literature evangelism because it can serve as a good education for "men and women to do pastoral labor."<sup>37</sup> Twenty years later in 1900 she again encouraged women to do ministry. "It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God."<sup>38</sup> In 1887, while discussing the need to provide good education to Adventist youth in our schools, she exhorted administrators to do their best to train young women "with an education fitting them for any position of trust."<sup>39</sup>

Although she was aware that in her day there would be limitations on what women could do, she did not limit the options available to them and never used the concept of male headship to limit women in ministry. If somehow Ellen White believed that there should be limits on ministerial options for women, she had plenty of opportunities to clarify her thought. She never did. Instead, her encouragements to young women are consistently open-ended and inclusive.<sup>40</sup>

#### B. Ordination

Ellen White earnestly believed that the ordained pastoral ministry alone is not sufficient to fulfill God's commission, that God is calling Christians of all professions to dedicate their lives to God's service. And thus she invited the Church to branch out in its understanding of forms of ministry to include non-traditional

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roles, beyond those of ordained pastor, elder, and deacon we find in the New Testament, to meet the needs of the church, and even to ordain people in these roles.

In order to encourage the mission of Adventist medical institutions, Ellen White wrote in 1908 that medical missionaries "should be as sacredly set apart for [this] work as is the minister of the gospel."<sup>41</sup> In a similar context, in 1895, she wrote a long article about the work of lay people in local churches. She counseled:

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. *They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands.* In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. *This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor.*<sup>42</sup>

Here, she counseled that God is leading the church in setting apart women for these forms of ministry. In these two recommendations, Ellen White clearly had in mind a broader understanding of ordination than some had in her day and saw ordination as a form of affirmation serving a variety of functions and purposes. This suggests that Ellen White did not understand ordination to be a form of sacrament limited only to certain gender-specific functions. From a mission perspective, it seems obvious that in her counsels, all these functions are gender-inclusive.

These last two examples reflect a non-sacramental understanding of the laying on of hands. Ordination is first of all a form of affirmation and commissioning to a task. In

fact, it is accurate to say that in her writings ordination and commissioning seem to be the same thing.<sup>43</sup> Ordination is viewed as an affirmation of God's prior spiritual ordination and commissioning to ministry. The church simply recognizes what God has already blessed. In fact, in 1851, when she wrote about the ordination of our very first ministers, she called this ceremony a commissioning not an ordination. By 1896, she still had the same concept of ordination.

We must note that Ellen White was not interested in displacing men from the traditional roles they have had in the family, church, and society, but she asked the church to allow women in the broad functions of gospel and pastoral ministry, and in any position of trust they are qualified for, even including the management of the church.<sup>44</sup> Thus she appealed to the church to include women with gifts of leadership, pastoral ministry, and teaching (all the same biblical functions occupied by pastors, teachers, elders, and overseers), implicitly and explicitly calling the church to ordain them for these positions, as men are ordained for the same positions.

### IX. Conclusion

There is not a divine command in the Old and New Testaments or in the writings of Ellen White to ordain women to the gospel ministry. Neither is there an explicit command against ordaining them. However, we do find in the Bible and in the writing of Ellen White references to women holding very important leadership positions that required from them to "have authority over men." If ordination means basically "to have authority over someone," there is no reason to exclude women from being ordained to the ministry. But ordination is not about headship. It is based on gifts, a divine call, the witness of the church, and a spirit of service to God and to others

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(mission). An overemphasis on authority will distort the nature of ministry and will bring us too close to a type of ministry that is not supported by the New Testament but that is found in some Christian communities. Christ has to be our model.

It is important to realize that Ellen White opposes an understanding of the ordained ministry (a theology of ordination) along the lines of “having authority over.” Talking about the ministry of the apostles as illustrating our ministry, she writes:

The apostles wished it to be understood that *they did not set themselves up as lords over the faith and consciences of the believers*. They avoided all the severity they possibly could, and labored to promote the joy of the believers, leading them by kindly persuasion to renounce their errors. *Thus we are to work, by faith in God fulfilling our duty, not by exercising authority or dominion*, but by revealing Christlikeness of character.<sup>45</sup>

No one has been called by God to have authority over other believers, males or females, but to serve them by revealing a Christ-like character. This is leadership through the influence of a holy life. A theology of ministry and ordination is to be grounded in the endowment of the Spirit, the divine calling, and a life of commitment to God, to His people, and to the world. Grounding it on an alleged cosmic principle of male headship must be kindly rejected in order to avoid developing an understanding of ministry that would be difficult to support from the Scriptures.

Having presented our case, I must acknowledge that our friends have also their own case and arguments to support their position. We have not been able to reach a consensus on the biblical materials. This by itself indicates that we do not have enough information in the Bible to settle this case. The

question of whether or not we should ordain women to the ministry cannot be resolved on the basis of our own private opinions on what the Bible teaches, because the church has not been able to reach a Spirit-led consensus on the topic. This has some implications for you as church leaders. Here is one: It would not be theologically correct for the world church to decide on the basis of a majority vote which of the two positions is the biblical one and then proceed to impose it on the world church. In such a case biblical truth would not be defined on the basis of what the Bible says, as required by the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs No. 1, but on the basis of the belief of a majority. We would be sacrificing too much of our heritage and of the centrality of the Bible in the church. Let us continue to uphold the Bible as our final authority.

