

# Ellen White, Ordination, and Authority

Jerry Moon, July 27, 2013

## Introduction

Both the Bible (e.g., Rom 16:1-3, 6, 7, 12) and Ellen White support the participation of women in the work of ministry. Women “are recognized by God as being necessary to the work of the ministry,” wrote Ellen White. “A mistake is made when the burden of the work is left entirely upon the ministers” (5MR 30, in GW 452 and Ev 492). She explained that women “*can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach*” (WM 145).<sup>1</sup> “Through the exercise of womanly tact and a wise use of their knowledge of Bible truth, *they can remove difficulties that our brethren cannot meet.*” Ev 491. Further, she advocated that women who devote their full time and talents to ministry should be paid (GW 452-453; Ev 492, cf. 472) from the tithe (CS 81, 101-103; 9T 247-250). Thus it is clear that Ellen White considered the participation of women in the work of the gospel to be not merely an option but a divine mandate, the neglect of which would result in diminished ministerial efficiency (Ev 491), fewer converts (Ev 472), and “great loss” to the cause (Ev 493, 469), compared to the fruitfulness of the combined gifts of men and women in ministry.

The problem facing the church today is how to implement this inspired instruction. For “best results,” it is crucial that the church implement this instruction in full harmony with biblical criteria. Among those criteria is the concept of the minister’s authority. The purpose of this paper is to show that the same pattern of authority that gives order to the universe is also reflected in the divinely designed structure for both church and society on earth. In order to uphold the truth as it is in Jesus, the church must structure its delegation of ministerial authority in harmony with the Creator’s original design.

Ordination is a rite which delegates to individuals the authority to lead in the name of Jesus. In order to rightly understand ordination, we need to understand authority as it is in Jesus. Lucifer rejected Jesus’ authority, and countered with rebellion. Jesus’ submission to authority led Him to the cross. Do we understand authority in the light of the cross? Lucifer rebelled; Jesus submitted. If we follow God’s design, His model of leadership, we submit. If we follow Lucifer’s model, we resist Christ’s leadership.

## Hermeneutical principles used

The following study is based on the hermeneutical principle of *sola-tota-prima Scriptura*, as set forth in the Methods of Bible Study Document (MBSD) approved by the Annual Council in Rio de Janeiro, 1986. *Sola Scriptura* means that Scripture “alone” is “the standard by which all teaching and experience

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the paper, all emphasis through *italics* or **bold italics** is mine, unless otherwise noted. References to the Ellen G. White writings use the standard abbreviations of the White Estate, listed at the end of this document.

must be tested.” MBSD 2 b (1). *Tota Scriptura* means that when studied in its “totality,” Scripture shows an inherent unity which testifies to its divine origin. MBSD 2 a (3). *Prima Scriptura* acknowledges that while there are lesser authorities besides Scripture, all other authorities draw their legitimacy from the “primary” authority of the Word of God. MBSD 2 a (1); Rom 13:1; GC vii.

A second hermeneutical principle that the Protestant Reformers insisted on was that of the unity of Scripture and the Holy Spirit (MBSD 3 b). They warned against either extreme: of claiming the guidance of the Holy Spirit while disregarding Scripture, or of interpreting Scripture without seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This principle Ellen White also endorsed. “[T]he 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.” Nor can the Spirit “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. White also claimed that the same Holy Spirit had revealed truth through her own writings—not to contradict or supersede Scripture, but to show its correct practical application to the life and experience of people today. GC vii-xi. Thus, Seventh-day Adventists believe that White’s “expositions on any given Bible passage offer an inspired guide to the meaning of the texts without exhausting their meaning or pre-empting the task of exegesis.” (MBSD 4 l).

### The Source and Nature of Authority

Christian ministry is an extension of the ministry of Christ, carried on in His name and in the power of His Spirit. Thus the *source* of a minister’s authority is divine authority. “There is no authority except from God.” Rom 13:1. Authority originates in God and comes to others only by delegation. DA 166.

Authority involves *accountability*. Ellen White warns that “*Those who have too little courage to reprove wrong, or who through indolence or lack of interest make no earnest effort to purify the family or the church of God, are held **accountable** for the evil that may result from their neglect of duty. We are just as **responsible** for evils that we might have checked in others by exercise of **parental or pastoral authority** as if the acts had been our own.*” PP 578. On the one hand, she sees the minister as “conscious of possessing power and authority from God” to speak the whole truth and reprove sin. RH Aug. 8, 1878, in Ev 134; cf. 5T 281. On the other hand, she strongly warns against the dictatorial misuse of authority. 8T 170-171.

As to its *nature*, authority may be defined as “the right to command or act.” “Responsibility” is “the state of being accountable.”<sup>2</sup> Thus authority could be described as the power to be responsible, the mandate to lead.

The *purpose* of authority is to enable unity and cooperation between free beings. Just as true love presupposes free will, so order and unity among free beings presupposes authority. In an orchestra, authority is vested in a conductor, but this does not make of the other musicians less essential. Only through the exercise of leadership and authority can beings with free will act in coordination.

The *expression* of authority occurs through ordered relationships of leadership and willing cooperation (authority and submission). As the centurion said to Jesus, “I also am a man *under authority*, having soldiers *under me*.” Matt 8:9; cf. MB 109. Heaven is structured on the basis of relationships of selfless loving authority and voluntary submission.

The sinful human *reaction* to authority is a natural aversion to superior authority, and an almost universal perversion of possessed authority. Rom 8:7. Human perceptions of authority and submission are almost universally associated with coercive, oppressive, or manipulative relationships. But when authority is exercised in totally selfless love, it is never oppressive. When submission is freely given because of love, that submission has a totally different character from the coerced submission that is the normal human reaction to oppressive authority. When, by his conquest of Adam, Satan became the prince of this world, he perverted both authority and submission. Thus perverted forms of authority and submission, *based on selfishness*, became the norm on planet earth.

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, **the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of.** In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.” Psalm 40:8. MB 109.

Because God is a God of both *love* and *order*, the “order” of the whole universe is essentially a fabric of loving relationships, structured by authority and voluntary submission [leadership and cooperation in love].

### Authority and Submission in the Godhead

Even within the Godhead, where there is perfect equality among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, there is both authority/leadership and loving submission/cooperation. ***We reject the heresy of subordinationism—that Jesus was inferior to the Father in nature or that His preexistence was derived***

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<sup>2</sup> Noah Webster’s 1828 *Dictionary* (the linguistic authority in Ellen White’s day), s.v., “Accountability,” “Authority,” and “Responsibility.”

*from the Father.* God the Son has preexisted from eternity. Micah 5:2; John 1:1-3; DA 530. Before taking on humanity, Christ “was God” (John 1:1) and was “equal with God,” yet He humbled himself to take “the form of a servant” and became “obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Phil 2:5-11. This passage shows that Christ gave voluntary submission to the Father’s authority, and was exalted by the Father’s authority. Thus “the head of Christ is God.” 1 Cor 11:3. When the plan of redemption is complete, Christ will again “deliver the kingdom to God the Father” and “then the Son also will be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.” 1 Cor 15:24-28.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal in being (ontology), having co-existed as one God from eternity. Yet even though equal in every way, they function in different roles in the plan of salvation. God the Father exercises a leadership role, the Son voluntarily accepted the humiliation of becoming human to be the Savior and Sacrifice for sinful humanity, and the Holy Spirit cooperates with the Father and the Son in the work of salvation, acting in many roles largely invisible and unrecognized. Thus with God, equality of being and nature does not mean sameness of roles.

### **Authority and Submission among the Angels**

Angels, though created with a higher nature than humans (Ps 8:5), nevertheless are organized in relationships of authority and submission. They are “ministering spirits sent forth [*apostello*] to minister [*diakonia*] for those who will inherit salvation.” Heb 1:14. Angels are charged with authority for specific assignments on behalf of humans. “He shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.” Ps 91:11.

Ellen White makes five pertinent observations regarding the relationships between angels. First, she described angels as organized in ranks of authority, some higher, some lower. Commenting on Rev 7:1-3, she observed that the “*highest angel had authority to command the four angels to keep in check the four winds until this work was performed, and until he should give the summons to let them loose.*” TM 444. “The *very highest angels* in the heavenly courts are appointed to work out the prayers which ascend to God for the advancement of the cause of God.” EGW Letter 201, 1899, quoted in 4BC 1173.5, emphasis supplied.

Second, she describes the roles of the “commanding angel(s).” For example, after Lucifer’s rebellion, before the creation of the world, “The angels were marshaled in companies with a commanding angel at their head.” 1SG 17. When Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane,

“Angels were hovering over the place . . . , and with the deepest interest silently watched Jesus. There was no joy in heaven. They wished to surround the Son of God, but the *commanding angels suffered them not*, lest, as they should behold his betrayal, they would deliver him; for the plan was laid out, and it must be fulfilled. 1SG 46; emphasis supplied; cf. EW 167.

These “commanding angels” were sometimes presented to her as taller than the other angels. When the mob arrested Jesus, “*many companies of holy angels, each with a tall commanding angel at their head*, were sent to witness the scene.” EW 168; cf. 272. When Pilate ordered Jesus to be scourged,

“It was difficult for the angels to endure the sight. They would have delivered Jesus, but the *commanding angels forbade them*, saying that it was a great ransom which was to be paid for man; but it would be complete and would cause the death of him who had the power of death. EW 170, emphasis supplied.

When Jesus was insulted at His trial, “there was commotion among the angels. They would have rescued Him instantly; but their *commanding angels restrained them*. EW 170, emphasis supplied.

At the final crisis of earth’s history, when God’s people cried in distress,

“the angels, in sympathy, desired to go to their deliverance. *But a tall, commanding angel suffered them not*. He said, ‘The will of God is not yet fulfilled. They must drink of the cup. They must be baptized with the baptism.’” EW 272, emphasis supplied.

At the saints’ reward after the Second Coming,

“Angels brought the harps, and Jesus presented them also to the saints. The *commanding angels first struck the note*, and then every voice was raised in grateful, happy praise, and every hand skillfully swept over the strings of the harp, sending forth melodious music in rich and perfect strains.” EW 288, emphasis supplied.

Third, she saw every angel as having a specific assignment. “*Each angel has his own mission, and is at his post*, ready to cooperate with you, and by combining divine power with human effort, make of no effect the opposition of foes.” *Southern Review*, October 24, 1899, emphasis supplied.

Fourth, angelic assignments were not to be altered simply by angels’ personal choice. “*Each angel has his particular post of duty, which he is not permitted to leave for any other place*. If he should leave, the powers of darkness would gain an advantage.” Letter 201, 1899, in 4BC 1173.5, emphasis supplied.

Fifth, she notes that the angels’ motivation for obedience is purely that of love. The angels’ love for God,<sup>3</sup> their love for each other,<sup>4</sup> for their commanding angels, and for the humans they minister to,<sup>5</sup> are

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<sup>3</sup> “The angels love to bow before God; they love to be near Him.” SC 94.

<sup>4</sup> “The same love that animates the angels, the same purity and holiness that reign in heaven, should, as far as possible, be reproduced upon earth.” FLB 65.

<sup>5</sup> “On account of disease, or surrounding discouragements, some drift into despair,” but “the thought that Jesus loves them, *pure angels love them*, and our gracious Heavenly Father loves, pities and wants to save them, should inspire them with faith and confidence in God.” RH, May 4, 1876 par. 66, emphasis added.

the constraints that subdue powerful emotions<sup>6</sup> and keep the angels in willing, joyful, freely chosen *submission* to the divine *authority*.

The reason that sinless angels need the leadership of commanding angels is that all their choices and relationships are completely free of coercion. The heavenly society is built on perfect love, which, to be genuine, presupposes the freedom of choice to love or withhold love. Ellen White maintained that saved humans, former sinners, will throughout eternity remain free of sin, not by being made incapable of sin, but by the powerful constraint of the love which God and Christ revealed at the cross.<sup>7</sup>

Thus it is clear that among the angels, the meanings of *authority* and *submission* are radically different from their meanings in this world. In sinful society, *authority* is too often an opportunity to indulge selfishness and to disregard of the needs and rights of others—the very opposite of love. *Submission* in a sinful world is associated with defeat, oppression, and helpless victimization. But in God’s kingdom, of which the church is to be a visible example, love is the controlling motive for all actions and relationships. True love sees authority not as an opportunity for self-aggrandizement, but as an opportunity for service, especially focused on those with special needs. Voluntary loving submission to loving authority often does not look like earthly authority/submission at all. Rather it takes the form of gentle, thoughtful, unselfish leadership and eager cooperation. See, e.g., MB 101.

