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**EVALUATION OF THE ARGUMENTS
USED BY THOSE OPPOSING
THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN TO THE MINISTRY**

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez
Theology of Ordination Study Committee
Columbia, MD
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1 **EVALUATION OF THE ARGUMENTS**
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9 In what follows we will examine arguments and opinions offered to build up a case
10 against the ordination of women to the ministry. This is not about personalities but about
11 arguments. It is obvious to me that those opposed to the ordination of women to the ministry are
12 seeking to know God's will for the church as manifested in the Bible and in the Spirit of
13 Prophecy. They, like those with whom they disagree, are committed to the Lord, to the
14 Scriptures, and to the church. I have done my best to understand their arguments but if I
15 misrepresented their views I am willing to make the necessary changes. It is impossible to
16 evaluate every argument and opinion offered by them within the time limitations we have.
17 Therefore I have concentrated my analysis on their main arguments.

18 The way they have put their case together provides the organizational structure for this
19 paper. After an evaluation of their methodology and their approach to the Biblical text and to the
20 writings of Ellen G. White, I will examine the question of the pre-fall headship in the Old and
21 New Testaments. This will be followed by a discussion of the alleged gender exclusive nature of
22 spiritual leadership in the Bible and of the arguments they use to interpret passages that seem to
23 undermine their views. The last section will focus on a few arguments drawn from the writings of
24 Ellen White.

25 **Methodology and Hermeneutics**

26 The methodology used by our friends is not explicitly stated, making it necessary for me
27 to try to reconstruct it from the papers they presented. Their interpretation of 1 Timothy 3:2 is at

1 the very heart of their case. According to them the phrase “the husband of but one wife” (NIV)
2 needs no interpretation because its meaning is plain. It is a divine command unquestionably
3 stating that church elders have to be male. Their understanding of this text will determine their
4 reading of all biblical passages dealing with the topic of male/female leadership. They believe
5 that their understanding of 1 Timothy 3:2 is supported by the fact that throughout the Bible the
6 spiritual leaders of God’s people have always been males. This practice, they further believe, is
7 based on the principle of male headship (1 Cor 11:2-16).

8 It is not clear how they methodologically move from the universal and exclusive male
9 headship over women to male headship in the church. For them the metaphor of the church as a
10 family is very significant. At home the husband is the head of the wife and at church, defined as
11 the family of God, the elder is the head of the women. They claim to find support for this idea in
12 1 Cor 11:2-16 where Paul states the man, understood primarily as the church elder, is the head of
13 the woman. Therefore women in church are to be submissive and are forbidden to teach; they are
14 to be quiet (1 Tim 2:11; 1 Cor 14:33-34).

15 Based on 1 Corinthians 11:2-10 they, first, trace headship back to the pre-fall condition of
16 Adam and Eve and, second, they find support for the eternal headship of God over Christ. These
17 two details lead them to conclude that headship belongs to the inter-Trinitarian relationships and
18 that it plays a fundamental role in the order of the cosmic kingdom of God and in His church on
19 earth. They conclude that ordaining women to the ministry would be a violation of the divine
20 order established by God at creation. As we can see methodology is inseparable from the
21 conclusions reached.

22 The question of hermeneutics is at the heart of our discussion. How do we find a biblical
23 answer to the question of whether women should or should not be ordained to the ministry? They

1 are persuaded that what is needed is a hermeneutical key that can be used to harmonize
2 everything the Bible says about the topic. They claim to have found this key in 1 Timothy 3 and
3 1 Corinthians 11. We agree that “before arbitrarily elevating some text above others, all the
4 scriptures on a given subject should be carefully studied and every word must be carefully
5 considered.”¹ We add that this should first be done within the immediate context of each
6 passage. Let us look more closely at some of their hermeneutical principles.

7 *1. The Clarity of Scripture:* It is claimed that the meaning of the passages of the New
8 Testament used by them are clear and that their conclusions are based on the plain meaning of
9 the texts.² We agree that the basic message of the Scripture is clear and accessible to all,

¹ Clinton Wahlen, “Is ‘Husband of One Wife’ in 1 Timothy 3:2 Gender-Specific?” Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Columbia MD, January 23, 2014, 9.