### Endnotes:

1. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 34.
2. She wrote, “All things both in heaven and in earth declare that the great law of life is a law of service. The infinite Father ministers to the life of every living thing. Christ came to the earth ‘as He that serveth.’ Luke 22:27. The angels are ‘ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.’ Hebrews 1:14. The same law of service is written upon all things in nature. The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the trees of the forest, the leaves, the grass, and the flowers, the sun in the heavens and the stars of light—all have their ministry. Lake and ocean, river and water spring—each takes to give” (White, *Education*, [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2002], 103).
3. White, *Special Testimonies on Education* (Payson, AZ: Leaves of Autumn Books, 1978), 57.
4. For instance, Gabriel was not a covering cherub but was assigned that position after the fall of Lucifer. Ellen White describes Gabriel as “the angel who stands next in honor to the Son of God” (White, *Desire of Ages* [Nampa, ID: Pacific



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- Press, 2006], 99; see also 234). This was Lucifer's position before his rebellion. In fact, Lucifer was exalted to the position of covering cherub; it was not his by nature. She wrote, "The first sinner was one whom God had greatly exalted. . . . Not content with his position, though honored above the heavenly host, he ventured to covet homage due alone to the Creator" (Francis D. Nichols, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, (SDABC) 7 vols. [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1957] 4:1162). She also comments, "Satan, who was once an honored angel in heaven, had been ambitious for the more exalted honors which God had bestowed upon His Son. He became envious of Christ, and represented to the angels, who honored him as covering cherub, that he had not the honor conferred upon him which his position demanded. He asserted that he should be exalted equal in honor with Christ. Satan obtained sympathizers. Angels in heaven joined him in his rebellion, and fell with their leader from their high and holy estate, and were therefore expelled from heaven with him" (White, *Confrontation* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2014], 9). Notice that when the Son received more exalted honors from the Father, Lucifer thought that he should also receive them. Lucifer's position was "appointed to him" by God (White, *Great Controversy* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1999], 495). He had developed the gifts the Creator gave him above the rest of the angels. White writes, "The greatest talents and the highest gifts that could be bestowed on a created being were given to Lucifer, the covering cherub" (White, *This Day With God* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004], 287). Because of his talents, he "was given a position next to Jesus Christ in the heavenly courts" (SDABC 4:1143).
5. She expresses this idea in very clear terms: "Graceful and symmetrical in form, regular and beautiful in feature, their countenances glowing with the tint of health and the light of joy and hope, they bore in outward resemblance the likeness of their Maker. Nor was this likeness manifest in the physical nature only. *Every faculty of mind and soul reflected the Creator's glory. Endowed with high mental and spiritual gifts,* Adam and Eve were made but "a little lower than the angels" (Heb 2:7), that they might not only discern the wonders of the visible universe, but comprehend moral responsibilities and obligations" (White, Ed 20; emphasis mine).
  6. White, *Adventist Home* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2002), 115.
  7. White, PP 58, 59.
  8. The ordination of the Levites and the high priest, Aaron, seems to have been a unique event. We have not evidence supporting the view that every new high priest was ordained. This is not an argument from silence, because we have a report of what happened when Aaron died and his son was appointed as high priest. When Aaron was to die, Moses was commanded by the Lord to remove from him the high priestly garments and to place them on his son, Eleazar (Num 20:22-26). This was a ritual of investiture that transferred the office of the high priest from Aaron to his son. It did not include the laying on of hands.
  9. White, *Review and Herald* (RH) (May 18, 1911) in *Daughters of God* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2007), 252.5.
  10. The Hebrew phrase *sōpṭāh 'et-yiśrā'ēl* ("was judging Israel") in 4:4 is a technical phrase in Judges to refer to "the exercise of a leadership office in the premonarchic period" (H. Niehr, "Sāpaṭ," *TDOT* 15:419). The participle is always used, including the case of Deborah, to refer to the person who was exercising authority by leading the people (Judg 2:16; 17, 18, 19; 4:4). The supreme judge/leader is the Lord (11:27). In the case of Deborah it is said that she was judging/leading Israel "at that time" (4:4), indicating that at other times God had used other leaders/judges. This type of leadership was instituted by the Lord over Israel (2 Sam 7:11).
  11. White, *Signs of the Times* (June 16, 1881): par. 4 (italics are mine). Although the primary responsibility of delivering God's people was Deborah's, Barak would be her military leader: "Although he had been designated by the Lord himself as the one chosen to deliver Israel, and had received the assurance that God would go with him and subdue their enemies, yet he was timid and distrustful" (*Ibid.*, par. 6).
  12. *Ibid.*, par. 6.
  13. *Ibid.*, par. 4.
  14. Some of the material used in this section is indebted to the paper, "A Synthesis Statement on Gender Inclusive Ministry and Ordination," in the final Report of the Theology and Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), June 2014. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
  15. Please note that in Rom 12:8, the gifts of teaching and leadership are tucked in among other, seemingly less significant gifts. It would

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be paradoxical to claim, on the basis of this passage, that the gift of encouragement was lower on the scale of giftedness, while the gift of leadership was higher and thus could only be endowed upon a certain class of believers in the church. Certainly this could not have been Paul's intention. Furthermore, Paul's use of the word *proistēmi* both in Rom 12:8 and 1 Tim 5:17 clearly indicates that the leadership position was based on spiritual gifting. Adventists have always believed that the spiritual gift of leadership, as any other gift, is also gender inclusive and can be exercised by women. Those who exercise this gift get their authority from God as recognized by the church. This authority is not dependent on any other person in leadership function in the church.

16. On this section see Carl Cosaert, "Leadership and Gender in the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy," TOSC, January 2014. Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
17. See Robert Jewett and Roy David Kotansky, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 941, 942.
18. RH, July 9, 1895.
19. "A number of women were ordained as deaconesses during Ellen White's Australian ministry. On August 10, 1895, the nominating committee at the Ashfield church in Sydney rendered its report, which was approved. The clerk's minutes for that date state: 'Immediately following the election, the officers were called to the front where Pastors Corliss and McCullagh set apart the elder, deacons, [and] deaconesses by prayer and the laying on of hands.' Several years later, in the same church, W. C. White officiated at the ordination of the church officers. The minutes of the Ashfield church for January 7, 1900, state: 'The previous Sabbath officers had been nominated and accepted for the current year, and today Elder White ordained and laid hands on the elders, deacon, and deaconesses.'" *Adventist Review* (Jan 16, 1986) in "Exhibits Relating to the Ordination of Women," a paper presented at the ministerial meeting at the 1990 General Conference session. Prepared by the White Estate staff.  
  
