THE SUMMARY OF SID BRC POSITION ON THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN.

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

I. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

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

1. Both male and female were created by the Creator in His image (*imago dei*). They are equal in their essence (ontologically) as reflected in Gen 1:26-27, Mk 10:6, and 1Tim 2:13. None is inferior to the other, and this resonates well with E. G. White (see PP 46 and AH 115).

2. Male Headship/leadership role:
   
   a. Man (Adam as in *ish*) represents God in headship as stated in the layout of Gen 1-3 and 1Cor 11:3, 7-8.
   
   b. There is clear role differentiation which started before sin and continues even after sin (Gen 2:7; 1Cor 11:7-8; Eph 5:22-31).
   
   c. Primacy of man (Adam) in creation (Gen 2:7, 22; 1 Cor 11: 12; 1 Tim 2: 13).
   
   d. God gives Adam the prerogative to name the animals and Eve (Gen 2:19-23; PP 48).
   
   e. Amongst the ordained priests in the Old Testament there were no women (Ex 28: 41).
   
   f. Amongst the ordained apostles of Jesus there were no females (Mark 3: 13-19).
   
   g. There were also no female elders amongst the ordained leadership of the church.
h. Male headship is reflected in Eden, in the home and in the church (Eph 5:23).

3. The curse which resulted from the entrance of sin, brought a distortion of God given roles not an introduction of new roles (Gen 3:16).

4. There is a lack of biblical precedence for the appointment of female elders.

5. The priesthood of all believers in the New Testament sets every believer on the same level. Yet the same New Testament demonstrates the appointment of ordained male leaders.

II. GUIDANCE FROM THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN WHITE

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

   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. -RH, July 9, 1895.

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

2. Ellen White is recognised as having occupied the prophetic office within the Adventist Church and yet there is no record where she requested to be ordained nor received ordination from the church.

3. Ellen White did not receive a vision, instruction or revelation on the issue of her ordination.

III. POSITION ON WOMEN ORDNATION

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

IV. OUR AFFIRMATIONS

   We affirm:

1. The Bible has and should still continue to inform practice and ministry in the church, both in the past and present.

2. The Old Testament and New Testament models of ministry leadership give us timeless principles regarding the appointment of men and women to different functions.

3. The Old Testament and New Testament demonstrate that no women were ordained.
4. In the selection of leaders in the Old Testament and the appointment of apostles in the New Testament, culture was not used as a determining factor. Christ’s Model in the selection of apostles provides the fundamental framework for ministry and its practice in the Christian church within the multicultural context of the expanding church without introducing women’s ordination.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Since there is no biblical support for the ordination of woman pastors, then the ordination of women elders should also not be considered. That implies that as from the action date, women shall no longer serve as elders.

2. The church should continue to recognise the spiritual gifts of both men and women and encourage them to be involved in appropriate ministry according to the biblical model.

3. Recognizing that we have taken actions that are not in line with the biblical model, we should review all principles, policies, and practises not consistent with the biblical model presented above.

4. The church should create a variety of ministry opportunities for women with ministerial training such as counsellors and teachers.

5. The church should create a remuneration system that does not discriminate on the basis of gender but recognises the capabilities and abilities of every individual in ministry.

6. Ministerial Training institutions should provide greater scope of study for women in ministry training, such as doing a double major in theology and counselling.

7. The Admission office of the ministerial training institutions should advise prospective women theology students of the ordination vote and guide accordingly.

8. Females who are currently enrolled in our theological seminaries need to be channelled in ministries that would not require ordination.

9. The proposal to regionalize ordination should not be allowed because it will lead to further fragmentation which will threaten the unity of the world church.