### Authority and Submission between Christ and Human Believers

Seeing that relationships among the angels are described in terms of authority and submission, it should not be surprising that the heart of the plan of salvation, a personal relationship with Christ, is also a relationship of authority and submission. Only by surrender to the authority of Christ can one enter into a saving relationship with Him. The disciple responds with willing submission to the authority of the Lord. Whoever chooses not to submit to the authority of the Lord, will inevitably be defenseless against the power of Satan. Matt 12:43; Luke 11:24. As Ellen White expresses it,

“The soul that is **yielded to Christ** becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that **no authority** shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus **kept in possession** by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. But unless we do **yield** ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be **dominated** by the wicked one. We must

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<sup>6</sup> “Jesus also told them [the angels before his incarnation] . . . that as they would witness His sufferings, and the hatred of men toward Him, they would be stirred with the deepest emotion, and through their love for Him would wish to rescue and deliver Him from His murderers; but that they must not interfere to prevent anything they should behold.” EW 150-151.

<sup>7</sup> E. G. White, “What Was Secured by the Death of Christ,” *Signs of the Times*, Dec. 30, 1889; quoted in 5BC 1132.8. “The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God.”

inevitably be **under the control** of the one or the other of the two great powers that are contending for the supremacy of the world.” DA 323, emphasis supplied.<sup>8</sup>

Either resistance or neglect--anything less than entire submission to Christ’s authority—leaves the soul vulnerable to the domination of Satan. Thus it is evident that relationships of authority and submission are not only present in the Godhead, and integral to the angelic ranks, but are also found at the very center of the plan of salvation.

Further, since God promises that He will permit nothing to happen to us that is not part of His plan for us (Rom 8:28; John 19:11; MB 71), then a key indicator of our submission to Christ is accepting an *appropriate submission* to the human authorities God has placed in our lives. For example, White taught that the husband is the head of the home, and that “where it is not a matter of conscience,” the wife should “yield to the head” (Lt 5, 1861, 6MR 126). At the same time she warned that the wife is *not* to surrender her “identity,” her “individuality,” or “her judgment and conscience” to the “control of her husband.” 10MR 179; AH 47. A wife’s “entire submission is to be made only to the Lord Jesus Christ.” AH 115-116.

## Authority and Submission in Humanity

The previous section showed that even the sinless angels require leadership, structured in levels of authority. The first major premise of this paper is that there was an implicit authority-submission structure in the human race even before the Fall, based on six lines of argument:

1. If sinless angels, who have a higher nature than humans, need commanding angels to direct, restrain, and strengthen them in their compliance with God’s will, then humans would certainly need leadership as well, even before sin.
2. Some Scriptural allusions seem to indicate the existence of authority figures on other created worlds. Luke traces the genealogy of Jesus clear back to “Adam, the *son of God*.” Luke 3:38. At the climax of creation, “all the *sons of God* shouted for joy.” Job 38:7. Job also speaks of “a day when the *sons of God* came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.” Job 1:6-7; 2:1-2. It is commonly held that this was a heavenly council involving the leaders of created worlds, and that Satan presumed to attend because he had usurped the place of Adam, the original “son of God” on planet Earth. The inference is that Adam was in some sense a representative of the whole human race. When Satan overcame Adam and Eve, “he claimed that their Eden home was his. He proudly boasted that the world which God had made was his dominion.” RH, February 24, 1874 par. 19.

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<sup>8</sup> This comes from a potent, extended passage on this topic in DA 323-324, in which White speaks of authority under the related words *dominion*, *domination*, *possession*, and *control*. Related words for submission include *surrender*, *yield*, and *co-operate*. Words for unsubmission include *resistance* and *neglect*.

3. The concept of Adam as the representative of the whole human race forms the basis of the NT teaching that it was not Eve's sin, but Adam's that was determinative for the entrance of sin and death into the human race. Rom 5:12. In Paul's theology, the premise that Adam sinned as a representative of the whole human family, leads to the typological linkage between Adam and Christ. "Adam . . . is a type of Him who was to come." Rom 5:14-19. Again Paul writes, "The first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam [Christ] became a life-giving spirit." 1 Cor 15:45.

This implies that like Christ, the first Adam was *both head and representative* of humanity. "Head" and "representative" have slightly different meanings. "Representative" implies standing in place of the human family in relation to God or other entities outside the world. Thus Satan presumed to represent planet earth in the heavenly council of Job 1. Ellen White calls Adam "the *father and representative* of the whole human family." PP 48.

But Adam was not only the representative of humanity, he was also the head of humanity. "Head" implies leadership authority *within* the world and *over* the human family. Ellen White explains that "under God, *Adam was to stand at the head of the earthly family, to maintain the principles of the heavenly family.*" CT 33. Thus Adam's position as "head" involved an authoritative leadership, under God, that included both teaching and inculcating "the principles of the heavenly family." "Under God," means that Adam did not hold an independent authority over the earthly family, but only a delegated authority, "under God."

When Adam failed, Christ entered the battlefield to recover the headship authority Adam had lost.<sup>9</sup> "Jesus humbled himself, clothing his divinity with humanity, in order that He might stand as the *head and representative* of the human family. . . . Altho [*sic*] tempted upon all points even as men are tempted, he sinned not. He did not surrender [to Satan] his allegiance to God, as did Adam." ST, Jan. 16, 1896 par. 2.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "Christ is appointed to put down the rebellion. He makes this world His battlefield. *He stands at the head* of the human family. He clothes His divinity with humanity and *He passes over the ground where Adam fell* and endures all the assaults of Satan's temptations, but He does not yield in a single instance." {4BC 1163.4}

<sup>10</sup> "As *representative* of the fallen race, Christ passed over the same ground on which Adam stumbled and fell. By a life of perfect obedience to God's law, Christ redeemed man from the penalty of Adam's disgraceful fall." Ellen White, MS 126, 1901, quoted in 6BC 1092 par. 7. Cf. ST, January 16, 1896 par. 2. At Christ's baptism, He received the "assurance" that His Father "accepted the fallen race through their *representative*, and that he had granted them a second trial. The communication between Heaven and earth, between God and man, which had been broken by the fall of Adam, was resumed." Signs of the Times, Aug. 7, 1879 par. 8.



4. Further evidence that Adam was both head and representative of the human race can be found in the contrasts between pre-fall blessings and post-fall curses in Eden. Each curse in Gen 3:16-19 was a modification of a previous blessing.

Pre-Fall Blessings	Post-Fall Curses
1. Gen 1:28 “Be fruitful and multiply,” child bearing without pain	1. Gen 3:16a, to Eve: Childbearing with pain
2. Gen 2:4-22. Adam was “formed” from the dust; God’s covenant with Adam—one prohibition; Adam named the animals—all before Eve. Eve was “built” from Adam’s rib. Finally, Adam names Eve.	2. Gen 3:16b, to Eve: Husband shall rule over you
3. Gen 2:15-16 Adam to “tend and keep” the garden; i.e., light enjoyable labor	3. Gen 3:17-19, to Adam: Cursed is the ground; in toil and sweat shall you eat of it

The first curse, childbearing with pain, is a direct modification of the first blessing, “be fruitful and multiply.” The third curse, on the fertility of the ground, requiring “toil and sweat” to make a living, is a direct modification of the third blessing of tending and keeping the garden.

The precedent for the second curse is less explicit. Parallelism with the previous examples suggests that Adam’s post-fall rulership over Eve was also a modification of their previous relationship. Did Adam have any sort of leadership authority with reference to Eve before sin? When one passage is not explicit, *tota Scriptura* teaches us to look elsewhere in the totality of Scripture. In the NT we find an inspired commentary on Gen 3. In two places, the apostle Paul makes explicit what is implicit in Gen 2. In 1 Tim 2:13 he writes: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve.” In 1 Cor 11:8 he writes, “For 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 on her head, because of the angels.” Just as there is authority structure among the angels, so *there was an authority structure implicit in the original creation of the human race.*

In these two NT passages, Paul makes explicit what was implicit in Gen 2—the man was created first, and afterward the woman; and this sequence signified a difference in their roles. There was no coercion, no “ruling” on Adam’s part before the fall, but he was the first created and held primacy of position.

5. Perfection-of-Creation principle. When Jesus was asked about the Mosaic law of divorce, he replied, “from the beginning it was not so.” Matt 19:8. God did not create the world with defects and then try to fix it through history. The prevailing evolutionary worldview regards the latest developments in human society as improvements over the past, but the biblical worldview teaches the absolute perfection of God’s original creation.

6. Unity of the scriptures. If we accept that the human race needed an authority structure, even before sin, and that Adam was the primary authority figure in the human family even before sin, then the

entire Bible is consistent, and Paul is in perfect harmony with Genesis. Throughout the history of the OT era, the priests and their Levite assistants were all men. For judges and prophets, God usually chose men, with a few exceptions (Miriam, Deborah, Huldah). In the NT the twelve apostles and the seven deacons were all men. The lists of qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 2:11—3:7 and Titus 1:5-9 assume that elders will be men. Women could be prophets and probably deacons. 1 Tim 3:11; Rom 16:1.<sup>11</sup> Paul mentions many women who were partners in ministry and/or hosts of house churches, but does *not* say that they held the church offices of overseer or elder. Spiritual gifts were given to every member, both men and women, for ministry.

It is commonly assumed that in the NT, the “priesthood of every believer” replaced the OT Aaronic/Levitical priesthood, with its foundation in male leadership. It is true that *Christ’s high priesthood* “according to the order of Melchizedek” replaced the Aaronic/Levitical priesthood. Heb 7:11. But there was a “kingdom of priests” in the OT as well. Exod 19:6; cf. 1 Pet 2:9. And there remains in the NT a distinction between the witness and mission of every member and the “full ecclesiastical authority” of the ordained minister.<sup>12</sup>

### Authority, Equality, and Diversity

All the angels are equally essential to God’s perfect plan (there can be no leaders without followers), yet they are diverse in their respective roles. So also, when God, who exists in plurality, created humans in the divine image, He created them in a plurality of forms, male and female. As form follows function, so it is apparent that God made male and female different because He had different roles for them. Both genders are equally essential to God’s design for society, but they are not identical. Each supplies complementary strengths and qualities that would otherwise be deficient in the other. Indeed, if they were identical in every way, one of them would be unnecessary.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Many expositors, including some staunch opponents of ordaining women as elders or ministers, believe that the best translation of *gunaikas* in 1 Tim 3:11 is “women,” referring to female deacons rather than wives of deacons. See, e.g., Harold W. Hoehner, “Can a Woman be a Pastor-Teacher?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50/4 (Dec. 2007): 761-771. The reference to deaconesses is on pp. 763-764. Online at [http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/50/50-4/JETS\\_50-4\\_761-771\\_Hoehner.pdf](http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/50/50-4/JETS_50-4_761-771_Hoehner.pdf) Accessed December 2012. Hoehner was Distinguished Professor of NT Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. He died in 2009. See also William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000, 202-204, cited in Hoehner, 765 n14; J. David Pawson, *Leadership Is Male* (Nashville: Oliver-Nelson Books [a division of Thomas Nelson], 1990), 89; Mario Veloso, “Biblical Base for an Adventist Theology of Ordination” (unpublished paper), p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> “Full ecclesiastical authority” is the phrase Ellen White uses in AA 160. This will be considered in detail beginning on page 18, below.

<sup>13</sup> The feminist agenda first asks *tolerance* for women in roles designed for men, then *equal rights* in those roles, then *supremacy* in those roles. John T. Pless, “Women’s Ordination and Global Lutheranism Today,” presentation to International Lutheran Council, Niagara Falls, Ontario, Sept. 20, 2012, pp. 9-10,

Ellen White often uses “equal” or “not equal” to compare human, angelic, or divine nature. She repeatedly declared that the Son of God is “equal to the Father.” PP 37-38, 63, 69. The angels and Lucifer, however, were *not* equal in nature to God and Christ. Because human nature was not equal to that of the angels, when Christ took “human nature upon Him, His strength would *not be equal* to theirs [the angels’].” PP 65. Finally, the animals were of lesser natures than humans. “Among all the creatures that God had made on the earth, there was *not one equal to man*.” PP 46. In response to this need, God made for Adam “a helper comparable to him.” Gen 2:18. Ellen White comments that the woman was to be

“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***, showing the ***close union and the affectionate attachment*** that should exist in this relation. PP 46.