Jerry Moon commented on the statement by Ellen White: "Three responses to this appeal are known. Shortly after this was written, the Ashfield church in Sydney, Australia, not far from where Ellen White was then working, held an

ordination service for newly elected church officers. "Pastors Corliss and McCullagh of the Australian conference set apart the elder, deacons, [and] deaconesses by prayer and the laying on of hands." (Minutes of the Ashfield Seventh-day Adventist Church, Sydney, Australia, August 10, 1895, cited by A. Patrick; cf. DG 249). Notice that identical terminology is used for all three offices. Another record from the same church five years later (1900) reports the ordination of two elders, one deacon, and two deaconesses. This time the officiating minister was W. C. White, whose diary corroborates the church records (see Patrick). A third example comes from early 1916, when E. E. Andross, then president of the Pacific Union Conference, officiated at a women's ordination service and cited Ellen White's 1895 *Review* article as his authority (DG 253-255). Both the internal evidence of Ellen White's 1895 article and the responses of those close to her at the time—the Ashfield church; her son W. C. White; and E. E. Andross, president of the Pacific Union Conference during her Elmshaven years—confirm that Ellen White here approved the ordination of women to a role then associated with the office of deaconess in the local church" (Jerry Moon, "Ellen White, Ordination, and Authority," [TOSC, July 2013], 33). Available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.

20. Besides, Ellen White does not support this interpretation. She never opposed single men in the ministry. She acknowledged them. She wrote, "I was shown that the usefulness of young ministers, married or unmarried, is often destroyed by the attachment shown to them by young women." It could be argued that unmarried pastors were ordained after getting married but she does not indicate this. She never asked pastors who were widowers to resign from the ministry. On the contrary, she supported them and encouraged those who wanted to get married to marry again (e.g. S. N. Haskell and J. N. Andrews).
21. See Georg Bertram, "Sunergos," *TDNT* 7:874.
22. Ellen White echoes the words of Paul when she writes, "These whom God has appointed are workers together with God, and they are to be respected and honored and loved" (RH [October 10, 1893]: par. 13). This statement is preceded by a quotation from Eph 4:11-13—"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers"

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23. On this section see Carl Cosaert, "Leadership and Gender in the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy," TOSC, January 2014; and Teresa Reeve, "1 Corinthians 6:2–16 and the Ordination of Women to Pastoral Ministry," TOSC, January 2014; and Carl Cosaert, "Paul, Women, and the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy 2:8–15," TOSC, July 2013. All three available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
24. According to the Bible the teaching authority of the church, understood as the community of believers, is to be exercised by all of its members in accordance with their gifts. Elders, as overseers, are responsible for making sure that what is taught in church is the apostolic truth, this is emphasized in the Pastoral Epistles, but church elders are not the only teachers. There is a gift called teaching, and there is no evidence limiting to church elders or to male members of the church (Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28). Through the gift of prophecy, exercised by men and women, God teaches and edifies His church (cf. 1 Cor 14:3). Paul also mentions that when the church gathers, anyone can share a "hymn," a "word of instruction/teaching," a "revelation" or even a "tongue," but this should be done "for the strengthening of the church" and in an orderly way (14:26; also Col 3:16). Believers are expected to be teachers (Heb 5:12). The authority of the teaching is determined by its loyalty to Scripture rather than by the gender of the person who proclaims it (e.g., Isa 8:20).
25. The Greek term *hesuchia* means "silence, tranquility, rest." The verbal form means "to be silent, to be calm/tranquil." Paul is calling "for an attitude of attentiveness and receptiveness" (TLNT 179, gives a comment: "In the LXX and the papyri, the most common meaning of *hēsychia-hēsychazō* is remain calm, tranquil; repose is contrasted with agitation, war, or a danger. It is commonly said that the land, the city, or the populace was tranquil for so many years, meaning that they enjoyed peace for that length of time: peaceful people live in security and at rest [Ezek 38:11; Hebrew *šāqat*])." See also C. H. Peisker, "Hēsychia quiet, tranquil," EDNT 2:126. The Greek word-family emphasizes silence as the absence or avoidance of conflict. Philo wrote, "Has someone said something worth hearing? Pay close attention, do not contradict them, be silent (ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ *en hesuchia*), as Moses taught (Deut 27:9): Be silent and listen" (Philo, *Dreams* 2.264).
26. A reading of 1 and 2 Timothy indicates that the women in Ephesus were attracted by the false teachings dividing the church (e.g., 1 Tim 6:20, 21; 1:20; 2 Tim 2:17, 18), and that they were accepting these false teachings and advocating them (e.g., 1 Tim 5:13; cf. Rev 2:20).
27. Ellen White takes the phrase *Christ is the head of every man* to mean that He is the head of the church: "'The head of every man is Christ.' God, who put all things under the Saviour's feet, 'gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.' 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22, 23. The church is built upon Christ as its foundation; it is to obey Christ as its Head. It is not to depend upon man, or be controlled by man" (DA 414). This would suggest that for her the phrase *man is the head of a woman* is referring to the husband (cf. Eph 5:22, 23). In a more theological reading of the text, Ellen White takes the term *head* to mean "source" (see Ángel M. Rodríguez, "Evaluation of the Arguments Used by those Opposing the Ordination of Women to the Ministry," 44, 45).
28. It may be useful to keep in mind that "woman is not man's subordinate in this passage; she is his 'glory' (or 'reputation,' 'honor,' 'splendor'), the one who brings him shame or honor" (Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letter of Paul* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992], 33). It is not said anywhere in the passage that man "has authority over" the woman; in fact, it is the woman who "has authority" over her head (v. 10) (see Gordon Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987], 502).
29. See, Morna D. Hooker, "Authority on Her Head: An Examination of 1 Cor. XI.10," NTS 10.3 (1964): 410-416.
30. Ellen Whites states, "Heavenly intelligences can work with the man or woman who will not absorb the glory to himself, but who will be willing that all the glory shall redound to the honor of God" (White, *Lift Him Up* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2011], 358.3).
31. The phrase *to have authority over her head* is difficult to understand and in some manuscripts the noun *authority* was changed to "veil" (*kalumma*) to try to clarify the meaning ("to have a veil over her head"). But there is no reason to change the Greek text. The word *exousia* "can mean 'power' or 'authority' but there is no evidence that it means power or authority exercised by someone else over

the person in question [in this case the woman]. . . We are talking, then, about an authority or power which the woman has. It is best to translate *exousia* as authority, not power” (Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Church* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988], 87).