² Steve Bohr, “A Study of 1 Peter 2:9, 10 and Galatians 3:28,” Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Baltimore July 2013, 1, writes, “I believe that what is simple and clear in the Bible has been mystified and relativized.” It is unfortunate that Bohr considers the hermeneutics of those who disagree with him as practically the same as the one used by Cristian theologians to undermine the authority of the Sabbath commandment. Both, according to him, reject or question the plain meaning the Bible. He knows very well that the non-Adventist scholars he was using as examples use the historical critical method which has been rejected by us. Surprisingly he approvingly uses the hermeneutics employed Wayne Grudem to exclude women from the ministry. If the hermeneutics used by Bohr and Grudem is the one that unfolds biblical truth, why has not Grudem, using that same hermeneutics, found the Sabbath in the New Testament? This suggests to me that the hermeneutics employed by both Bohr and Grudem does not necessarily lead to biblical truth. It is also unfortunate that Bohr uses the argument of fear to buttress his views. In agreement with Grudem, he writes, “Evangelical scholar Wayne Grudem has warned that those who drift away from faithfulness to the authority and clarity of the Bible on the matter of women’s ordination will drift further from the Bible in other areas as well” (3). I wonder what Grudem is talking about, because Protestants have drifted away from biblical authority long ago! I doubt that Bohr is calling us to return to the hermeneutics of evangelicalism. The argument from fear does not appeal to reason but to the irrational and therefore aims at halting the conversation. It is not a valid argument in the study of the Bible. On what grounds can it be demonstrated that if we ordain women to the ministry we may abandon the Sabbath, “bless gay marriages,” accept gay pastors, and reinterpret the creation account along liberal lines, as Bohr suggests? There is no way to establish any valid correlation between these and ordaining women to the ministry (see Nicholas Miller, “The Ordination of Women in the American Church,” Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Baltimore MD, June 2013). If there is any statistical study that clearly shows that this is the case, let us bring it to the table for careful study. In this case, Bohr is not placing a valid argument on the table for discussion; he brings fear. The rhetorical function of the phrase “the tip of an iceberg” is to instill fear (4). Such arguments were used by prophets because the Lord revealed to them what would unquestionably happen. What we need is to find biblical truth and follow it, leaving the consequences in the hands of the Lord.

1 particularly in matters related to salvation. But Bible students know that there are many difficult
2 passages in Scripture that require laborious work and prayer to understand them. It just happens,
3 for instance, that 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is a notoriously difficult passage.³ They recognize that it
4 is important to do word studies, but it is immediately stated that Ellen White also says that the
5 words are not inspired.⁴ One has to wonder about the intent of such a comment. By *assuming*
6 that the New Testament passages clearly teach male headship in the church the soundness of the
7 exegesis they offer us is questionable.

8 2. *Context*: The question of the context of a passage lies at the heart of the hermeneutical
9 differences between both groups. We seem to have a different understanding of what the context
10 of a passage is and how that context contributes to the interpretation of specific biblical texts.
11 Although we all agree that the context is of great importance in the interpretation of a biblical
12 text, most of the papers we are evaluating tend to deemphasize its significance. So, for instance,
13 the religious situation in Ephesus and Corinth are not carefully examined. It would appear that
14 the fear of over-contextualization does not allow them to take the cultural context seriously,⁵
15 although other concerns may also be present. But the situation is more serious when it comes to
16 the immediate context of some of the critical the passages. For instance, in the case of 1

³ The Seventh-day Adventist Commentary says that this is one of those passage to which we can apply what Peter said about Paul: Some of his writings are difficult to interpret.

⁴ P. Gerard Damsteegt, "Headship, Gender, and Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White," Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Baltimore July 2013, 8. Fortunately, Ingo Sorke is a little more careful calling for the study of words, grammar, and a careful study of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 ("Adam, Where are You? On Gender Relations," Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Baltimore July 2013, p. 11). His comments point to the complexity of the passage implying that its meaning is not that obvious.

⁵ Sorke, 14. I would also oppose over-contextualization. Edwin Reynolds, "Biblical Hermeneutics and Headship in First Corinthians," Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Baltimore July 2013, briefly comments, "At best, it seems, local cultural practices are not determinative for understanding Paul's counsel apart from his own internal explanation" (25). They may not be determinative but they could be very useful in understanding of some elements of the text. I do support the opposition, expressed by all of those who are against the ordination of women, to the idea that the biblical text is culturally conditioned (e.g. Reynolds, 3).