Evidently, the primary meaning of the first woman being “equal” to the first man was that they were equal in possessing the same *human nature*. The animals were not equal to the man, but the woman was equal to him. She could not only be a companion, but she “could be *one with him* in love and sympathy.” PP 46. They were both called “Adam,” or “Mankind” (Gen 5:2) because they were of the same nature. The woman was made of a rib taken from the flesh of the man, suggesting that as they had come from “one flesh” they were capable of reuniting in one flesh. Being of one nature, they had a profound potential for intimacy and unity.

Though White believed that both genders were created equal, she also held that they were each unique, with complementary strengths and weaknesses. The very fact of gender uniqueness implies that each gender would have some qualities unequal to those of the other gender. Thus the man had deficiencies that the woman could supply, and vice versa. To one husband who held extreme ideas of his own authority, White succinctly explained the concept of complementarity:

We cannot all have the same minds nor cherish the same ideas; but one is to be a benefit and blessing to the other, that where one lacks, another may supply what is requisite. You have certain deficiencies of character and natural biases that render it profitable for you to be brought in contact with a mind differently organized, in order to properly balance your own. Instead of superintending so exclusively, you should consult with your wife and arrive at joint decisions. 4T 128.

Ellen White denied that there was any intrinsic inferiority in the woman, in physical abilities, intellect, or spirituality. She not only insisted that husband and wife are “equal,” but that the mother’s work is “more holy, more sacred,” than is the work of her husband.

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quoting Charles Porterfield Krauth, *The Conservative Reformation and its Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963), 195-196. The end result is that men are marginalized, become unnecessary, and God’s original design for the sexes is reversed.

*Woman should fill the position which God originally designed for her, as her husband's equal.* The world needs mothers who are mothers not merely in name but in every sense of the word. We may safely say that ***the distinctive duties of woman are more sacred, more holy, than those of man.*** Let woman realize the sacredness of her work and in the strength and fear of God take up her life mission. Let her educate her children for usefulness in this world and for a home in the better world.

The wife and mother should not sacrifice her strength and allow her powers to lie dormant, leaning wholly upon her husband. Her individuality cannot be merged in his. ***She should feel that she is her husband's equal***—to stand by his side, she faithful at her post of duty and he at his. ***Her work in the education of her children is in every respect as elevating and ennobling as any post of duty he may be called to fill, even if it is to be the chief magistrate of the nation.***” AH 231; see also CE 178.

Thus she taught that husband and wife are “equal” in nature, but have different roles, of which the mother’s role is “more sacred, more holy” than that of her husband. While she held that men and women are “equal in every respect,” White also held that both genders have special leadership roles involving specific responsibilities.

The mother is the *queen of the home*, and the children are her subjects. *She is to rule her household wisely, in the dignity of her motherhood. Her influence in the home is to be paramount; her word, law.* If she is a Christian, under God's control, she will command the respect of her children.

*The children are to be taught to regard their mother, not as a slave whose work it is to wait on them, but as a queen who is to guide and direct them, teaching them line upon line, precept upon precept.* AH 232.

Thus the roles of men and women are equal in value and importance, but not identical. The teaching of Paul and Ellen White that Adam was both head and representative of the entire human race, clearly indicates that he held a different position than that of Eve. That distinction is implicit in the text of Genesis 2. The Hebrew *ha-adam* can be variously translated “man” (mankind) or “the man” (as an individual), or “Adam” (his proper name). In Gen 2:7, all three are possible simultaneously. Adam, the man, constituted at that moment the whole of mankind. In the following verses, God made a covenant with Adam, including the commandment about the forbidden tree, before the existence of Eve. Gen 2:7-17. The creation of the woman was different from that of the man. Adam was “formed” (*yâtsar*) from the dust of the ground. Eve was “built” (*bânâh*) from one of Adam’s ribs (Gen 2:7, 22). In Ellen White’s words,

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**, showing the **close union and the affectionate attachment** that should exist in this relation. PP 46.

Then White quotes two verses of Scripture that apply the Genesis principle to present-day life on earth. "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." Gen 2:24. PP 46.

Thus in their marriage, God "made Eve the equal of Adam" (PP 58), representing the equality that God intended should always exist between husbands and wives. Again White writes, "*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.* . . . 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 [in Gen 3:16] he has abused in many respects by exercising arbitrary power." 3T 484.

I myself once read this as indicating that there was no head of the family until after the Fall. Such a concept only seemed to make sense because Adam and Eve had no children in the Garden of Eden. Had Adam and Eve been faithful, the command to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28) would have led to a growing family in which the need of authority and leadership would have been obvious.

The statement, God "designed . . . that in all things she [Eve] should be his [Adam's] equal" does not mean there were no role differences before the fall. White is clear that before sin, Adam and Eve had complementary, but not identical roles. Eve was to be "loved and protected" by Adam, and she was to be his "helper" and "companion." PP 46. "The holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other; and yet each had an individuality in thinking and acting." 3T 484.

The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone. But absorbed in her pleasing task, she unconsciously wandered from his side. On perceiving that she was alone, she felt an apprehension of danger, but dismissed her fears, deciding that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it. PP 53, 54.

Thus they both failed to follow the specific instructions given to them. Eve trusted in herself and became independent. Adam "permitted Eve to wander from his side" and thus failed to be her protector. PP 56. Then he "heeded the voice" of his wife, rather than the command of God. Gen 3:17. How different would have been their history had Adam, instead of eating the fruit, had fallen on his face in intercession for his wife.<sup>14</sup> The fact that he recognized her sin, but determined to follow her lead is further evidence that his love for Eve had eclipsed his faithfulness to his responsibility as leader of the home and church.

### **Authority and Equality after the Fall**

After their fall, God made known to Adam and Eve the "consequences of their transgression." PP 57.

To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire *shall be* for your husband, And he shall rule over you."

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it':

"Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. Gen 3:16-17.

Ellen White sees these verses as prescriptive, maintaining that the curses were not arbitrary punishments, but necessary adaptations to the new situation of human sin; and further, that if applied in the way God intended, these changes would have proved to be blessings.<sup>15</sup>

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 Eve 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 enjoined 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 58-59

Proof that White did not see *male leadership* as incompatible with *equality between Adam and Eve*, is that White endorsed as still valid today, both a woman's equality with her husband, and the husband's position as head of the household—despite the sinful, even criminal abuses committed under the cloak of male headship. She consistently taught that the *husband is still to be the head* of the home, and that *husbands and wives are still to be fully equal*. For example, she wrote that

The wife and mother should not sacrifice her strength and allow her powers to lie dormant, leaning wholly upon her husband. Her individuality cannot be merged in his. ***She should feel that she is her husband's equal***--to stand by his side, she faithful at her post of duty and he at his. ***Her work in the education of her children is in every respect as elevating and ennobling as any post of duty he may be called to fill, even if it is to be the chief magistrate of the nation.*** AH 231.

She reminded a Brother B that he "should be very tender and gentle toward his wife, ***who is his equal in every respect.***" AH 227. To another husband she wrote,

You think too much of your opinion . . . and have not been willing that your wife's judgment should have the weight it should in your family. You have not encouraged respect for your wife yourself nor educated your children to respect her judgment. ***You have not made her your equal,***

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<sup>14</sup> Pawson, 35.

but have rather taken the reins of government and control into your own hands and held them with a firm grasp. AH 227.

White cited Abigail's initiative with David (1 Samuel 25) as an example of "circumstances under which it is proper for a woman to act promptly and independently, moving with decision in the way she knows to be the way of the Lord. *The wife is to stand by the side of the husband as his equal*, sharing all the responsibilities of life, *rendering due respect to him* who has selected her for his life-long companion. "For the *husband is the head* of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." Ms 17, 1891 (21MR 214-215). She saw "in the character of Abigail, the wife of Nabal, . . . an illustration of womanhood after the order of Christ, while her husband illustrates what a man may become who yields himself to the control of Satan." 21MR 213. Again, "**Woman**, if she wisely improves her time and her faculties, relying upon God for wisdom and strength, *may stand on an equality with her husband as adviser, counselor, companion, and coworker, and yet lose none of her womanly grace or modesty.*" HR, June 1, 1880, quoted in DG 151-152.

### *Male leadership in the home*

While White strongly rebuked the tyrannical, controlling spirit of some husbands, she also upheld a carefully defined role of male leadership in the family. Notice the change of tone in the middle of the paragraph, where her emphasis shifts from rebuking the abuse of headship, to instructing about the proper role of the husband.

It is *no evidence of manliness* in the husband for him *to dwell constantly upon his position as head of the family*. It does not increase respect for him to hear him *quoting Scripture to sustain his claims to authority*. It will not make him more manly to *require his wife, the mother of his children, to act upon his plans as if they were infallible*. **[Here she changes from rebuke to instruction:]** The Lord has constituted the *husband the head* of the wife to be her protector; he is the *house-band of the family*, binding the members together, *even as Christ is the head of the church* and the Saviour of the mystical body. Let every husband who claims to love God carefully study the requirements of God in his position. *Christ's authority is exercised in wisdom, in all kindness and gentleness; so let the husband exercise his power and imitate the great Head of the church*. AH 215.

In a lengthy testimony to an overbearing husband (4T 125-134), White wrote,

You have made a sad mistake in *breaking down the will and judgment of your wife, and requiring her to unquestionably yield to your superior wisdom*. . . .

*You should not seek to rule the actions of your wife, or treat her as a servile dependent. Never lift yourself above her, and excuse yourself by thinking: "She is inexperienced and inferior to me." Never seek to unreasonably bend her will to yours, for she has an individuality that can never be merged in yours. I have seen many families shipwrecked through overmanagement on the part of their head, whereas through consultation and agreement all might have moved off harmoniously and well.*

My brother, you are self-conceited. *You go out of your proper province in order to exercise your authority.* You imagine that you understand the best way of doing the work *in your kitchen.* You have your own peculiar ideas of how everything should be done in the working department, and you expect all to adapt themselves like machinery to these ideas and observe the particular order that pleases you. . . . You do not encourage independent effort on the part of your family; but if your specific directions are not scrupulously carried out, you too frequently find fault with the delinquents.

Were your wife and other members of your family without tact or skill, you would be more excusable in *taking the reins so entirely into your own hands;* but this not being the case, *your course is altogether unwarrantable. After you have kindly informed them concerning your views of cooking and the management of household matters, and intimated what your desires are in this respect, go no further, but let them use your suggestions as they choose.* They will be much more likely to be pleasantly influenced to please you than if you resorted to peremptory measures. ***And even if they do not adapt themselves to your opinions, do not persist in ruling, in having everything done in your own way. You must remember that the natural independence of others should be respected. If your wife does her work in a way convenient to herself, you have no right to interfere with her affairs and fret and burden her with your many suggestions and reflections upon her management.*** 4T 127-28.

The testimony continues in this vein for ten pages (4T 125-134). White did not in any way condone the all-too-common abuses of male headship. *Yet she maintained that the principle of male leadership, when lovingly carried out in the spirit of mutual equality between husband and wife, is still God's plan for home government.* (See next quotation.) Unfortunately, what many envision as “male headship” in the home is far from the biblical concept. Describing the quality of love that should characterize the husband, Eph 5:25 commands, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself [to death] for it.” If a husband would rather die than cause needless pain to his wife, she need not fear he will be abusive toward her.

The husband is the head of the family, as Christ is the head of the church; and any course which the wife may pursue to lessen his influence and lead him to come down from that dignified, responsible position is displeasing to God. 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. And it will not detract from the dignity of the wife to yield to him whom she has chosen to be her counselor, adviser, and protector. The husband should maintain his position in his family with all meekness, yet with decision. 1T 307-308.

White also encouraged wives to respect their husbands and support them in their spiritual leadership, in harmony with Gen 3:17. To Mary Loughborough, wife of J. N. Loughborough, White counseled that the wife should still regard the husband as the head.

“We women must remember that God has placed us subject to the husband. He is the head and our judgment and views and reasonings must agree with his if possible. If not, the preference in God's Word is given to the husband where it is not a matter of conscience. We must yield to the head.” Lt 5, 1861, 6MR 126.



Yet White always insisted that the wife is *not* to surrender her “identity,” her “individuality,” or “her judgment and conscience” to the “control of her husband.” 10MR 179; AH 47. A wife’s “entire submission is to be made only to the Lord Jesus Christ.” AH 115-116. Thus she did not see male leadership as contrary to the fundamental equality of the marriage relationship. Rather, she echoed Paul’s command in Eph 5:33, that the husband should “love his own wife as himself” and the wife should “respect” her husband. AH 103.