32. It seems strange that Paul would say that only man is the image of God and not the woman. It is unquestionable that in Gen 1 both man and woman were created in the image of God. This is confirmed by Ellen White when she writes, using the phrase Paul uses: “Created to be ‘the image and glory of God’ (1 Corinthians 11:7), Adam and Eve had received endowments not unworthy of their high destiny” (Ed 20). How can we harmonize what Paul says with Genesis and with the statement of Ellen White? We can suggest that Paul, in this polemical passage, decided to use a popular interpretation among Jewish interpreters of Gen 1:27 without necessarily considering it to be the final reading of Genesis. In the Jewish exegesis of Gen 1:27, the first part of the verse was interpreted to be about man (“God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him”) and the second about the woman (“male and female he created them”). According to this interpretation only man was the bearer of the image of God. See Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology*, trans. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 533, who was relying on Jacob Jervell, *Imago Dei: Gen 1, 26f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis, und in den paulinischen Briefen*, FRLANT 76 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 107–112, for the Jewish examples. Paul would then be arguing from within the Jewish reading of the text. His main point would remain valid independent of this particular interpretation of the text, if his intention was to emphasize the importance of giving all glory to God in Christian worship.

Some may feel uncomfortable with this harmonization. Let me offer you another possibility. When Paul says “man is the image and glory of God,” he is not necessarily denying that woman is also the image and glory of God. What he is saying is correct—man is the image and glory of God—but because of the polemical nature of the text he chose not mention the inclusive nature of the statement. It is also true that the “woman is the glory of man” as explained by Paul. According to him, since Adam was created first, the creation of the woman provided for him what he was missing, fullness of being (Weinfeld,

“*Kābôd*,” *TDOT* 7:24, points out that the Hebrew term *kābôd*, [“glory”] “can mean ‘substance, being’”). Paul goes to Gen 2 and provides an excellent reading of it. He notices that in Genesis the woman is created from man—this is her immediate origin—and not man from woman. These are the facts. According to Paul the woman came to enrich the man and in that sense, she added honor/glory to him. She was created for the benefit of man not man for her benefit, because he had already been created when she was created. For Paul and Genesis this is the very foundation for gender differentiation. This argument is used by Paul to indicate that when a woman participates in worship, she should cover her hair in order to give glory to God, not to man. When doing, this she also avoids self-glorification, because her hair is her glory (v. 15).

There is another passage in the New Testament in which we find a grammatical structure similar to the one in 1 Cor 11:8, 9. Since it is also used in the context of Creation it could help us to understand what Paul means when he says that woman was created for the benefit of man. We are referring to Mark 2:27: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” There are some important parallels between these two passages. The first one is the concept of Creation. Jesus was talking about the moment when God instituted the Sabbath—when it came into existence (*ginomai*, “to come into existence, be made, be created”). In the case of Paul the reference to Creation is even more evident. He uses the verb *ketizo*, which means “to bring something into existence, to create.” Second, in both passages a temporal sequence is assumed. In the saying of Jesus the temporal sequence is implicit, when he says that man was not created for the benefit of the Sabbath. Man was created first. In Paul, the priority of man is also implicit in the phrase “for man was not created for benefit of woman.” Third, in both passages something is denied and something is affirmed in connection with Creation. The grammatical formulation is the same in both cases: The proposition *dia* is followed by a noun in the accusative. Fourth, what is denied is that something/someone was created for the benefit of another: Man (*anthropos*) was not created for the benefit of (*dia* + accusative) the Sabbath, and man (*aner*) was not created for the benefit of (*dia* + accusative) the woman. The positive side is that the Sabbath was created for the benefit of (*dia* + accusative) man (*anthropos*, the human race) and

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the woman for the benefit of (*dia* + accusative) man (*aner*). These are the facts. The question is whether the fact that something is created for the benefit of another means or implies that the one who receives the benefit has power or authority over the other. The obvious answer is that this is not the case. Humans have no authority over the Sabbath. Jesus said that only the Son of Man has authority over the Sabbath. It is only the Creator who has authority over both the Sabbath and humankind. Eve was created for the benefit of Adam. She added existential weight (“glory”) to his life. The woman knew from the very beginning fullness of being, because she always had Adam with her. But she did add something to him. In this sense Paul is in complete agreement with Genesis.

33. Perhaps one of the most puzzling things in the New Testament regarding matters of leadership is the total silence in 1 Corinthians of any mention of elders. For a church that was plagued with so many troubles, Paul never refers to elders to keep things in order or to bring things under control. It is almost as if there were no elders in that church.
34. I have summarized in this section material from the first draft of the paper that will express the position of those who support the ordination of women in TOSC (“A Synthesis Statement on Gender-Inclusive Ministry and Ordination”). A full summary statement of what is now called Position #2 is available under TOSC, June 2014 at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc>.
35. White, “The Laborer Is Worthy of His Hire,” Manuscript 43a, 1898, in *Manuscript Releases*, 21 vols. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 5:324–327. It is important to emphasize that Ellen White recommended that tithes be used to pay women doing ministerial work. Tithes in the Old Testament was only to be used to pay the Levites and priests, all of them males. For Ellen White this distinction has come to an end. A woman can be a spiritual “Levite” and be paid from the tithe.
36. Ellen G. White to Brother Johnson, n.d. (Letter 33), 1879, in 19MR 56.
37. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 4:390.
38. White, 6T 322.
39. White, RH (June 21, 1887) in *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Hagerstown, MD:

Review and Herald, 2011), 117, 118 (emphasis added). Ellen White supports the idea of placing women in high administrative positions. After a discussion of the enthronement of David and the instructions God gave him, she applies the narrative to church leaders: “Those placed in positions of responsibility should be men and women who fear God, who realize that they are humans only, not God. They should be people who will rule under God and for Him. Will they give expression to the will of God for His people? Do they allow selfishness to tarnish word and action? Do they, after obtaining the confidence of the people as leaders of wisdom who fear God and keep His commandments, belittle the exalted position that the people of God should occupy in these days of peril? Will they through self-confidence become false guideposts, pointing the way to friendship with the world instead of the way to heaven?” (White, Manuscript 163, 1902, in *Christ Triumphant* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999], 146). This statement has become a source of debate, because the editors of the book decided to use gender-neutral language instead of keeping the term *men* used by Ellen White. Perhaps it would be better to exclude the use of this statement from the discussion. There are other statements from Ellen White that can be used to demonstrate the point. However, one could argue that she is using “men” in a gender-inclusive sense, based on her use of the term in the statement itself. Here is what she wrote: “Those placed in positions of responsibility should be men who fear God, who realize that they are men only, not God. They should be men who will rule under God and for Him. Will they give expression to the will of God for His people?” The second use of the term *men* is obviously gender neutral, because the contrast is between men and God. In that case what she really means by “men” is “humans.” The statement is important in that it makes clear that any person—men or women—can be placed in positions of responsibility that would require from them to “rule under God and with him” and to teach God’s will to the people. Nevertheless, in order to avoid unnecessary discussions, I will withdraw this quote from the discussion.

40. This perspective also harmonizes with what we stated earlier that spiritual gifts are gender inclusive. Ellen White agreed that women with gifts of leadership, pastoral ministry, and teaching could serve in the church.

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41. White, Manuscript 5, 1908, in *Evangelism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 546 (emphasis added).
42. "The Duty of the Minister and the People," RH (July 9, 1895) (emphasis added).
43. Very early in Seventh-day Adventist history, the leading pioneers of the movement felt concerned about the confusion and false teachings that were manifested sometimes among the small group of Sabbatarian Adventist believers. Following the example of New Testament apostles who had set apart elders to oversee local congregations against false teachings and to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, these early Adventist leaders selected promising men and set them apart with prayer and laying on of hands. The criterion for their ordination was the "full proof" evidence "that they have received their commission from God." By ordaining them, the group of believers "would show the sanction of the church to their going forth as messengers to carry the most solemn message ever given to men" (White, *Early Writings* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000], 100, 101). The ordination of these early Adventist itinerant preachers served as a rite to authorize them to speak on behalf of the church and to preserve order in the emerging church. It is interesting to note that in this passage Ellen White does not use the word *ordination* but rather refers to this rite as a setting apart and a commission. This indicates that she uses these words and concepts synonymously.
44. It would be helpful here to note a statement made by C. C. Crisler in *Women of God* 255, to the effect that Ellen White did not oppose women's ordination on theological grounds as permanently opposed to God's will, but in the circumstances where by doing so it would be exposing the church to unnecessary prejudice by a "gainsaying world." From Crisler's many conversations with her on this subject, he makes plain that this was her practical concern, not that of headship or some other theological obstacle, and that the day might come that this obstacle would no longer be an issue. Here is the statement by Crisler: "Sister White, personally, was very careful about expressing herself in any wise as to the advisability of ordaining women as gospel ministers. She has often spoken of the perils that such general practice would expose the church to by a gainsaying world; but as yet I have never seen from her pen any statement that would seem to encourage the formal and official ordination of women to the gospel ministry, to public labor such as is ordinarily expected of an ordained minister. This is not suggesting, much less saying, that no women are fitted for such public labor, and that none should ever be ordained; it is simply saying that so far as my knowledge extends, Sister White never encouraged church officials to depart from the general customs of the church in those matters."—C. C. Crisler (White, DG 255).
45. White, 21MR 275. She will also discourage an understanding of marriage based on the idea of having authority over: "*Neither the husband nor the wife is to make a plea for rulership.* The Lord has laid down the principle that is to guide in this matter. The husband is to cherish his wife as Christ cherishes the Church. And the wife is to respect and love the husband. Both are to cultivate the spirit of kindness, being determined never to grieve or injure the other" (White, 7T 47). It is true that our friends argue that "having authority over" is to be understood as something positive and constructive and not as domineering authority. But there is no way for them to fully avoid the negative aspect, because it is understood as not allowing women to teach. The element of control is always present in their use of the phrase. What makes this even more challenging is that this authority is particularly exercised on the basis of gender. This is the only criteria used independent of the quality of service of the woman, her consecration to the Lord, and her commitment to mission.



## MOVING FORWARD IN UNITY

Differing positions on gender-inclusive ordination can be respected in the practices of the global Seventh-day Adventist Church and enhance the unity and mission of the church<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

THE QUESTION TO BE addressed in this chapter is straight-forward. With respect to the practice of ordination for gospel ministry, can diversity be respected and unity maintained in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church so that the church and its mission are strengthened?

This question will be addressed in the context of differing positions held on the practice of ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, at the outset, it is important to indicate that the chapter does reflect a definite viewpoint, and it is appropriate that a number of presuppositions be articulated. They are as follows:

1. Uncompromising loyalty to the message and mission of the SDA Church.
2. Commitment to the God-given gift of global unity and respect for the mosaic of diversity within the global church family.
3. Commitment to the SDA methodology of biblical interpretation commonly referred to as the historical-grammatical hermeneutic.
4. An understanding and respect for the reality that in the church that there are different positions on gender-inclusive ordination.<sup>2</sup>
5. Dependence on Scripture and the writings of Ellen White as they are applied to the needs of the church and its mission. The presuppositions, proposals and conclusions of this chapter are not in any way drawn from the philosophies of feminism nor those theologies and practices which are not representative of the biblical understanding and accepted practices of the SDA Church.
6. A foundation in a biblical understanding of God's call to the ministry and the reaffirmation of the freedom of the Spirit to call and use whomever He chooses to minister to His church and to be engaged in response to that call in the mission of the church.
7. A desire to acknowledge the work of the Spirit in addressing misunderstandings of the nature of Christian ministry which have been introduced into the Christian church through the centuries. This is a call to include in our agenda as reformers of the Christian faith the restoration of a truly Christian ministry



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as defined by Scripture under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

8. The assertion that this issue alone is under consideration. Any assumption of linkage between the topic under discussion and other problematic issues is not appropriate. Credence is not given to any attempt to draw conclusions about positions on other issues on the basis of discussion about this issue.
9. The recognition that because of differing religious contexts, history and experience, the meaning attached to ordination is influenced by culture. Different cultures appear to bestow a different status upon a minister at ordination.
10. A position of affirmation for permitting the practice of gender-inclusive ordination in the SDA Church.