1 Corinthians 11:2-16, the writer of the paper does not attempt to provide a contextual justification for its inclusion in the letter.⁶ If the purpose of the passage is to reaffirm headship in the church, as the paper argues, then the letter does not provide a reason for its discussion. But if the main topic is not headship then there are contextual reasons for its inclusion. With respect to 1 Timothy 2:11-14, the author indicates that the interpretational context of the passage is not 1 Timothy but Genesis 1-3. Consequently the paper does not provide a contextual reason, a local situation in the church that would help us to understand why Paul included it in the letter. It is assumed that Paul is addressing a local situation but this situation is never identified. Another writer ignores the immediate context of the passage arguing that 1 Timothy is similar to a last will or testament or that it is like a church manual; they do not need a context to be understood: “Paul wrote 1 Timothy with a view to preparing him [Timothy] to minister in his extended absence. A careful reading of the epistle reveals nothing that is of exclusively local relevance.”⁷ He then goes on to argue that “more important are the *biblical* contexts to which Paul refers to explain his own meaning.”⁸ Thus is the passage sundered from its immediate context in order to be able to use it to support a particular reading of it. This attempt to ignore the immediate context of the passage is justified arguing that Paul is describing what is of universal value to the

⁶ Edwin Reynolds comments that there is “no clear indication of his [Paul’s] motivation for writing to them on this subject, although v. 16 may suggest that reports were circulating that there were some who were debating the need to practice the sign of headship in the church at Corinth, and he intends to make clear that there is no room for diversity in this area” (12). Instead of exploring this contextual possibility he lets it rest leaving the passage without a clear motivation. Notice also that the hermeneutical emphasis on listening to the plain meaning of the text is not applicable to this particular passage because there is something that is not clearly indicated in the text.

⁷ Clinton, “Husband of One Wife,” 18. Clinton recognizes that there is in 1 Timothy a polemic against false teachers but he deemphasizes it and makes it irrelevant for the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2 and 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 19. Italics in the original.

1 church.⁹ At this point we can only say that establishing what is universally valid is necessary, but
2 in order to define what is universal we first need to understand the specific problem that Paul is
3 trying to resolve in the church of Ephesus. Otherwise what we universalize may not be what the
4 Bible is universalizing—as is the situation in this case. Once we remove a passage from its
5 immediate context we are hermeneutically on our own, without interpretational controls.

6 3. *Totality of the Scriptures:* We all agree that in the study of the Bible we need to take
7 into consideration everything the Bible says on the specific topic. This requires from all of us to
8 study every passage within its context before establishing connections with other passages. The
9 papers under consideration, as I indicated, selected a group of NT passages that allegedly are
10 very clear on the topic of headship, ordination to the ministry, and gender differentiation and
11 used them to interpret other passages without first listening to the other passages on their own
12 terms. A reading of the papers discussing the pre-fall headship in Genesis 1-3 clearly indicates
13 that the intent of the writers was to demonstrate the presence of a pre-fall headship in Genesis
14 and to undermine the arguments of those who disagree with them. What they allegedly found in
15 the NT is over-imposed on Genesis. At least one of the papers explicitly acknowledges this
16 procedure: “The fact that the Gen 1-2 account does not raise the headship issue directly enough
17 for scholars to be able to prove it is there does not invalidate the inspired NT writer’s theological
18 insight into the matter.”¹⁰ This will become clear later on. Another example is found in their

⁹ Sorke, 16, where he writes, “Paul is not telling Timothy what to do in his particular situation; rather, he communicates what he thinks is universally appropriate for men and women in the church. This shifts the command from a local Ephesian situation (Timothy’s context) to a universally applicable mandate for all churches across time and place.” He never returns to a discussion of Timothy’s context to understand what Paul is telling him and why. His casual interest on this topic shows up again when he comments, “Although a local context may be granted, especially in the sense of false teaching, Paul’s point harks at creation, not cultural specificity (i.e., Ephesus)” (23).