### Authority in Home and Church

Some acknowledge that male leadership is the biblical teaching for the home, but deny that it applies to the church. Scripture is clear that the church is not a corporation, but a family. To discover the relation between home and church, we again begin with the heavenly order. The heavenly “Father” (Greek *pater*), as head of the heavenly “family” (Greek, *patria*), is the pattern for every earthly father and earthly family. Eph 3:14-15. Ellen White echoes Paul, writing “the home [is] a symbol of the heavenly family” and “every family is a church.” Ms. 42, 1903, in RC 179.

In Eph 5, the great Apostle Paul makes an extended argument that the authority structures of the home and the church were created by God to be reflections of each other.

<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. <sup>24</sup> Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let the wives be* to their own husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. <sup>30</sup> For we are members of His body, <sup>[d]</sup> of His flesh and of His bones. <sup>31</sup> “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”<sup>[e]</sup> <sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife *see* that she respects *her* husband. Eph 5:22-33, NKJV.

Christ’s self-sacrificing love for the church is the prototype for the husband’s selfless love for his wife. By their submission to Christ in baptism, Christians have become one flesh with Christ, members of

His body. The mystery of how a man and woman can become “one flesh” is but a faint reflection of the greater mystery, how that through submission to Christ’s loving authority, sinners can become “one spirit” with Him. Eph 5:31, 32; 1 Cor 6:17. Thus the church is the household (family) of God (Eph 2:19; cf. 1 Tim 3:15), and each family is a little church, a branch of the family of God. Thus the governance structure of the home mirrors that of the church, and vice versa. Further, this is entirely in harmony with the parallel Ellen White draws between parental and pastoral authority. PP 578. It seems clear that from the standpoint of origins, family leadership became the basis for clan leadership and tribal leadership and so on to national leadership. Thus the role of husband and father began as head and representative of the family, and the most effective heads of household went on to lead clans, tribes, and nations. Thus male leadership in the church is a natural extension of male leadership in the home, as Paul observes, “If a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will take care of the church of God?” 1 Tim 3:5.

The counsels of Ellen White about husband-wife relationships in the home teach explicitly that the husband (“houseband”) is particularly charged with protecting the integrity, stability, and security of the home and its environment so that all members of the family may prosper spiritually, mentally, socially, and physically. Ellen White held that the husband should exercise spiritual leadership (not as a dictator, but in the sense of taking responsibility for foresight and planning to provide and maintain the rhythms of family worship, spiritual discipleship, and participation in the church). She called the father “the highest priest of the family” (RC 179; cf. CG 521; MH 392), but saw the mother as carrying a similar responsibility to give spiritual leadership in the father’s absence (AH 212). This mention of the father as priest raises the issue of the relationship between the mission and witness of every believer and the headship responsibilities of the ordained ministers.

### **In What Sense is there a “Priesthood of Every Believer”?**

Scripture is clear that the means of salvation is divine grace, received by human faith; but the *goal* of individual salvation is service. “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.” Eph

2:8-10. To every believer, God has given “his work.” Mark 13:34.<sup>16</sup> The great commission to preach the gospel to the whole world was given to every believer. AA 105, 110. All Christians, without exception, are expected to be lay workers, daily living and giving the gospel. Thus the baptism of every believer is an induction into service. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body,” and “the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.” 1 Cor 12:13, 7. Quoting John 15:16, “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit,” Ellen White commented: “We are *ordained* unto God to bear fruit. Was this not our experience when we were led down into the water and *baptized* in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?”<sup>17</sup>

Everyone 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 telling this to someone else than you can keep the wind from blowing.*<sup>18</sup>

Thus every believer has the responsibility to proclaim the message from God to others and to intercede for others to God. 1 Pet 2:9 calls the church “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.” But this was not “new” in the NT. Peter is quoting from Exod 19:6: “You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Both OT and NT recognize that every believer is called to represent God to the world and intercede with God for the world. Both Testaments also recognize that within the “kingdom of priests,” there are those who have a headship role. In both Testaments, women served in other roles—as mothers, advisers, counselors, and prophets. So today, all believers, men and women, belong to the “kingdom of priests.” But the ordained ministers holds a special position of leadership responsibility.

The “priesthood of believers” was Luther’s slogan asserting that every believer had the right (authority) to read the Bible for themselves, every believer had received the illumination of the Holy Spirit to interpret Scripture for themselves, and every believer had the standing with God to approach Him directly in Jesus’ name. In the 16th century, all of these were thought to be exclusive prerogatives of priests. So the slogan “priesthood of believers” spoke a powerful truth to the members of the medieval

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<sup>16</sup> EGW, “Individual Responsibility and Christian Unity,” Ms 29, [January] 1907, pp. 9, 10, quoted in ChL 39; compare COL 326-327.

<sup>17</sup> E. G. White, “Abiding in Christ,” Sermon, March 10, 1908 (Ms. 37, 1908), p. 6, quoted in 6MR 29.

<sup>18</sup> RH, November 24, 1904 par. 16, emphasis supplied.

church, which had taught that only the priests had direct access to God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and Scripture.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, the social and political context is so different that the term “priesthood of every believer” acquires some actually unbiblical connotations. In the context of modern democracies, “every member a minister” has a subtle, but pervasive democratizing influence on the concept of church, which results in a great diminution of the “specialness” of the ordained ministry.

1. More and more of our brightest men are choosing other professions other than ministry, and the ministers are often treated more like religious politicians or spiritual social workers, than men who speak authoritatively for God.

2. Ministers who dare to apply Scripture to popular sins in the church are rebuked in the name of the majority.

3. Doctrinal issues are more and more decided by vote of the majority instead of by Scripture.

4. Even the bishops—conference and union presidents—feel under pressure to do as the majority wishes, and give this “view of the majority” as a justification for disregarding the plain reading of Scripture. 1 Sam 15:24. But the church is not a democracy. It is a “kingdom of priests”—a spiritual kingdom ruled by Christ through the delegated authority of the New Testament offices of deacons, elders, and presiding or overseeing elders.

5. The democratization of the church allows ordained ministers to blame the lay people for the lack of revival and reformation. But all through Scripture, the spiritual declension of the laity is attributed to lack of godly leadership. It was the failure of leadership that left sin to spread unchecked. When God brought judgment on the whole people for their sins, He still laid the *primary* responsibility on the leaders for enabling such a state of affairs. 2 Sam 24:10, 17; 1 Kings 12:26, 30; 16:2; 2 Kings 24:3; 1 Chron 21:17.

I was an unordained pastor in the 1970s when the church decided to give unordained men the right to baptize as if they were ordained. That compromise was a first step in breaking down the barriers that make the ministry special and give ministers a load of sacred responsibility.

To reassert the special responsibilities of ordained ministers, and restore the biblical difference between ordained men and unordained men and women would do much to restore the rightful authority of the ministers.

## Authority in the Church: Its Source and Delegation

Ecclesiastical authority comes from Christ, who has been given “all authority . . . in heaven and on earth.” Matt 28:18. As the Head of His body, the church, Christ exercises His authority on earth through the church. Authority from Christ flows to the church and its ministers through *delegation* and *representation*.<sup>19</sup> “While Jesus ministers in the sanctuary above, He is still by His Spirit the minister of the church on earth.” Though He “*delegates His power to inferior [human] ministers, His energizing presence is still with His church.*” DA 166. Delegation gives an appointed representative the authority to act in the name of the superior. The limitation of delegated authority is that it only remains legitimate as long as the delegate remains in submission to the superior.

## Ordained Ministry and Lay Ministry

A major premise regarding roles is that *there are in the church different levels of authority*. Both Scripture and Ellen White agree that not all who received the laying on of hands were appointed to the same level of authority. For biblical examples, compare the appointment of the twelve apostles (Matt 10:1-4) with a later occasion (Acts 19:1-6) when Paul laid hands on “about twelve” newly baptized converts. While the ritual was similar, the levels of authority were different.

Ellen White recognized the ordination of the Twelve as the “first step” in organization of the Christian church. DA 291, AA 18. Thus the highest human authority in the church was instituted first. In contrast, Acts 19:1-7 is an example of laying on of hands at baptism. Ellen White describes the recipients as “twelve brethren, who, like Apollos, had been disciples of John the Baptist, and like him had gained some knowledge of the mission of Christ. They had not the ability of Apollos, but with the same sincerity and faith they were seeking to spread abroad the knowledge they had received.” AA 282-283. In short, these twelve were consecrated to the mission of every believer—spreading the gospel—but did not receive the “full ecclesiastical authority” given to Paul. AA 160. In fact, there is no mention of them holding any church office.

It is commonly assumed that the sharp distinctions between priests and people (clergy and laity) in the OT (e.g., 1 Kings 1:39; 2 Chron 24:20; Isaiah 24:2; Hosea 4:9) have no parallel in the NT; that the NT makes no difference between the ministry of all believers and the ministry of leadership traditionally referred to as the “clergy.” This opinion is not supported by the evidence:

1. In both OT and NT God’s people were to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Exod 19:6; 1 Pet 2:9.

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<sup>19</sup> The Greek word *apostello*, “to send,” indicates an exercise of authority, and often means “to delegate.” Mark 3:14, 15; 6:7 (“send” with “power [authority]”); Luke 9:1-2 (He “gave them power and authority” and “sent them to preach”); Luke 10:1, 19 (“sent” and gave “authority”).

2. The OT had Levites and Aaronic priests. The NT had deacons and elders/overseers.

3. The OT had a wide range of spiritual gifts, including: (1) prophecy, Num 12:6; (2) miracles and healings, Elijah, 1 Kings 17, 18; 2 Kings 1:9-14; Elisha, 2 Kings 2-6; (3) wisdom and knowledge, Bezalel and Aholiab, Exod 31:1-6; and (4) inspired musicians and worship leaders, 1 Chron 25:1-3. The NT also had a wide range of spiritual gifts, some associated with official leadership, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers, Eph 4:11; and other gifts not limited to official leadership. 1 Cor 12 and 14; Rom 12:3-8.

4. If there is any qualitative change between the role of believers in the OT and the NT, the difference is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on “all flesh” (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). In the OT, the powerful *gifts* of the Holy Spirit were given to certain selected individuals. In the NT, Christ’s death and resurrection made the powerful gifts of the Spirit available to every believer. But that release of power does not remove the need for leadership. God still works through the structures of church organization to coordinate His people’s worship, service, and witness.

All true service to God is ministry. Both lay people and ministers do genuine ministry. Jesus “was doing God’s service just as much when laboring at the carpenter’s bench as when working miracles for the multitude.” DA 74. But different responsibilities require different levels of authority.

There are many roles, vocations, or callings that EGW refers to as “ministry” which do not require ordination to “full ecclesiastical authority.” AA 110. The roles she reserves (ordinarily) to persons of “full ecclesiastical authority” comprise a much shorter list: baptizing, organizing churches, and a certain kind of authoritative teaching. AA 160. The reservation of these roles to ordained ministers is a matter of church order, not of their being too sacred for lay hands to perform. Baptizing can be done by lay persons in extraordinary situations. Local elders can conduct the ordinances of the Lord’s Supper. Every other kind of ministry can be performed by the lay members of the church.

The essential power, without which true Christian ministry is impossible, is the power of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:4-8. Success in working for Christ does *not* depend on ordination, but on the reception of the Holy Spirit.<sup>20</sup>

“There are *many who are laborers together with God whom we do not discern. The **hands of ministers have never been laid upon them in ordination*** for the work; but nevertheless they are wearing the yoke of Christ, and exert a saving influence in working in different lines to win souls to Christ.” TM 188.

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<sup>20</sup> “There are many ways of working for Christ. *Human hands may never have been laid on you in ordination*, but God can give you fitness for His service. He can work through you to the saving of souls. If, having learned in the school of Christ, you are meek and lowly in heart, He will give you words to speak for Him. *Ask, and receive the Holy Spirit. But remember that the Spirit is given only to those who are consecrated, who deny self, lifting the cross and following their Lord.*” BTS, March 1, 1912 par. 6, emphasis supplied.

## Offices vs. Gifts

Harold W. Hoehner, a New Testament scholar, proposes an interpretation that is faithful to the plain meaning of Scripture, yet highlights a distinction that many have overlooked: “Eldership is an office, whereas pastor-teacher is a gift.”<sup>21</sup> Hoehner shows that the NT draws at least six distinctions between *church offices* and *spiritual gifts*.

1. Church offices mentioned in the NT appear to include only four: “apostles (Acts 1:21-25), elders/bishops (1 Tim 3:1-7), deacons (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim 3:8-13), and possibly deaconesses (depending on how one interprets 1 Tim 3:11 and Rom 16:1).”<sup>22</sup> Gifts, however, are many. See 1 Cor 12:8-11, 28-30; Rom 12:6-8; Eph 4:11. According to 1 Pet 4:10, every believer “has received” at least one gift.