This chapter was originally written as a paper presented to the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC). The purpose of TOSC was to give *study* to the topic of ordination and its practice in the SDA Church. Other ecclesiastical bodies were to be tasked with the responsibility to assess and further develop in detail the positions and recommendations which resulted from the study process. To that end, this chapter is, in effect, a “broad brush strokes” case study of how differing practices may be implemented in the church.

### Historical Reflections

#### *Building on our Seventh-day Adventist History and Heritage*

Whatever we do as we move forward, we should ensure that we build on the foundation laid throughout our history and that we respect our SDA heritage. Since the latter half of the nineteenth century, whenever we have

had to make difficult decisions about matters of purpose and practice, we have always asked the questions, “What does the Word of God say?” and “What is it that best serves our mission?” The same questions are to be asked as we move this discussion forward. Word and mission have been the ingredients of success for the SDA Church that have distinguished the church for the last 150 years.

#### *The Principle of Flexibility in Practice*

Further, in being true to our history and heritage we need to remember that appropriate flexibility of practice has been a significant reason for the continuing growth, development, and sustainability of the global SDA Church. That flexibility has been a direct consequence of our commitment to the Word of God and commitment to our mission, as mandated by Christ Himself. Our reading of Scripture makes it obvious that God Himself used various patterns of organization and leadership in His dealings with His people. He practised the principle of flexibility. In the era of the nation of Israel He used at various times the patriarchs, the judges, prophets, priests, and kings. Then in the New Testament, while it is clear that principles of order and organization were a part of God’s intent for His church, He did not prescribe one inflexible form of order and organization. There is no mention of Sabbath School, a church board, or a business meeting. There is no requirement that we have a “Church Manual,” or that we establish a whole range of church officers in order to facilitate the fulfilment of our mission. Indeed, we believe that God has given the church the authority to establish such ecclesiastical practices and offices precisely because we are committed to the principles of Scripture and the fulfilment of our mission.

The words of the apostle Paul himself are

probably the most defining with respect to how we are to approach flexibility in practice:

For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings. (1 Cor 9:19-23 NRSV)

Without taking the time to fully exegete this passage, two things are clear. First, commitment to our mission determines our practice. Second, appropriate flexibility of practice is not only permissible, but in the context of mission, necessary.

Study of the history of the development of the SDA Church reveals that we have generally well understood this principle of flexibility. Particularly was this the case in matters of church order and organization. For example, in 1855 James White was insisting that the organization of the church should be patterned after what he regarded as a "perfect system of order, set forth in the New Testament."<sup>3</sup> Just a few years later, as he came to realize that the New Testament was not so specific as to prescribe a non-negotiable system of order, he argued that "we should not be afraid of that system which is not opposed by the Bible, and is approved by sound sense."<sup>4</sup> While ordination was not the specific topic under consideration in White's discussion, the principle is

established that change and flexibility for the sake of mission are entirely possible. Furthermore, wherever a definitive and unchallengeable view cannot be established on the basis of Scripture alone, we are to use "sound sense" as a guide.

Ellen White herself also often demonstrated these principles in the counsel she gave to the leaders of the denomination. Her counsel to them took account of context and circumstances and, while remaining focused on essential principle, she was indeed adaptable. For example, in 1892 she gave some very specific counsel with regard to the shape of church organizational structure. Writing from Australia to the General Conference in session (her letter was read to the delegates by O. A. Olsen, president of the General Conference), she explained:

We had a hard struggle in establishing organization. Notwithstanding that the Lord gave testimony after testimony upon this point, the opposition was strong, and it had to be met again and again. But we knew that the Lord God of Israel was leading us, and guiding by his providence. We engaged in the work of organization and marked prosperity attended the advance movement. . . . The system of organization has proved a grand success. . . . As we have advanced our system of organization has proved effectual.

Let none entertain the thought, however, that we can dispense with organization. It has cost us much study, and many prayers for wisdom that we know God has answered, to erect this structure. It has been built up by his direction, through much sacrifice and conflict. Let none of our brethren be so deceived as to attempt to tear it down,

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for you will thus bring in a condition of things that you do not dream of. **In the name of the Lord, I declare to you that it is to stand strengthened, established, and settled.**<sup>5</sup> (Emphasis supplied).

This statement is obviously one of very strong support for the need for organization and the "system of organization" operative in the church at the time of her writing. But please note the time of her writing. Ellen White wrote these words only nine years before the major reorganization of 1901-1903, when organizational structures underwent major reform: union conferences were introduced, and the auxiliary organizations were brought under the umbrella of the executive committee of the General Conference as departments.<sup>6</sup> Obviously, she did not intend that strong approval of the principles of organization or even of the specific system and forms of organization should preclude later changes when contingencies in the context of the world mission of the church made change desirable.

In fact, on the day before the official opening of the 1901 General Conference session, she declared, "God wants a change . . . right here . . . right now."<sup>7</sup> The following day when reiterating the concerns which she had communicated in no uncertain terms on the previous day, she added, "according to the light that has been given me—and just how it is to be accomplished I cannot say—greater strength must be brought into the managing force of the Conference."<sup>8</sup> She called for change and flexibility but did not attempt to dictate at key times in our history the particular shape that structures were to take. She left that to due process.