¹⁰ Reynolds, 31; he continues saying, “The NT provides many insights into the Old Testament (OT) that scholars today want to deny are actually present there. Fortunately, we have the insight of the NT apostles to provide additional understanding of the OT texts.” It is one thing to find new insights but

1 interpretation of Romans 16:1. The phrase “Phoebe, deacon of the church in Cenchrea” does not
2 mean what it says because, according to 1 Timothy 3:12, a deacon must be male.¹¹ They silence
3 the witness of one text through the sound of the voice of the interpreter. We should not place
4 biblical text in opposition to each other but look for a proper harmonization that respects or
5 honors the contribution of each passage. We need to listen to each passage on its own terms.

6 4. *Use of Ellen G. White:* This is possibly the most sensitive topic in the area of
7 hermeneutics. How should we use her writings in the interpretation of the Bible? The document
8 “Methods of Bible Study Committee” (MBSC) states, “Her expositions on any given biblical
9 passage offer an inspired guide to the meaning of texts without exhausting their meaning or
10 preempting the task of exegesis.”¹² This is a safe guideline. But it seems to have been taken to
11 mean that “she was an inspired interpreter of Scripture, depending not on exegesis but on
12 revelation to explain the significance of a particular text.”¹³ This means that if she interprets a

it is another to over-impose on the Old Testament what Reynolds himself says is not there. If what we found in the New Testament is not clearly found in the Old Testament it is a proper hermeneutical procedure to go back to our interpretation of the NT passages to see whether our interpretation was as clear and normative as we concluded it was. In fact the Old Testament does shed light on the New Testament.

¹¹ This type of hermeneutical approach is very risky. Let me provide an example. First Corinthians 14:33-34 and 1 Timothy 2:11 clearly state that in church women are to be in silence. In none of these passages there is any indication that under certain circumstance women are allowed to speak in church. This, according to our friends, is a universal law. Then we find some passages in which women are permitted to pray and prophecy (1 Cor 11:3). Using their hermeneutical approach I could easily say that since women are not allowed to speak in church these other verse must refer to private meetings hold outside the official meetings of the church. But none of us argue that way. We all say that the very clear prohibition against women speaking in church does not mean what it seems to say (the so called plain meaning of the text) because there are other passages in which they are permitted to speak in church. In other words, we accept the contribution of each passage in the formulation of an understanding of the role of women in the apostolic church. This is what we believe should be done in the interpretation of each of the passages involved in the discussion of the ordination of women to the ministry.

¹² “Methods of Bible Study Committee,” 30.

¹³ Reynolds, 8. He seems to be the only one who has tried to explain the role of Ellen G. White in the study of our topic. The others assume that she is authoritative and some of them tend to us her as almost canonical on topics not directly addressed in the Bible.

1 passage literally we should also take it literally and that if she “understands it within a particular
2 context, we should take that context seriously as well.”¹⁴ The best I can do here is to work within
3 the role they assigned to her and see to what extent they are consistent.

4 Another problem that I found in most of the papers is that their use of Ellen White lacks
5 balance. They tend to quote what supports their arguments. The best example I can give is the
6 quotes used to support the idea that the content of the Bible is clear. They provide many
7 statements from her writings on this topic but nothing on the importance of deep careful study of
8 the Bible and the challenges that such study present to us. Most of her statements about the need
9 to take into consideration the times and circumstances in which the biblical writers lived and
10 wrote are almost ignored. We should expect from them to examine everything Ellen White says
11 on the subject or to tell us about other statements from her that need to be harmonized with the
12 ones they are offering us.

13 Finally, we should be clear that, while affirming the important role of Ellen White among
14 God’s end-time remnant people, our doctrines have to be grounded in the Bible. We have
15 constantly stated that none of our doctrines are based on her writings and we should continue to
16 affirm this conviction. This means that although it is good and necessary for us to explore her
17 contribution to our topic, the Bible is and should always be the final norm. If the church is going
18 to make a decision about the biblical meaning and practice of ordination to the ministry it would
19 have to do it on the basis of the biblical text.

20 *4. Hermeneutical Diatribe:* Our friends charge those who disagree with them of using a
21 non-biblical, no-Adventist hermeneutics. This type of diatribe is not constructive and closes the
22 possibility of any meaningful conversation. It leads away from a discussion of the arguments

¹⁴ Reynolds, 8.

1 themselves into an evaluation of the character and intentions of those involved in the discussion.
2 This approach seems to attempt to resolve the problem by instilling fear against those who
3 disagree with them; they are the enemy. My careful reading of their papers made it clear to me
4 that the major hermeneutical problems we face is located in the definition and application of one
5 principle of biblical interpretation, namely, the proper use of the context of a biblical passage.