2. “Those who hold offices are either appointed (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) or elected based on qualifications (Acts 1:26; 6:3; 1 Tim 3:1-13), whereas gifts are sovereignly bestowed directly by God (Eph 4:7; Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:11, 18, 28).” Hence, there are no qualifications listed in any of the gifts passages.<sup>23</sup>

3. “Scripture indicates that every believer has at least one gift (Eph 4:7; 1 Cor 12:7, 11; Rom 12:4; 1 Pet 4:10), but not every believer holds an office.”<sup>24</sup>

4. “While marital status is mentioned for the offices of elder and deacon (1 Tim 3:2, 4-5, 12; Titus 1:6), no such stipulation is mentioned for those endowed with gifts.”<sup>25</sup>

5. An elder “cannot be a recent convert (1 Tim 3:6),” but gifts are given “regardless of age or maturity.”

6. The office of elder must be held by a man (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6), “whereas gifts are given to either gender” (Acts 21:9-10; 1 Cor 11:5).<sup>26</sup>

Hoehner maintains that the office of elder is reserved for married males who meet the specific qualifications in 1 Tim 3:1-7. But he also argues that “pastor-teacher” in Eph 4:11 is a gift, not an office,

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<sup>21</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, “Can a Woman be a Pastor-Teacher?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50/4 (Dec. 2007): 761-771. Online at [http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/50/50-4/JETS\\_50-4\\_761-771\\_Hoehner.pdf](http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/50/50-4/JETS_50-4_761-771_Hoehner.pdf) Accessed December 2012. Hoehner was Distinguished Professor of NT Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. He died in 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Hoehner, 763-764. On 1 Tim 3:11 as a reference to deaconess, see William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 202-4; cited in Hoehner, 765 n14. See also footnote 7 in the present document.

<sup>23</sup> Hoehner, 764.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

which therefore can be bestowed on both men and women. The present problem among Adventists is that we have made the *gift* of pastor/pastoral care an *office* on the same level as the headship role of a minister. That is also how it is used by other churches, but that is not the biblical pattern.

Similarly, Hoehner sees a difference between the “office of an apostle” and the “gift of an apostle” in Eph 4:11.<sup>27</sup> The original Twelve held the *office*, which had specific qualifications (Acts 1:21-22). Paul, Barnabas, and James the Lord’s brother also seem to have held the apostolate as an *office*, even though they only partially met the qualifications of Acts 1:21-22. However, the *gifts* in Eph 4:11-12 are not given by election or appointment, but are bestowed directly by God (v. 7). No human qualifications are listed. If the gifts are to remain in the church until it reaches perfection, i.e., until the second coming of Christ (vv. 13-16), then the *gift* of “apostle” is clearly not bound to the qualification of being an eyewitness of the incarnate Christ. It could be applied to someone who saw Jesus in vision, but not in the flesh, as Paul, or it could refer to someone with *apostolic spiritual abilities and calling*, whether or not exercised in connection with the *apostolic office*. Three times in the NT, the Greek *apostolos* is translated “one sent” or a “messenger” (John 13:16; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25). Thus there is a NT basis for using the term “apostle” in the more general sense of one sent (such as a spiritual messenger, pioneer missionary, church planter, etc.). In this sense, a person could have the *spiritual gift* of “apostle” without necessarily holding the *apostolic office*.

What is the relation between the terms “pastor,” “elder,” and “overseer” or “bishop”? The term “pastor” (*poimen*, Eph 4:11) literally means “shepherd” and is so translated in 17 of its 18 occurrences in the NT. Two other terms, *presbyteros*, “elder” and *episkopos*, “overseer” or “bishop,” are used interchangeably in the NT (Acts 20:17, 28).<sup>28</sup> It is commonplace to also equate “pastor” with “elder/overseer,” but is this accurate? While the same person may be both a pastor and an overseer, it does not follow that every pastor is also an overseer.<sup>29</sup> If the distinction between gifts and offices is correct, a woman can biblically exercise the *spiritual gifts* of prophet, evangelist, or pastor-teacher, even though she cannot biblically hold the *office* of elder/overseer.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 767.

<sup>28</sup> See William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000) 161-63; Benjamin L. Merkle, *The Elder and the Overseer: One Office in the Early Church*, Studies in Biblical Literature 57 (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 19-21, 157-61; both in Hoehner, 765 n13.

<sup>29</sup> Christ is called “Shepherd and Overseer” in 1 Pet 2:25. In 1 Pet 5:1-4, Peter speaks as an elder (*presbyteros*) to his “fellow-elders,” exhorting them to faithfully shepherd the flock of God. Clearly, shepherding is one of the duties of the elder. It does not follow, however, that no one can shepherd the flock except an elder. The verb “to shepherd” (*poimai*/no) can be translated either “to tend” (nurture) sheep (Luke 17:7; John 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2; Rev 17:7) or to “rule” them (Matt 2:6; Rev 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). Does this suggest two aspects of “shepherding,” one that involves “ruling,” and one that



Ellen White's account of the development of church organization in the NT supports the above distinction between *church offices* and *spiritual gifts*. "The organization of the church at Jerusalem was to serve as a model for the organization of churches in every other place," she affirmed. AA 91. The first step in church organization—the first office to be instituted—was that of the twelve apostles (Matt 10:1-4; AA 18), who functioned at the same time as overseers/elders.<sup>30</sup> When the original twelve apostles left Jerusalem, other elders filled their vacancies.

The second step in church organization was the appointment of the seven deacons. Acts 6, AA 91. They "had been ordained for the special work of looking after the needs of the poor," but that "did not exclude them from teaching the faith. On the contrary, they were fully qualified to instruct others in the truth, and they engaged in the work with great earnestness and success." AA 89.

The third step, by which the NT church organization was "perfected," was the reception by every member of specific spiritual gifts enabling them to participate effectively in the mission of the church, spreading the gospel. "But all these classes of workers" could "labor in harmony," apparently because the *offices* were instituted first, and the individual *gifts* were to be exercised in harmony with the rest of the body, under the authority of the church officers. AA 91, 92.

Interestingly, both induction into *church offices* and the reception of *individual spiritual gifts* were signified by the same basic ceremony. While the laying on of hands in the NT could be given in connection with appointment to an *office* (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6),<sup>31</sup> it was also given to new converts in connection with baptism, signifying the *reception of the Holy Spirit and individual spiritual gifts* (Acts 8:16-17; 9:17-18; 19:5-6).

This flexible usage of the ceremony in the NT suggests that women today can be given the laying on of hands in recognition and consecration of their *spiritual gifts*, without encroaching on the biblical authority reserved for men in the *office* of elders. The distinction between *gifts* and *offices* would also prevent the common assumption that if a woman can be a pastor, she can also be an elder, and hence can be made a bishop or conference president. *The distinction between gifts and offices permits the*

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does not? Perhaps the "ruling" aspect of a shepherd's work would correlate with the work of a "ruling elder" (1 Tim 5:17).

<sup>30</sup> The apostles Peter and John also called themselves elders (1 Pet. 5:2; 2 John 1; 3 John 1). In describing the organization of the Jerusalem church, Ellen White ascribes to the overseers the characteristics that 1 Pet 5:2, 3 applies to the elders. AA 91.

<sup>31</sup> I consider the references to laying on of hands in Timothy (1 Tim 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6) as ordination to an *office* for the following reasons: 1 Tim 4:14 speaks of the laying on of the hands of the "presbytery"—the group of elders. This sounds more like induction into an office than the individual reception of a spiritual gift at baptism. Further, 1 Tim 5:22 implies that Timothy now has the authority to lay hands on other men; such authority would be the result of induction into an office, not merely of receiving a personal spiritual gift. It seems most likely that 2 Tim 1:6 refers to the same occasion, in which Paul was the leading minister.

*implementation of a career track for women to be employed in full-time ministry, while maintaining for the elders/overseers the principle of male leadership which since Creation has been the biblical pattern.*

For Adventists it is significant that this interpretation of Scripture agrees with the counsels of Ellen G. White who indicated in several places that God calls and equips women as gospel workers. For example,

“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. . . . In the Scriptures the faithful **teacher** is represented as a **shepherd** of the flock of God.*”<sup>32</sup>

This is the only statement in all of White’s writings that specifically speaks of women as “pastors.” Sound hermeneutics demands that we not jump to the conclusion that she used “pastor” with exactly the same meaning we do today, but that we define it (1) in its historical context, (2) in the context of White’s other uses of the word “pastor,” and (3) in the immediate literary context of the chapter in which it occurs.

“Pastor” in historical context

Ken Corkum’s dissertation of 1986 establishes that during Ellen White’s lifetime, Seventh-day Adventist ministers were primarily evangelists who visited and cared for churches between evangelistic meetings.<sup>33</sup> In 1886, George B. Starr was interviewed by a local newspaper during an evangelistic campaign. Noting the rapid growth of Seventh-day Adventists, the reporter asked Elder Starr, “By what means have you carried forward your work so rapidly?”

“Well, in the first place,” replied the Elder, “We have no settled pastors. Our churches are taught largely to take care of themselves, while nearly all of our ministers work as evangelists in new fields. In the winter they go out into the churches, halls, or school houses and raise up believers. In the summer we use tents, pitching them in the cities and villages where we teach the people these doctrines. This year we shall run about 100 tents in this way.”<sup>34</sup>

As late as 1912, General Conference President A. G. Daniells described the work of Adventist ministers:

From the beginning of our work . . . *we have not settled our ministers over churches as pastors to any large extent. In some of the very large churches we have elected pastors; but as a rule we **[ministers] have held ourselves ready for field service, evangelical work,** and our brethren and sisters **[church members]***

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<sup>32</sup> E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 6:322-323.

<sup>33</sup> Ken Corkum, *The Role of the Seventh-day Adventist Minister in Public Evangelism* (DMin diss., Andrews University, 1986). Online through ProQuest at <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.cc.andrews.edu/pqdtft/docview/303560260/fulltextPDF/13E5B1FC1245CF85034/4?accountid=8313>. Accessed May 30, 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with G. B. Starr as reported in the Wabash [Indiana] *Plain Dealer*, Oct. 1, 1886, 5; quoted in Corkum, 89-90.

*have held themselves ready to maintain their church services and carry forward their church work without settled pastors.*<sup>35</sup> “Pastor” in the context of White’s general usage

In her writings, Ellen White used the term “pastor” in at least two different ways. Occasionally she used “pastor” to denote the minister at the head of a congregation, though her most frequent term for that position was “minister.”<sup>36</sup> She also used the term “pastor” to designate a *particular function* of the minister’s work, namely the personal ministry of visitation and instruction in the home, as contrasted with public pulpit ministry.<sup>37</sup> For example, she wrote:

The *duties of a pastor are often shamelessly neglected* because the minister lacks strength to sacrifice his personal inclinations for seclusion and study. ***The pastor should visit from house to house among his flock, teaching, conversing, and praying with each family***, and looking out for the welfare of their souls. Those who have manifested a *desire to become acquainted with the principles of our faith* should not be neglected, but *thoroughly instructed* in the truth. GW 337.

Pastoral work especially included visiting the people in their homes. A pastor who did not visit “*was not a shepherd of the flock. . . . He neglected personal labor, therefore pastoral work was not done in the church and its borders. . . . Had the preacher done the work of a pastor*, a much larger number would now be rejoicing in the truth.”<sup>38</sup> Men trained to be debaters, she said, had “in many respects” “unfitted themselves to become pastors of the sheep and lambs.” 1888 220.

She can even use the word “pastors” to describe the function of lay members who give themselves to the “personal effort” of ministry within the church and outside of it. “Responsibilities must be *laid upon the members of the church*. The missionary spirit should be awakened as never before, and *workers should be appointed as needed, who will act as pastors to the flock, putting forth personal effort* to bring the church up to that condition where spiritual life and activity will be seen in all her borders.” 5T 723.

This is the background for Ellen White’s statement that “*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 322-323. The immediate context of the statement is a chapter titled, “The Canvasser a Gospel Worker.” The first sentence of the chapter is: “The intelligent, God-fearing, truth-loving canvasser should be respected; for he occupies a position equal to that of the gospel minister.” She immediately focuses on the importance of ministers working “from house to house.” 6T 321. She describes the work using such terms

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<sup>35</sup> A. G. Daniells, *The Church and Ministry* (Riverside, Jamaica: Watchman Press, 1912), 25; quoted in Corkum, 32.