It appears that for Ellen White, the bottom line with respect to practice was the facilitation of the mission of the church. Structures which inhibited or detracted from

task accomplishment, which led the church to focus its time and attention inward rather than outward, were not at all appropriate. For example, soon after the General Conference session of 1901, Ellen White wrote to A. G. Daniells, the newly elected president of the General Conference, regarding the work among the "colored people" in the South. She admonished Daniells to be flexible in his administration because of the unique needs of the South. The church was not to become "narrow" and confined by "regular lines." Different methods of organization and approach were necessary in culturally diverse situations. For administration to be tied to an inflexible predetermined policy which could not adapt to diverse cultural and sociological needs was, for Ellen White, an abuse of administrative prerogative.<sup>9</sup> The very same day, Ellen White wrote to her son Edson, who was working in the southern part of the United States. Edson was inclined to be too adventurous in his innovations. Whereas Daniells the administrator had to be counseled to allow change and innovation in a different socio-cultural milieu, Edson had to be cautioned not to be too hasty. Ellen White wrote:

You need now to be able to think and judge with clear discrimination. Great care must be exercised in making changes which differ from the old-established routine. Changes are to be made, but they are not to be made in such an abrupt manner that you will not carry the people with you. You who are working in the South must labor as if in a foreign country. You must work as pioneers, seeking to save expense in every way possible. And above all, you must study to show yourselves approved unto God.<sup>10</sup>

If it was appropriate for Ellen White and the pioneers of the church to demonstrate this level of flexibility in order to facilitate the unity and the mission of the church, it is no less so

today when the level of diversity and complexity in the world church is so much greater. Yes, it is important to act together, and it is important to hold dearly to those things which make us who we are. But in the context of diversity, where Scripture is not definitive, we can agree to act in a manner consistent with that of our pioneers as we work together under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The mission of the church is realized to the extent that we are loyal to our understanding of the teachings of Scripture and we translate those beliefs into appropriate praxis within the diversity of cultures and environments in which we share the love of God. To the extent that we continue to be successful in doing just this, to that extent we will continue to flourish and be instrumental in fulfilling the commission that Christ has given us.

### *The Way Forward*

The principle of flexibility in the pursuit of our mission as it was experienced in the time of Ellen White's leadership has served us well in the church during the decades that have followed. Subsequent to an earlier discussion in 1975 on the role of women in the church, and following careful study of Scripture, the General Conference Executive Committee at its Annual Council in 1984 took action with respect to the appropriateness of ordaining of women as local church elders. While a number of guidelines for the implementation of the decision were included, the substance of the action is stated in the minutes as follows:

To advise each division that it is free to make provision as it may deem necessary for the election and ordination of women as local church elders.<sup>11</sup>

This action has served the global Church well. There have been no deep schisms. Indeed, it has promoted the preservation of unity of the church

and enabled mission to flourish by encouraging appropriate flexibility in practice. Time has shown that it was a wise decision in the face of the diversity of the church on the issue of the role of men and women in the local church. It has not fractured the unity of the church, and neither has it damaged the message and mission of the church. It is my observation that in the places where it was possible to implement the decision, the church has been blessed.

Given the ongoing nature of the global discussion and the deliberations of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, the challenge again faces us as to how to preserve unity and move forward. In order to do that it is here recommended that the global church take an enabling action which gives a similar flexibility to global church practice with reference to the ordination of gospel ministers. Such an action could be worded something like this:

That each division be given the prerogative to determine and make provision as it may deem appropriate within its territory for the ordination of men and women to the gospel ministry.

How would this work in practice? Subsequent to an enabling action, the primary operational documents of the church (*The Church Manual* and *General Conference Working Policy*) would need to be adjusted and appropriate wording found in order to express the principle of flexibility and permit freedom for the relevant various organizational entities of the church to exercise their conscientious conviction on this matter. For the sake of the unity of the church, it is important for us to find the means of expression which bring the church together; especially when there is difference such as is the case in this instance.

As an example of how this wording might be adjusted, it could be stated that while all ordination as such is for the world church (deacons, elders, and pastors), the

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scope of authority to perform the functions of an ordained person is determined by the appropriate authority-granting entity. For example, a person who is ordained as a deacon or an elder is authorized to function in those capacities only when elected to do so by a local church, for a specified period of time. If such an ordained person were to move to another local church anywhere in the world, they would only be granted the authority to function as an elder or deacon in that local church, if elected through due process to do so. They would not need to be ordained again. On the other hand, if they were not authorized to function in those capacities by a local church, they would not function, even though ordained. The same would apply to pastors. Although the ordination of a pastor is recognition for ministry in the global church, authorization to exercise the functions of an ordained pastor would be granted by the body authorized to issue the ministerial credentials to individuals, whether male or female, within the territory in which they reside or are employed.

In fact, there is a sense in which this principle is already at work. Ordination does not automatically enable a male pastor to minister in any part of the world. A process of careful selection still needs to occur to prevent the wrong person going to a place or responsibility for which he is totally unsuited. It is always appropriate to ensure that the right person, ordained or otherwise, is appointed to fill any vacancy. Credential-granting entities should always exercise their prerogative to meet the needs of their constituents in the best way for them and the church.

On the basis of the changes made to documentation, each Division would then have the prerogative to determine how the issue would be handled within its own territory. Some Divisions would continue to do as they do at

present and ordain only men. Some will determine that they are going to ordain both men and women. It could be that some Divisions will determine that each union or employing entity within the Division may make the decision and make provision as each may deem appropriate within its territory for the ordination of men and women. It would be important that assurance be given in each circumstance that there would be mutual respect and recognition of the actions of each other and that within a Division, an employing entity's decision on the matter will not be overridden by the senior entity. There will be differences in practice, just as there are right now, with respect to ordination of local church elders.

These differences should not be seen as insurmountable problems. Ministerial credentials are issued by an employing entity (usually a conference or a mission) upon the endorsement by the relevant Union. The credential grants authority to perform the functions of an ordained minister within the territory of the issuing authority. Even now, while we say that ordination is for the world church, this does not mean that ordained ministers can organize or disband churches within a specific territory, for example, without the approval of the local conference or mission. We expect that every ordained minister will function within the parameters of formally expressed approval by the supervisory entity for that territory.

All employing entities will continue to have the prerogative to issue ministerial credentials to those they appoint. They will continue to be able to choose whom they transfer into their territories and to issue credentials accordingly. They will also continue to have the prerogative through the service request process to grant appropriate authority to guests from other places who are invited to visit within their territory.

