

1 **THE SUMMARY OF SID BRC POSITION ON THE ORDINATION OF**
2 **WOMEN.**

3
4 **INTRODUCTION**

5 The Seventh-day Adventist Church has debated the issue of the ordination of women to
6 the gospel ministry for over a hundred years. In all instances, the decision has not been in
7 favour of women ordination. The absence of a clear biblical basis has been the reason for lack
8 of support for the ordination of women. In recent years the topic has generated increasing
9 discussion.

10 There has been a growing awareness of the increasing participation of women in
11 various aspects of ministry. There is also a notable contribution and participation of women
12 in ministry and this is commendable and encouraged. Perhaps the debate about ordination is
13 indicative of the fact that women are active in the mission of the church.

14 The contribution of this paper is to develop a position based on biblical foundations and
15 the writings of Ellen White in dealing with women participation in ministry and women
16 ordination.

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18 **I. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS**

19 In the discussion of this topic, time has been invested in establishing sound
20 hermeneutics of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. The first three chapters of
21 Genesis are recognised as playing a foundational role in the development of theology. Hence,
22 they are taken to be the starting point on which the discussion of ordination of women should
23 be established. Some pertinent issues that arise out of these chapters are:

- 24 1. Both male and female were created by the Creator in His image (*imago dei*).
25 They are equal in their essence (ontologically) as reflected in Gen 1:26-27,
26 Mk 10:6, and 1Tim 2:13. None is inferior to the other, and this resonates well
27 with E. G. White (see PP 46 and AH 115).
28 2. Male Headship/leadership role:
29 a. Man (Adam as in *ish*) represents God in headship as stated in the
30 layout of Gen 1-3 and 1Cor 11:3, 7-8.
31 b. There is clear role differentiation which started before sin and
32 continues even after sin (Gen 2:7; 1Cor 11:7-8; Eph 5:22-31).
33 c. Primacy of man (Adam) in creation (Gen 2:7, 22; 1 Cor 11: 12; 1 Tim
34 2: 13).
35 d. God gives Adam the prerogative to name the animals and Eve (Gen
36 2:19-23; PP 48).
37 e. Amongst the ordained priests in the Old Testament there were no
38 women (Ex 28: 41).
39 f. Amongst the ordained apostles of Jesus there were no females (Mark
40 3: 13-19).
41 g. There were also no female elders amongst the ordained leadership of
42 the church.

- 1 h. Male headship is reflected in Eden, in the home and in the church
- 2 (Eph 5:23).
- 3 3. The curse which resulted from the entrance of sin, brought a distortion of God
- 4 given roles not an introduction of new roles (Gen 3:16).
- 5 4. There is a lack of biblical precedence for the appointment of female elders.
- 6 5. The priesthood of all believers in the New Testament sets every believer on
- 7 the same level. Yet the same New Testament demonstrates the appointment of
- 8 ordained male leaders.

9 II. GUIDANCE FROM THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN WHITE

- 10 1. Ellen White, consistent with the OT and NT models, affirms the participation of
- 11 women in ministry within the specified roles as stated in the article where she directly
- 12 addressed the laying on of hands on women in 1895:

13 Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of
14 the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and
15 minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work
16 by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel
17 with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women,
18 maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in
19 the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the
20 church. -RH, July 9, 1895.

21 This statement does not relate to the ordained minister's functional roles (administration,
22 ordinances or raising of new churches). It describes a part time function for persons who must
23 consult with church officers or a minister.

- 24 2. Ellen White is recognised as having occupied the prophetic office within the
- 25 Adventist Church and yet there is no record where she requested to be ordained nor
- 26 received ordination from the church.
- 27 3. Ellen White did not receive a vision, instruction or revelation on the issue of her
- 28 ordination.

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30 III. POSITION ON WOMEN ORDINATION

31 In view of the study conducted and the arguments presented above, SID BRC
32 recommends that the Biblical model of ordaining men only, must be maintained.

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34 IV. OUR AFFIRMATIONS

35 We affirm:

- 36 1. The Bible has and should still continue to inform practice and ministry in the church,
- 37 both in the past and present.
- 38 2. The Old Testament and New Testament models of ministry leadership give us
- 39 timeless principles regarding the appointment of men and women to different
- 40 functions.
- 41 3. The Old Testament and New Testament demonstrate that no women were ordained.

- 1 4. In the selection of leaders in the Old Testament and the appointment of apostles in the
2 New Testament, culture was not used as a determining factor. Christ's Model in the
3 selection of apostles provides the fundamental framework for ministry and its practice
4 in the Christian church within the multicultural context of the expanding church
5 without introducing women's ordination.

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7 V. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8 1. Since there is no biblical support for the ordination of woman pastors, then the
9 ordination of women elders should also not be considered. That implies that as from
10 the action date, women shall no longer serve as elders.
- 11 2. The church should continue to recognise the spiritual gifts of both men and women
12 and encourage them to be involved in appropriate ministry according to the biblical
13 model.
- 14 3. Recognizing that we have taken actions that are not in line with the biblical model,
15 we should review all principles, policies, and practises not consistent with the
16 biblical model presented above.
- 17 4. The church should create a variety of ministry opportunities for women with
18 ministerial training such as counsellors and teachers.
- 19 5. The church should create a remuneration system that does not discriminate on the
20 basis of gender but recognises the capabilities and abilities of every individual in
21 ministry.
- 22 6. Ministerial Training institutions should provide greater scope of study for women in
23 ministry training, such as doing a double major in theology and counselling.
- 24 7. The Admission office of the ministerial training institutions should advise
25 prospective women theology students of the ordination vote and guide accordingly.
- 26 8. Females who are currently enrolled in our theological seminaries need to be
27 channelled in ministries that would not require ordination.
- 28 9. The proposal to regionalize ordination should not be allowed because it will lead to
29 further fragmentation which will threaten the unity of the world church.

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