6 In summary the hermeneutics used by those opposed to gender inclusive ordination does
7 not appear to be completely faithful to MBSC. They claim to be following the principles of the
8 totality of Scripture, Scripture interprets itself, and Scripture alone, but their use of a few biblical
9 passages as their hermeneutical key to interpret or reinterpret other passages (a canon within a
10 canon?), raises questions about the validity of their hermeneutics. Their main hermeneutical
11 problem is to a large extent their desire to prove their point and to undermine the arguments of
12 those who support the ordination of women to the ministry.

13 **Pre-Fall Headship**

14 The concept of a pre-fall headship attempts to explain why women should be under
15 subjection to the husband and to church leaders. Without it, male headship would be a divine,
16 arbitrary decision. The answer provided is a simple one: Headship is an essential part of the
17 order established by God for His cosmic kingdom. This order of creation reflects the inter-
18 Trinitarian functional headship that characterizes the Godhead. It is argued that although the
19 members of the Godhead have the same nature they functionally operate on the basis of
20 headship. The Son and the Spirit are under submission to the Father. Therefore headship is the
21 way God and the universe functions and it regulates the role of angels and the experience of
22 Adam and Eve.

23 **Headship and the Godhead**

1 Apparently not all of those who oppose the ordination of women to the ministry believe
2 in the eternal headship of the Father over the Son.¹⁵ Nevertheless we need to address it because
3 of the serious implications it has for our body of beliefs. I expected a critical evaluation of this
4 argument by those who took it from the writings of evangelical scholars and introduced it within
5 Adventist theology, but it was not there. In my opinion this is a serious deviation from Adventist
6 theology and doctrine.

7 *1. It Redefines the Biblical Doctrine of God.* Adventists believe that within the mystery of
8 the Godhead there is a plurality of person but one God. We have never speculated about the

¹⁵ Jerry Moon, “Ellen G. White, Ordination, and Authority,” Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Baltimore July 2013, 4, accepts incarnational headship in the Godhead. It is not clear to me whether P. Gerard Damsteegt believes in the eternal headship of the Father over the other members of the Trinity. He limits the examples he gives to the work of Christ during the incarnation but he also writes, “The relationships within the Godhead give an insight into the operation of the headquarters of God’s dynamic universal kingdom” (“Headship, Gender, and Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White,” Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Baltimore July 2013, 12). In order for their argument to be useful to them, headship within the Godhead has to be eternal. Otherwise the kingdom of God could function on a different model (the eternal pre-headship). Reynolds is probably the one who most clearly expresses the eternal submission of the Son to the Father: “It is characteristic of the role relationship between Christ and His Father that extend from eternity past to eternity future” (23). Sorke, 24, states that “whether this subordination [the Son’s] is eternal or just incarnation is immaterial—although humans do not share in the divine nature, a modeling paradigm in divinity still exists within the NT writers.” It does not seem to be immaterial because if it is only incarnational then it would be more difficult to argue for a pre-fall headship. I was pleased when John W. Peters informed me that he did not believe in the eternal submission of the Son to the Father. In his unrevised paper he certainly gave the impression that the submission was eternal: “The ‘mystery of godliness’ captures the biblical principle of headship and submission, and this mystery which is inherent in the Trinity is to be manifested in conduct and order within the church” (“Restoration of the Image of God: Headship and Submission,” Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Columbia MD, January 2014, 26). However, in the revised edition of the paper he continues to argue that “a relationship of authority and submission between the Father and Son has existed in parallel with their equality of being from before the beginning of creation” (51). In the same revised edition he goes on to say, “Equality of being and the principle of headship/submission are inherent within the nature of the Trinity, and this nature of the Trinity, the image of God, was reproduced in the creation of mankind, male and female” (28). The level of speculation is distressing. He states that “since the principle of authority and submission exists among angels in heaven, angels would expect to see the principle reflected in beings on earth. Alternatively, since man was created in the image of God and angels recognize the headship principle among members of the Trinity, the angels expect to see the principle manifested in ‘male and female’ created in the image of God” (50). You have to ask yourself, where is the evidence for such dogmatic statement? There is none. This is simply his personal opinion. His original paper included an appendix dealing with the patristic fathers and Trinitarian headship that suggests to me that may have been influenced by the catholic theology of the eternal procession of the Son from the Father.