Consideration would need to be given to the situation if a female ordained person were

to be called to serve in the General Conference or even in a Division, where not all entities held the same position. The question to be faced in such a circumstance is whether holding a Ministerial Credential as compared to holding a Commissioned Minister Credential imposes any different or additional burden on any entity where ordination without gender distinction is not accepted. This chapter contends that such should not be seen as an imposition, because the functions unique to ministerial ordination (organizing/disbanding churches; functioning as a president, etc) can only be performed with the express consent of the supervising entity and the local membership group involved. A person from the General Conference and/or a Division cannot simply travel around undertaking those tasks indiscriminately. Ministerial ordination, while it is for the global church, does not give authority for uncontrolled or unsupervised activity which is out of harmony with the wishes and convictions of the local entity. There are parameters in place at present which moderate the scope of activity of an ordained minister and such would continue to be the case. Further, it should be noted that the widespread ministry and leadership of women who hold Commissioned Minister Credentials has not become a divisive issue in the church. If some of these women or others holding similar positions were to receive ministerial ordination their functions with respect to their role in the global church would really be unchanged.

### *The Outcome for the Church*

In order to move forward it is important that it be made clear that **any motion to be brought before the world church will impact only those Divisions which are ready to proceed** with the ordination of women as well as men. No entity which is opposed to ordaining woman need be affected in its practice. But

those entities which conscientiously believe it is imperative could do so.

Unity does not mean uniformity. **The essence of unity is not uniform action.** The lessons of the Jerusalem Council make that abundantly clear. The Jerusalem Council did not consider uniformity the same as unity. It did not vote on the one hand that all members should be circumcised or on the other that all should be uncircumcised. The Jewish members could continue to circumcise while the Gentile members need not be circumcised (Acts 15:19–35). Unity was obtained without uniformity.

No matter which position you or I personally take with reference to the discussion of ordination, **as Seventh-day Adventists we have a responsibility to guard the unity and promote the mission of the church. Right now we are at a watershed.** We have opportunity to move forward in unity. In fact, we all have the responsibility to maintain the unity of the church and promote its mission. **Even though it may come at what some may consider a cost, to do nothing will come at a greater cost: a deep schism in the church.** I do not believe that is what any of us want.

### **Conclusion**

Finding a solution is the task to which the global church must remain committed—if we are to remain a global church family. Such a solution can maintain the integrity of our belief structure. The practice of ordination with or without gender distinction is not included within our statement of 28 fundamental beliefs. **We can agree that the practice does not impinge on the content of our end-time message or on the fulfillment of our global mission, nor on our global unity.** And we can surely agree to modify our essential operational documents in order to reflect our

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mutual decision. Whenever in our history we have faced a situation such as this we have taken the decision which will best fulfill our mission. **Our unity has always been a function of our commitment to the Word of God and the mission He has given to us.**

Right now, the situation we face is a threat to the unity of the church. But we should be confident that we will be able to avoid that outcome. Why? Because of our love and respect for God and one another and our shared commitment to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These complementary allegiances are the two things which are an antidote to schism in this church. They are twin sisters, foundational to unity. Both must be present. One without the other will not do it. **Allegiance without involvement is pointless. Involvement without allegiance is aimless and most likely dangerous. In both instances, unity is the casualty.**

This church exists because there are people who have given their allegiance to God and the church, and they act on it. They come from "every nation, kindred, tongue and people" and they go to "every nation kindred, tongue, and people" (Rev 14: 6). They are one, but they are different. Difference requires adaptation. **Unity is ultimately dependent on the recognition that diversity exists. We can move forward together as the Holy Spirit leads us to love and respect one another and to find a solution which works.**

### Endnotes:

1. Some thoughts contained in this chapter reflect aspects of "Reflections on the Church and Unity" in ed. Woodrow Whidden and Gilbert Valentine: *Adventist Maverick* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2014), 184–193.
2. The Theology of Ordination Study Committee Report of the North American Division has expressed it this way: "Because the Bible does not directly address the ordination of women, and because the principle-based evidence is neither complete nor irrefutable, it can be expected that differing conclusions may be drawn by equally sincere and competent students of God's Word," 6.
3. *Review and Herald*, (RH) (Jan. 23, 1855): 164.
4. RH (Jul. 21, 1859): 68.
5. Ellen G. White to Brethren of the General Conference, Dec. 19, 1892, Letter 32, 1892; General Conference Bulletin, 1893, 20–25.
6. The adoption of some of these structures became possible because there had been an earlier flexibility of approach which made their general adoption more acceptable.
7. "Talk of Mrs E. G. White, before Representative Brethren, In the College Library, Apr. 1, 1901, 2:30 P.M.," MS 43a, 1901. This manuscript, together with MS 43, an edited edition of Ellen White's speech, is available in Ellen G. White Research Centers.
8. General Conference Bulletin, 1901, 25. By "greater strength," Ellen White did not mean more authority. She was referring to the wider participation of other gifted people in the work of leadership in the church.
9. See Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, Ju. 30, 1901, Letter 65, 1901.
10. Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, Jun. 30, 1901, Letter 62, 1901.
11. General Conference Committee Annual Council, Oct. 14, 1984.

**WOMEN and ORDINATION: Biblical and Historical Studies** is a careful review of both ministry and ordination in Scripture and in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This book explores what it means to be “called” to the ministry and how ordination, as we know it, came to be practiced. The book stands as the culmination of an extensive conversation. It is poised to begin the next conversation on ordination and women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God.

—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 322

The biblical understanding of ordination is not that the act changes those who are set aside, but only that the church is acknowledging what God has already done by equipping them through the gifts of the Spirit.

—Jiří Moskala, dean, SDA Theological Seminary

Women’s ordination to ministry does not violate the preservation of God’s name, neither His precepts written in the Holy Scriptures. Only two factors can limit the decision of the Adventist Church in favor of women’s ordination: avoiding scandal and the hindrance of the evangelizing mission to the world.

—Natanael B. P. Moraes, professor of applied theology, Adventist University of São Paulo, Brazil



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ISBN 978-0-8163-5787-1  
US\$19.99



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