<sup>36</sup> William Fagal, “Ellen White and the Role of Women in the Church,” n.d., p. 6; online at <http://drc.whiteestate.org/read.php?id=9044>, accessed May 29, 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Fagal, 7-9.

<sup>38</sup> E. G. White, Document File #28a, “Experiences in Australia,” pp. 50-58 (Adelaide, Australia, October 11, 1892), quoted in 9MR 343-944.

as “fireside labor,” “visiting the people in their homes,” “speaking of the love of Christ,” “telling their experience in their service for the Master,” “pray[ing] with those who are awakened,” “reading to them from the Bible or from books that teach the truth,” and “hold[ing] Bible readings” with those “ready to receive instruction.” 6T 324. The chapter concludes, “This is the work of the evangelistic canvasser.” 6T 325. These are also important parts of the work of the minister, which is why she recommended the gospel work door to door, not only as a method of giving pastoral care, but as a preparation for a larger ministry. This chapter (6T 321-325) shows that the spiritual gifts of shepherding and teaching (Eph 4:11) are given not only to elders and overseers, but to laypersons, both men and women. The original context of this statement is door-to-door evangelistic work using literature. However, in applying the terms “pastor” and “teacher” to those *doing* this door-to-door work, *she implies that the gifts of pastor and teacher (Eph 4:11) may be given to, and exercised by, persons not holding the office of elder or overseer.*

Again she writes,

[T]each the youth to do evangelistic work. Our time and energy must not be so largely employed in establishing sanitariums, food stores, and restaurants that other lines of work will be neglected. *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.*

The youth should be encouraged to attend our training schools for Christian workers, which should become more and more like the schools of the prophets. These institutions have been established by the Lord, and if they are conducted in harmony with His purpose, the youth sent to them will quickly be prepared to engage in various lines of missionary work. *Some will be trained to enter the field as missionary nurses, some as canvassers, and some as gospel ministers.*<sup>39</sup>

The question is whether she envisioned all these roles open to women as well as men. If we take seriously the biblical evidence about headship, it is obvious that she is simply using an economy of words, rather than explicitly spelling out exactly which roles are appropriate for women and which for men. Elsewhere in the same volume, focusing on the need for “ministers,” she repeatedly calls for “men” and “young men” without any reference to women. 6T 135, 411-416.<sup>40</sup> What she *does* affirm is the great need for women to take up certain *specialized ministries*, working alongside the ordained ministers.

### Roles of Women in the Work of Ministry

Ellen White affirms many roles for women in the work of ministry. Here is a partial list.

Home visitation ministry to families (Ev 459, 464, 470, 471, 478, 491)

Giving evangelistic Bible studies (Ev 491-493; cf. 456, 469, 470, 475, 477)

Door-to-door sales of Christian literature (2T 322-323; 6T 469-470; 8T 229-230)

Pastoral and evangelistic work in partnership with ordained men; ideally in husband-and-wife

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<sup>39</sup> E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 8:229-30; cf. *idem*, *Health Food Ministry*, 71.

teams (2T 322-323; 8T 229-230 Ev 467-473, 491-493)  
Teaching in various capacities, such as elementary schools, Sabbath schools, and camp meeting Bible classes (Ev 469, 473-477; 5MR 325)  
Preaching, pulpit ministry (Ev 469, 473-477; CSW 90-96).  
Chaplains for medical and other institutions (8T 143-144)  
Personal counseling (Ev 460)  
Temperance leadership, particularly in connection with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (1MR 125)

### May Women Teach Men?

One of the objections sometimes raised against Ellen White's own ministry was that women were not to teach men (1 Timothy 2:12). This her colleagues consistently refuted, not by pleading that she as a prophet constituted a special category, but by arguing that the verse was wrongly applied to prohibiting women ministers in general (cf. Lt 17a, 1880, in 10MR 70).

About the same time, J. N. Andrews wrote an article on the words of Paul in 1 Tim 2:12, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence." Andrews cited the women who "labored" with Paul "in the gospel" (Phil 4:2, 3), Phoebe, "a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea" (Rom 16:1), Priscilla's role in "instructing Apollos" (Acts 18:26), and the leadership roles of other NT women to prove that Paul's "*general* rule with regard to women as public teachers" did not constitute a rigid or universal prohibition. Andrews argued that Rom 10:10 requires public confession of the faith as integral to salvation, and therefore "must apply to women equally with men."<sup>41</sup>

While Ellen White did not often refer to the Pauline passages on women as teachers, she did cite the work of Aquila and Priscilla in teaching Apollos as an example of "a thorough scholar and brilliant orator" being taught by two laypersons, one of whom was a woman. Acts 18:26; cited in LP 119. Thus White rejected the traditional interpretation of 1 Tim 2:12 as prohibiting all women in all circumstances from having a teaching ministry that included men.

What then is the true meaning of 1 Tim 2:12, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man"? We see in the immediate context (1 Tim 3:2) that a bishop/overseer must be "able to teach."

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<sup>40</sup> An excellent discussion of this and related passages is found in William Fagal, "Ellen White and the role of Women in the Church," n.d., pp. 4-9; online at <http://drc.whiteestate.org/read.php?id=9044>, accessed May 29, 2013.

<sup>41</sup> J. N. Andrews, "May Women Speak in Meeting?" RH, Jan. 2, 1879, p. 4, emphasis his; see also U. Smith, "Let Your Women Keep Silence in the Churches," RH, June 26, 1866; and J. White, "Women in the Church," RH, May 29, 1879; see also Beverly Beem and G. Harwood, "'Your Daughters Shall Prophesy': James White, Uriah Smith, and the 'Triumphant Vindication of the Right of the Sisters' to Preach," *AUSS* 43 (Spring 2005): 41-58; B. Beem and G. Harwood, "'It Was Mary That First Preached a Risen Jesus': Early Seventh-day Adventist Answers to Objections to Women as Public Spiritual Leaders," *AUSS* 45 (Autumn 2007): 221-245.

There is evidently a kind of teaching that women are not to do, but which elders must do. The teaching restricted to men must be the teaching associated with leadership and full ecclesiastical authority.<sup>42</sup>

A survey of the kinds of teaching that Ellen White specifically approved for women implies further support for this conclusion. The majority of Ellen White's statements regarding women in gospel work are set in the context of a team ministry in which the women employ their gifts largely, but not exclusively in teaching and counseling individuals and small groups, especially families. These women are called "self-sacrificing" because this work with individuals and families is seen as a supporting rather than a leading role in the ministerial team. Yet it is precisely in this supporting role that women are promised "a power that exceeds that of men," to "do in families a work that men cannot do," and "come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach" (WM 145). The Adventist term is "***Bible instruction***," teaching the foundations of faith to new believers. White also saw a place for women in the ***proclamation*** of the gospel. "It was Mary who first preached a risen Jesus; and the refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth now." DG 18.

In addition, she commended women for teaching in schools, Sabbath schools, and camp-meeting Bible classes, as well as in public pulpit ministry (Ev 469, 473-477; CSW 90-96)—all of which are forms of teaching that might be termed ***Christian education, exposition, exhortation, and Bible instruction***. During her ministry in Australia, she spoke approvingly of two Bible instructors, Sister Robinson and Sister Wilson, who were "doing just as efficient work as the ministers." She reported that at "some meetings when the ministers are all called away, Sister W[ilson] takes the Bible and addresses the congregation." (Lt 169, 1900, in Ev 473; cf. Ms 43a, 1898, in 5MR 323-327).

When Mrs. \*S.M.I. Henry, national evangelist for the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), became a Seventh-day Adventist, she corresponded with Ellen White regarding her connection with the WCTU (4Bio 346-348). Ellen White replied, "We believe fully in church organization, but in nothing that is to prescribe the precise way in which we must work; for all minds are not reached by the same methods. . . . You have many ways opened before you. Address the crowd whenever you can;<sup>43</sup> hold every jot of influence you can by any association that can be made the means of introducing the leaven to the meal" (Lt 54, 1899, in DG 130 and Ev 473). So we could add ***evangelism*** to the list of approved teaching roles.

"All [regardless of gender] who would enter the city of God must during their earthly life set forth

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<sup>42</sup> This distinction may be one of the reasons why the word *exethéntō*, "explained," describing Priscilla's instruction of Apollos in Acts 18:26, is *not* the word translated "to teach" [*didáskein*] in 1 Tim 2:12.

<sup>43</sup> The original context is not a reference to preaching in churches, but to addressing the crowds of the WCTU and other public gatherings.

Christ in their dealings. It is this that constitutes them the messengers of Christ, His *witnesses*. They are to bear a plain, decided *testimony* against all evil practices, pointing sinners to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.” CCh 59.

Combining the kinds of teaching that White specifically approved, we have the following list: *proclamation of the gospel, Christian education, Bible instruction, exposition, exhortation, evangelism, and witness or testimony*. What is missing from this list? Only one form of teaching is reserved for ordained men: the teaching that pertains specifically to the office of elder or overseer.

White also wrote that by their ordination, Paul and Barnabas “were authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority.” AA 160. The three highest responsibilities in church leadership—the definitive teaching of God’s Word, baptism, and organizing churches—she restricts to persons of “full ecclesiastical authority.” All members may and must understand Scripture for themselves and communicate to others, to the best of their ability, what they find in Scripture, even though their knowledge may be imperfect and incomplete. But the ordained minister is officially recognized by the church as qualified to teach God’s Word accurately.

Earlier, we saw the consistent biblical witness throughout the Old and New Testaments that the highest religious authority was reserved for men who had been selected according to precise, divinely given criteria. The phrase, “full ecclesiastical authority” does not denote that ordained ministers belong to a higher order of being, as in Roman Catholic theology. It simply means that they have authority to baptize, organize churches, and provide authoritative teaching, especially in times of confusion, conflict, and crisis. All other church members are guided in their witness, proclamation, Bible studies, and other kinds of teaching, by the scriptural principles set forth by those leaders to whom is entrusted full ecclesiastical authority.

A NT example is Paul’s exhortation to a young minister in 2 Timothy 3:16–4:2:

“All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. I charge *you* therefore before God . . . Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season; convince, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching.”

Such leadership positions are restricted to men who meet specific and stringent qualifications, because the exercise of such authority has far-reaching positive or negative consequences for the church. It is also essential that such leaders do their work within a strict framework of collegiality and accountability. Yet, when such men are in leadership and the church is intelligently submissive to their scriptural authority, this system gives enormous benefits for the unity of the church and the accomplishment of its mission. Of course, such godly leadership would be a high priority target for

Satanic opposition, diversion, or corruption.

Ellen White recognizes that in the course of church history, “*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.*” In Roman Catholic theology, ordination was thought to bestow an “indelible character” that guaranteed inerrancy. AA 162. But in its original Hebrew context, the “laying on of hands” was a rite by which an animal was devoted to God as a sacrifice. Lev 1:4; 3:2, 8, 13; AA 162. Thus the laying on of hands primarily connotes a “dedication.”

Since every believer is to be a gospel worker, empowered by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12), the laying on of hands is appropriate for dedicating anyone who is taking up his or her ministry. (Acts 19:5-6; RH July 9, 1895). It is a rite that imposes responsibility, conveys authority to carry out that responsibility, and thus serves to encourage, dignify, and empower the person being so dedicated.

### **Laying on of Hands as Dedication to Lay Ministry**

In 1895 Ellen White published in the *Review and Herald* an article titled, “The Duty of the Minister and the People.” Its main concern was that the majority of church members were inactive in the work of spreading the gospel. “A few” officers were “spiritual burden-bearers,” but “the talent of other members has remained undeveloped.” To remedy this, White urged ministers to involve the congregation both in “planning” and in “executing the plans,” so that every member has a definite part in the work of the church.

In this context, White urged that: “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. *Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work*” (RH July 9, 1895, emphasis added; cf. DG 249-250).

This passage speaks of laywomen, as implied by the sentence, “In some cases they will need to counsel with church officers or the minister.” They are women who will give “some of their time,” not their full time, to church work. This is not a career choice by which they will earn their livelihood, but a part-time volunteer ministry. The terms “appointed” and “set apart . . . by prayer and the laying on of hands” were terms that could be used interchangeably for ministerial ordination (AA 160-161; GW 15,



452; 2MR 32, 5MR 29, 323; 8MR 189; MYP 226; RH May 11 1911; 6T 444; TM 188) or for consecrating lay members to a variety of ministries.

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 SDA Church, Sydney, Australia, Aug. 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.