1 mystery of the inner being of God. The proposal before us invites us to talk about what we will
2 never comprehend and leads us into dangerous terrain. If one of the three members of the
3 Godhead has been the eternal leader of the other two, even at a functional level, we have
4 introduced a fissure within the unity of the Godhead that brings us too close to polytheism. If one
5 member of the Godhead has to tell the others what to do and when to do it, then, we have to
6 conclude that the exercise of the divine attributes of the other two is being limited or that not all
7 of them have the same divine attributes—they complement each other. If we were to insist that
8 eternal headship is consistent with monotheism, we would have to argue for something very
9 close to modalism—the one God is functioning in three different ways.

10 Apparently they have not realized that the concept of an eternal headship within the
11 Godhead is incompatible with the distinction between equality of nature and functional
12 differentiation within the Trinity. If the Son had been eternally under subjection to the Father,
13 then this is what defined Him; this is who *He is* and *not* what *He does*. He would have always
14 existed in subordination to the Father. Here nature and function coalesced. Unlike the Father, He
15 exists unable to fully exercise His divine freedom and this is who He is. Being and acting are
16 inseparable. What we do reflects who we are. There is no dichotomy here. The distinction
17 between nature and function is no longer valid within the Godhead. Part of the problem is that
18 our friends seem to have confused submission with function. Submission is a condition or state
19 of being and it expresses itself in the exercise of certain functions. An eternal submission is not
20 something a person does but the eternal state of that person. Therefore submission, function, and
21 being cannot be separated from each other.

22 2. *Eternal Headship and the Atonement.* The idea of an eternal headship within the
23 Godhead would require a redefinition of the doctrine of the atonement. At the core of the

1 atonement is the love of God manifested in self-sacrificing and disinterested divine salvific
2 actions toward sinners. There was nothing that forced God to save us. The eternal headship of the
3 Father could imply that the sacrifice of the Son was the result of an order given by the Father to
4 Him to save us; the assignment of a function. This would destroy the biblical doctrine of the
5 atonement and would damage in a radical way the biblical understanding of the nature of divine
6 love.

7 The only way available to my friends to avoid having to redefine the doctrines of God
8 and the atonement is by claiming that the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father was
9 voluntary. This is exactly what they suggest. This supposedly would preserve the distinction
10 between being and function. But this “solution” introduces into their argument a logical
11 inconsistency; even a logical contradiction. Here it is: If the subordination of the Son to the
12 Father was voluntary it could not have been eternal. “Voluntary” means that up to a particular
13 moment in eternity the Son was not under submission to the Father. This was not His “natural”
14 condition but one that for some reason He was willing to assume. The conclusion is obvious:
15 Headship within the Godhead cannot be eternal.

16 3. *Absence of Biblical Support.* But the most serious problem with the eternal headship of
17 the Father is the absence of biblical support. We search the Scriptures in vain for a “Thus says
18 the Lord” on this topic. They can only quote 1 Corinthians 11:3: “And the head of Christ is
19 God.”¹⁶ But there is absolutely nothing in the context about the eternal headship of the Father.
20 The fact that this concept distorts the doctrines of God and the atonement should alert us to the

¹⁶ Damsteegt, 13. Reynolds, 21-22. We should notice that the order of the list is not hierarchical but chronological: Christ created man, woman was partially created from man, and Christ became human to save us. The movement is from creation to redemption.

1 fact that an interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:3 that supports it is a misreading of the text. There
2 are other ways of interpreting this passage that preserve the theological unity of the Bible.

3 4. *Ellen G. White*. Ellen White does not know anything about the eternal headship of the
4 Father. The idea that the Son was eternally in submission to the Father came into Christian
5 history through the teaching of the eternal procession of the Son from the Father. Adventists
6 have considered this concept to be based on non-biblical tradition. The eternal headship of the
7 Father is the result of human speculation. It is argued among some Adventists that the Son of
8 God took the form of an angel before the origin of sin and that in the condition of an angel He
9 was under submission to the Father. But this does not mean that He was, as the eternal Son of
10 God, under the eternal headship of the Father.¹⁷ The same could be said about the incarnation.
11 The Son of God was voluntarily under subjection to the Father, but this does not mean that this
12 was His eternal condition. The decision to save the human race was an inter-Trinitarian one in
13 which the three persons of the Godhead where involved until they together could say, “*Let us*
14 *save the human race.*” This is what they, as One, decided to do for us.