This article promoted the “laying on of hands” as a ceremony of consecration to encourage and empower women for specific lay ministries in the local church (DG 249-250). Furthermore, White urged that fair wages for qualified workers and recognition through laying on of hands were important encouragements to women to qualify themselves for “the work they should engage in” (Ev 492). She did not see the laying on of hands as absolutely essential to ministry, but as an aid and support that would increase the effectiveness of the one so recognized. For example, Paul and Barnabas *already had* their commission from God before they were appointed by the church. AA 161-162. The idea that ordination conveyed a new spiritual grace or virtue was a corruption that came into the church much later.

One further comment from a person close to Ellen White needs to be taken into account here. C. C. Crisler, her head literary assistant 1900-1915, gave an interesting response to an inquiry about the above mentioned *Review* article of July 9, 1895.

While I do not make it a part of my work to presume to interpret that which has been written, yet I may be pardoned for expressing as my conviction the thought 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 in such churches where circumstances all for such action.

And may I add 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; 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 as is ordinarily expected of an ordained minister.<sup>44</sup>

### Ordination of Ministers Compared to Dedication of Lay Members

How does the dedication of a layperson by the laying on of hands, differ from the ordination of ministers to “full ecclesiastical authority”? Local or private ministry by individual believers does not *require* a formal dedication by laying on of hands, although such a service of dedication can have a salutary effect in sensitizing laypeople to their responsibility and assuring them of the power of the Holy Spirit as they take up their personal mission.<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps the main reason why a service of dedication for laypeople is not *required* is that every person baptized into Christ becomes a representative of the church.<sup>46</sup> Baptism is itself a setting apart to the gospel mission, which includes the laying on of hands and the reception of the Holy Spirit. A second reason why a further formal dedication service is optional, is because local lay ministry is often either *private* (with individuals or small groups) or *corporate* in the sense that the new member is participating in a *group activity* with the approval of church leaders and in teamwork with other members, some of whom function as mentors.

Ellen White made several statements indicating that *ordination is not absolutely necessary for lay ministry*. Both women and men may serve without ordination.

Aquila and Priscilla were *not called to give their whole time to the ministry* of the gospel, yet these humble laborers were used by God to show Apollos the way of truth more perfectly. The Lord employs various instrumentalities for the accomplishment of His purpose, and *while some with special talents are chosen to devote all their energies to the work of teaching and preaching the gospel, many others, upon whom human hands have never been laid in ordination*, are called to act an important part in soulsaving. AA 355.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> C. C. Crisler to Mrs. L. E. Cox, June 16, 1916, quoted in Roger W. Coon, “Ellen G. White’s View of the Role of Women in the SDA Church,” 1986, pp. 24-25. Online at <http://drc.whiteestate.org/read.php?id=9016> , accessed May 29, 2013.

<sup>45</sup> See the quotations above from EGW, *RH* July 9, 1895.

<sup>46</sup> “Ye have not chosen Me, *but I have chosen you, and ordained you*, that ye should go and bring forth fruit” [John 15:16]. *We are ordained unto God to bear fruit. Was this not our experience when we were led down into the water and baptized* in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? What did that mean?--It meant that the three great powers in heaven were pledged to keep us so long as we remain one with Christ, united to the vine. Ms 37, 1908, p. 6 (“Abiding in Christ,” Sermon, March 10, 1908), 6MR 29. The same quotation is in 2SAT 295.

<sup>47</sup> Both men and women can be ordained by God, even though never ordained by human hands.

“Dear young friends, remember that it is *not necessary to be an ordained minister* in order to serve the Lord. There are many ways of working for Christ. *Human hands may never have been laid on you in ordination*, but God can give you fitness for His service. He can work through you to the saving of souls. If, having learned in the school of Christ, you are meek and lowly in heart, He will give you words to speak for Him.” MYP 226, emphasis supplied.

Here ordination is associated with persons with “special talents” who “devote all their energies to the work of teaching and preaching.” Others are also “called to act an important part,” even without ordination. This is not to say that lay ordination is unimportant, but only that it may not always be available, and the lack of it should not keep us from our ministry.

The minister is paid for his work, and this is well. And if the Lord gives the wife as well as the husband the burden of labor, and she devotes her time and strength to visiting from family to family and opening the Scriptures to them, although the ***hands of ordination have not been laid upon her, she is accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry.*** Then should her labors be counted as naught?

Injustice has sometimes been done to women who labor just as devotedly as their husbands, and who are recognized by God as being necessary to the work of the ministry. *The method of paying men-laborers, and not paying their wives who share their labors with them, is a plan not according to the Lord's order, and if carried out in our conferences, is liable to discourage our sisters from qualifying themselves for the work they should engage in.* God is a God of justice, and if the ministers receive a salary for their work, their wives, who devote themselves just as disinterestedly to the work, should be paid in addition to the wages their husbands receive, even though they may not ask for this.

Seventh-day Adventists are not in any way to belittle woman's work. If a woman puts her housework in the hands of a faithful, prudent helper, and leaves her children in good care, while she engages in the work, the conference should have wisdom to understand the justice of her receiving wages. GW 452, 453.

Again she wrote,

While I was in America, I was given light upon this subject. I was instructed that . . . . Injustice has been done to women who labor just as devotedly as their husbands, and who are recognized by God as being as necessary to the work of ministry as their husbands. *The method of paying men laborers and not their wives is a plan not after the Lord's order. Injustice is thus done.* A mistake is made. The Lord does not favor this plan. *This arrangement, if carried out in our conference, is liable to discourage our sisters from qualifying themselves for the work they should engage in.*

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"You have neighbors. Will you give them the message? *You may never have had the hands of ordination laid upon you, but you can humbly carry the message. You can testify that **God has ordained that all** for whom Christ died shall have everlasting life if they believe on Him.*" *Tidings*, June 8, 1910 par. 6, emphasis supplied.

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." 6T 444, emphasis supplied.

"There are many who are laborers together with God whom we do not discern. *The hands of ministers have never been laid upon them in ordination* for the work; but nevertheless they are wearing the yoke of Christ, and exert a saving influence in working in different lines to win souls to Christ." TM 188, emphasis supplied.

"There are many ways of working for Christ. *Human hands may never have been laid on you in ordination*, but God can give you fitness for His service. He can work through you to the saving of souls. If, having learned in the school of Christ, you are meek and lowly in heart, He will give you words to speak for Him. Ask, and receive the Holy Spirit. But remember that the Spirit is given only to *those who are consecrated, who deny self, lifting the cross and following their Lord.*" BTS, March 1, 1912 par. 6, emphasis supplied. See also RH, November 24, 1904 par. 16. There are many more such statements in the *Ellen G. White* CD-ROM, search: hands ordination laid.

Some women are now teaching young women to work successfully as visitors and Bible readers. *Women who work in the cause of God should be given wages proportionate to the time they give to the work.* God is a God of justice, and if the ministers receive a salary for their work, their wives, who devote themselves just as interestedly to the work as laborers together with God, should be paid in addition to the wages their husbands receive, notwithstanding that they may not ask this. As the devoted minister and his wife engage in the work, they should be paid wages proportionate to the wages of two distinct workers, that they may have means to use as they shall see fit in the cause of God. The Lord has put His Spirit upon them both. *If the husband should die, and leave his wife, she is fitted to continue her work in the cause of God, and receive wages for the labor she performs.* 5MR 29-31 (1898), DG 110-111, emphasis supplied.

### Ordination to “full ecclesiastical authority”

For persons engaged in public ministry leadership, a formal, public dedication rite is important to attest that the church recognizes them as legitimate public representatives of the church. AA 162, 164.

EGW gives two main reasons why the ordination of Paul and Barnabas was necessary to their ministry:

First, they were about to begin a “difficult missionary enterprise” for which “they would need every advantage” the church could give them. AA 160.

The apostles who had been *appointed* to lead out in this work would be exposed to suspicion, prejudice, and jealousy. Their teachings concerning the breaking down of “the middle wall of partition” (Ephesians 2:14) between Jews and Gentiles “would naturally subject them to the charge of heresy, and their authority as ministers of the gospel would be questioned by many zealous, believing Jews.” AA 161. *“In order that their work should be above challenge, God 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.* AA 161.

*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.* AA 161-162.

Second, while the rite added “no new grace or virtual qualification,” it held great personal meaning. “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 164-165.

The foregoing seems to imply that the core reason for the ordination of Paul and Barnabas was that they were embarking on a great public work, in which they would face great opposition and persecution. This *difficult public ministry demanded a formal and public declaration of their authority* to represent the church. It may be inferred that *the ascending degree of formality or publicity given to the laying on of hands (from deacons and deaconesses, to local elders, to full-time clergy) is in proportion to the degree of public responsibility and the corresponding authority the person is being dedicated to.*

Thus we may describe “full ecclesiastical authority” as embracing both teaching and disciplinary authority, qualifying the ordained minister to be both “shepherd” and “overseer” of a congregation or congregations. This is the work of a senior minister or solo minister. Unordained persons, either male or female, who have spiritual gifts for pastoring and teaching may serve as associates in team ministry with ordained ministers.

## Summary

The source of all authority is God. All other legitimate authority is derived from God by delegation. Authority involves accountability and responsibility. The *purpose* of authority is to enable unity and cooperation between free beings.

*The first major premise of this paper is that authority and submission in love characterize ordered relationships at all levels of God’s created universe.* From the angels to the church on earth, all righteous beings yield submission to those God has placed in authority over them, and exercise authority in love for the benefit of those God has placed under their responsibility.

*The second major premise is that there was an authority-submission principle built into human society **before the fall**.* This is supported by six lines of argument:

1. If sinless angels need commanding angels to direct, restrain, and strengthen them in their compliance with God’s will, then certainly humans would need leadership as well, even before sin.

2. Satan presumed to attend the “sons of God” council in Job 1:6-7; 2:1-2, because he had usurped the place of Adam, the original “son of God” representing planet Earth. Ellen White confirms that Adam was “the father and representative of the whole human family.” PP 48.

3. The concept of Adam as the representative of the whole human race forms the basis of the NT teaching that it was Adam’s sin that brought sin and death into the human race. Rom 5:12. In Paul’s theology, the premise that Adam sinned as a representative of the whole human family, leads to the typological linkage between Adam and Christ. “Adam . . . is a type of Him who was to come.” Rom 5:14-19. Again Paul writes, “The first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam [Christ] became a life-giving spirit.” 1 Cor 15:45. That parallelism implies that Adam, like Christ, was a prototypical representative of humanity. Ellen White concurs that Christ was a representative of humanity and redeemed the failure of the first Adam.

4. Further corroboration that Adam was a representative of the human race can be found in the contrasts between pre-fall blessings and post-fall curses in Eden. Each curse in Gen 3:16-19 was a modification of a previous blessing. In the NT, Paul makes explicit what was implicit in Gen 2: the man was created first, and afterward the woman; and the man was not created from the woman, but

the woman from the man. Paul then makes a theological argument about the relationships between men and women in the church, based on the order of Creation.

5. Perfection-of-Creation principle. God did not create the world and humans with defects and then try to improve by trial and error through history. The biblical worldview teaches the absolute perfection of God's original creation.

6. Unity of the scriptures. If we accept that the human race needed an authority structure, even before sin, and that Adam was the primary authority figure in the human family even before sin, then there is a beautiful consistency all through the Bible. Peter and Paul are in perfect harmony with Moses, and Ellen White agrees with all of them. This is a conclusive argument, because the unity of Scripture is a fundamental presupposition of biblical interpretation.

*The third major premise is that the first humans were created equally in the image of God, but uniquely male and female.* Role differences between genders are not the result of the Fall, but were divinely designed in Creation. This is the basis for Paul's argument in 1 Cor 11:3, 7-12 and 1 Tim 2:12-14 that giving men the primary leadership in society was God's original ideal. But before the entrance of sin and selfishness, leadership was expressed in selfless, loving service, as seen in the supreme example of Christ in Phil 2:5-8. Corollary to this is the recognition that equality of nature between male and female does not mean there was no leadership needed. The leadership given to Adam at Creation did not make him superior or Eve inferior. The phrase "first among equals" expresses the recognition that leadership and equality are not mutually exclusive.

If it be accepted that authority and submission, gender uniqueness, and role differences were part of the original Creation, then there is no conflict between Genesis and Paul, the unity of Scripture is unbroken, and we have a solid foundation for understanding roles in ministry.

Ellen White pointed to the organization of God's people in both Testaments as patterns for the church today, thus recognizing the legitimacy of levels of authority. She held that in the NT, the highest office, that of apostle, was instituted first; then deacons and elders. The fact that the NT teaching on the individual spiritual gifts of all believers came after the establishment of the primary church offices, suggests that individual believers were to exercise their spiritual gifts in cooperation with and under the authority vested in church officers. In turn, a primary responsibility of church officers is to encourage and equip the other members in the exercise of their spiritual gifts.

There is a clear difference in authority between lay ministry and that of ordained clergy. Both Old and New Testaments had ministers of "full ecclesiastical authority," lower officers who assisted them, as well as a mission for every believer. Ellen White recognizes as "ministry," many roles, vocations, and callings that are open to laymen without ordination. Only three roles she reserves to persons of "full ecclesiastical authority"—baptizing, organizing churches, and a certain kind of authoritative teaching.

Except for these three distinctive roles, White regarded the full range of lay ministry as open to women, subject to the approval of the church.

White specifically approved women in a wide range of teaching activities, including the proclamation of the gospel, Christian education, Bible instruction, exposition, exhortation, evangelism, and witness or testimony. The only form of teaching that is left to the prohibition of 1 Tim 2:12 is the authoritative teaching associated with the exercise of full ecclesiastical authority. This level of teaching is reserved for selected, qualified men, set apart by ordination.

Through the centuries of church history, the meaning of ordination has been distorted, but White maintains that when biblically defined and administered, ordination remains an essential part of church order today. The rite of the laying on of hands essentially connotes the dedication of a person to some specific form of ministry. Just as the essence of “ministry” is the same for all believers, lay or clergy, so the rite of laying on of hands as dedication for ministry is appropriate for all believers. It is a rite that imposes responsibility, conveys authority to carry out that responsibility, and signifies the public approval of the church upon that person’s ministry. Thus it serves to encourage, dignify, and empower the person receiving it.

Ellen White strongly recommended the setting apart of women and other lay persons, by the laying on of hands, as a means of stimulating greater participation in the mission of the church. The rite of laying on of hands is a powerful personal reminder that the Holy Spirit is eager to work through every believer who will take up the challenge of ministering in the name of Christ. As a result of White’s promotion of this concept in 1895, a few churches set women apart, by the laying on of hands, to minister to the sick, the young, and the poor. This was considered to be within the office duties of deaconess. In this connection, “deaconess” may be understood as a feminine counterpart to the NT deacons. The NT deacons were elected to serve tables, but some of them expanded their ministry far beyond the original job description, becoming full-fledged lay ministers, preaching, evangelizing, and even baptizing.

White not only promoted the “laying on of hands” as a ceremony of consecration to encourage and empower women for specific ministries in the local church, but also urged that fair wages for qualified workers and recognition through laying on of hands were important encouragements to women to qualify themselves for full-time involvement in gospel ministry. She did not see the laying on of hands as absolutely essential to lay ministry, but recommended it to increase the effectiveness of the one so recognized. Regarding the ordination of women to “full ecclesiastical authority,” she is reliably reported as expressing some reservations or apprehension about giving women that level of authority.

For men, called to exercise “full ecclesiastical authority,” she did not see the rite of ordination as adding any “new grace or virtual qualification” to the minister. It was important, however, because their

call to a difficult public ministry demanded a formal and public declaration of their authority to represent the church.

### Conclusion

The order of Creation teaches that men and women are created equal by nature, equal in importance to God's plan, and equally gifted. Yet they were also created in unique genders so constituted that neither gender is complete in itself, but each needs the other for completion. This divinely designed gender uniqueness is manifested in distinct, but complementary roles. Thus each gender is incomplete without the other. Ellen White affirms that this complementarity extends even to the work of the gospel. The communication of the whole truth about God requires the contributions of both genders, whether parenting children in the home or shepherding the church of God.

The preponderance of the biblical evidence shows that in both OT and NT there was a category of spiritual leadership assigned to men. First the patriarchs, then the Aaronic priests were charged with leading out in the rituals of the sacrifices and sanctuary services. In the NT, the general oversight of the church was committed to male ministers, chosen according to specific scriptural guidelines. There were also in both Testaments, persons designated to assist the ministers, the OT Levites and the NT deacons, as well as the general priesthood of all believers, who were the "foot-soldiers" in the mission to the world. Exod 19:5, 6; 1 Pet 2:9.

The difference in the NT is *not* that there is no longer any distinction between clergy and laity. Rather, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the full power of the Holy Spirit has been unleashed and is now available to every member of the church. Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18, 32-33. But that release of power does not remove the need for leadership. God still works through the structure of church organization to coordinate His people's service, worship, and witness.

The role of women in the church is not to exercise "full ecclesiastical authority," but to assist, counsel, and serve as team members with the men who exercise "full ecclesiastical authority." The partnership of women in spiritual leadership, whether in home or church, goes far beyond mere "following" of men in leadership. The women are to be full partners, counselors, strategists, and friendly critics whose goal is to maximize the glory of God through the mission of the church. They are not called to direct the gate-keeping functions of church order—to baptize, organize churches, or call men to account regarding church teachings, because that is reserved to the ordained men. The prerogative of male ministers to fulfill roles of spiritual authority over other men is one of the marks of their ecclesiastical authority.

If we take seriously the wide range of roles that Scripture and Ellen White approve for women in the church, it appears that there are only three or four roles restricted to men: the administration of baptism,



the organization of churches, the authoritative teaching/disciplinary role, and possibly the conducting of the ordinance of the Lord's supper.

If women may preach, teach, and evangelize, why may they not baptize?<sup>48</sup> Because that rite is symbolic of the gate-keeping function of church leadership, and Paul makes clear that a woman should not exercise this type of authority in relation to men. *A woman's refraining from baptizing is symbolic of her refraining from the gate-keeping authority, and shows her submission to God's duly constituted authority in the church.* It is an expression of a woman gospel worker's respect for the authority given to men, comparable to the head coverings of 1 Cor 11. Thus in both church and home, the roles of women are complementary to those of the men, and essential to the optimum effectiveness of both the home and the church.

*The predominant reason for maintaining a distinction between the ministry of men and that of women is that Adventist theology and mission is based on the unity of Scripture and the perfection of the creation order.* For the sake of our homes, our society, and our theological integrity, we must continue to be a people who uphold before a disintegrating society, the unity and authority of Scripture and the perfection of God's original ideal.

God calls women to the work of ministry because feminine qualities are an essential component of the image of God in humanity. Christ promises to "give them a power that exceeds that of men. They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach." RH, Aug. 26, 1902.

Likewise, God calls men to ministry because masculine qualities are also an essential component of the image of God. "The father should enforce in his family the sterner virtues—energy, integrity, honesty, patience, courage, diligence, and practical usefulness. And what he requires of his children he himself should practice, illustrating these virtues in his own manly bearing" (MH 391; cf. 1T 547, 695-696). Thus parental authority and pastoral authority are closely associated, as implied by 1Tim 3:5.

*The understanding set forth in this paper is not opposed to setting women apart by laying on of hands to the office of deaconess or other specialized ministries.* Some of the original seven did both preaching and baptizing (Acts 6:5–7:55; 8:38). Ellen White implies that women have spiritual gifts for preaching, teaching, shepherding the flock of God,<sup>49</sup> and other local church ministries.<sup>50</sup> To ordain women to "full

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<sup>48</sup> Of course, any believer can administer baptism in an emergency where no ordained minister is available.

<sup>49</sup> E. G. White, Testimonies, 6:322-323; see p. 26 above; see also cf. p. 24, footnote 26.

<sup>50</sup> "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." Letter 33, 1879, p. 2 (undated, to Brother Johnson), in 10MR 70.

ecclesiastical authority,” however, would violate the consistent witness of Scripture that in both testaments the primary leadership in both home and church was reserved for godly *men*.

Ellen White affirms three foundational principles of gender relationships in the home and church: (1) equality of persons, (2) gender uniqueness and complementarity, hence (3) interdependence and the need to utilize the strengths of both genders. Therefore:

1. The church could affirm gender *equality* by having one pay scale for men and women, regardless of ordination.

2. The church could affirm gender *uniqueness* in ministry by continuing to use the term “ordination” for the appointment ceremony of men in ministry, while using a different term (such as “commissioning”) for the appointment ceremony of women in ministry. Both ceremonies would include the “laying on of hands,” but to different offices and different levels of authority. Both genders would be affirmed, but not to identical roles. Interdependence reinforces unity. Sameness, making male and female roles interchangeable, makes one or the other unnecessary.

3. The church could affirm the *interdependence of men and women in ministry*, by reserving to men in ministry the “full ecclesiastical authority” to administer baptism and organize new churches, while also recognizing that the highest evidence of ministerial effectiveness is not the performance of water immersion, but the spiritual birthing, nurture, instruction, and other aspects of discipling in which women are said to have “a power that exceeds that of men.” Just as neither gender can become a biological parent without the other, so no one is a soloist at soul-winning. A male minister may hold the authority to baptize, but the work of his female colleague is in some respects a work he “cannot do,” hence it is equally essential. Finally, Ellen White particularly endorsed husband-and-wife ministerial teams. This avoids the problems of inappropriate bonding that can result from extensive time of association between male and female colleagues who are not married to each other.<sup>51</sup>

Thus the church would be faithful to the united teaching of the entire Bible as well as to the counsels of Ellen White.

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<sup>51</sup> 2T 322-323; 8T 229-230 Ev 467-473, 491-493; E. G. White, “The Laborer is Worthy of His Hire,” Manuscript 43a, 1898, in *Manuscript Releases*, 5:323-324.

## Abbreviations

AA	<i>The Acts of the Apostles</i> , 1911
AG	<i>God's Amazing Grace</i> , 1973
AH	<i>The Adventist Home</i> , 1952
1BC, 2BC, etc.	<i>Bible Commentary, Seventh-day Adventist</i> , Ellen G. White Comments. 7 vols. plus supplement (vol. 7-A), 1953-1957
CC	<i>Conflict and Courage</i> , 1970
CCh	<i>Counsels for the Church</i> , 1957
CD	<i>Counsels on Diet and Foods</i> , 1938
CE	<i>Christian Education</i> , 1893
CET	<i>Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White</i> , 1922
CEv	<i>Colporteur Evangelist</i> , 1920
CG	<i>Child Guidance</i> , 1954
CH	<i>Counsels on Health</i> , 1923
ChS	<i>Christian Service</i> , 1925
ChL	<i>Christian Leadership</i> , 1974
CM	<i>Colporteur Ministry</i> , 1953
COL	<i>Christ's Object Lessons</i> , 1900
CS	<i>Counsels on Stewardship</i> , 1940
CSW	<i>Counsels on Sabbath School Work</i> , 1938
CT	<i>Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students</i> , 1913
CW	<i>Counsels to Writers and Editors</i> , 1946
DA	<i>The Desire of Ages</i> , 1898
DG	<i>Daughters of God</i> , 1998
EW	<i>Early Writings of Ellen G. White</i> , 1882
Ed	<i>Education</i> , 1903
1888	<i>The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials</i> . 4 vols., 1987
Ev	<i>Evangelism</i> , 1946
FE	<i>Fundamentals of Christian Education</i> , 1923
FLB	<i>The Faith I Live By</i> , 1958
GC	<i>The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan</i> , 1911
GW	<i>Gospel Workers</i> , 1915
HP	<i>In Heavenly Places</i> , 1967
HS	<i>Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists</i> , 1886
LP	<i>Sketches From the Life of Paul</i> , 1883
LS	<i>Life Sketches of Ellen G. White</i> , 1915
LS80	<i>Life Sketches of James and Ellen White</i> , 1880
LS88	<i>Life Sketches of James and Ellen White</i> , 1888
MB	<i>Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing</i> , 1896
MC	<i>Manual for Canvassers</i> , 1902
1MCP, 2MCP	<i>Mind, Character, and Personality</i> . 2 vols., 1977
MH	<i>The Ministry of Healing</i> , 1905
1MR, 2MR, etc.	<i>Manuscript Releases</i> . 21 vols., 1981-1993
MYP	<i>Messages to Young People</i> , 1930
PK	<i>Prophets and Kings</i> , 1917
PP	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> , 1890
SC	<i>Steps to Christ</i> , 1892
1SM, 2SM, 3SM	<i>Selected Messages</i> , 1958, 1958, 1980

1SP, 2SP, etc.	<i>Spirit of Prophecy</i> . 4 vols., 1870, 1877, 1878, 1884
1T, 2T, etc.	<i>Testimonies for the Church</i> . 9 vols., 1855-1909
Te	<i>Temperance</i> , 1949
TM	<i>Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers</i> , 1923
TMK	<i>That I May Know Him</i> , 1964
WM	<i>Welfare Ministry</i> , 1952
RH	<i>Review and Herald; Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald</i>
ST	<i>Signs of the Times</i>