15 The proposal offered to us to justify the headship of males over females in the church
16 creates more problems than it solves. What defines the inter-Trinitarian relationships and
17 functions is not headship but divine self-sacrificing love. The universe, according to Ellen White,

¹⁷ Peters provided several statements from Ellen White in which she affirms that Christ is the eternal Son of God (52), but in a conversation he indicated to me that this does not mean that there was an eternal inter-Trinitarian submission of the Son to the Father. I am not sure where he stands on this issue because in his revised paper he continues to talk about the Father as the head of Christ in eternity past. The impression I have is that it would be very difficult for him to give up this concept because it is part of the image of God that is to be reflected in the interaction of men and women in church. In other words, if he gives up the eternal subordination of the Son (or the eternal headship of the Father) he would have to rewrite his paper or set it aside. In reading Ellen White’s use of the title “eternal Son” it seems to me that she is communicating two basic theological ideas. First, that the Son has the same nature the Father has and, second, that He is a different person within the Godhead. She wrote, “The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity [same nature], a distinct person [different person], yet one with the Father [same nature]” (LHU 16). As far as I can tell she never explicitly speaks about the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father.

1 has been always ruled by the eternal love of God and not by a cosmic principle called headship.
2 This love manifested itself within the cosmos as disinterested service toward God and others.
3 Since divine love ruled the cosmos, there was perfect harmony within God's creation.

4 **Headship and the Angels**

5 We still have to deal with the question of headship among the angels. Both the Bible and
6 Ellen White point to some type of hierarchy among angels. We read about cherubim, seraphim,
7 archangels, and angels in general. It cannot be denied that order within the angelic hosts requires
8 some type of leadership. What needs to be explored is the nature of this harmonious angelic
9 order and the basis on which it was established. One could argue that when God was creating the
10 angels He decided to create some as seraphim, others as cherubim, and some as common angels.
11 These would be their eternal roles. If we were to assume that this was the case, it would be
12 impossible to find a reason for the hierarchy. We could only say that God wanted it to function
13 this way. In other words, it was a divine, arbitrary decision that eternally limited to role of angels
14 to a particular sphere of action without ever being able to outgrow it. This explanation would
15 echo Lucifer's accusation that God was arbitrary and that the Creator, by design, had restricted
16 the personal development of His creatures (cf. Gen 3:2).

17 The second possibility is to argue that the angelic order was based on service. In this case
18 the position of angels was not predetermined by divine fiat. It was rather the result of the gifts
19 entrusted to them and their use in character development. We do know that cosmic order was
20 established on the fundamental concept of service:

21 All things both in heaven and in earth declare that the great law of life is a law of service.
22 The infinite Father ministers to the life of every living thing. Christ came to the earth "as
23 He that serveth." Luke 22:27. The angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister
24 for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Hebrews 1:14. The same law of service is
25 written upon all things in nature. The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the trees of
26 the forest, the leaves, the grass, and the flowers, the sun in the heavens and the stars of

1 light—all have their ministry. Lake and ocean, river and water spring—each takes to
2 give.¹⁸
3

4 The law of service keeps everything working harmoniously. This is called by Ellen White “the
5 celestial harmonies.”¹⁹ She never used the term “headship” or a similar one to further define that
6 harmony. She indicated that “in their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons....
7 Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy.”²⁰

8 We could suggest that positions of leadership among the angels were assigned to them on
9 the basis of service and not on the grounds of who was created first. “The more studiously the
10 intellect is cultivated, the more effectively it can be used in the service of God, if it is placed
11 under the control of his Spirit. Talents used are talents multiplied; experience in spiritual things
12 widens the vision of saints and angels, and both increase in capability and knowledge as they
13 work in their respective spheres.”²¹

14 We know that angels are promoted to new positions, which means that they were not
15 created to fill a particular one without the possibility of new opportunities for service. Gabriel
16 was not a covering cherub, but was assigned that position after the fall of Lucifer.²² In fact,
17 Lucifer was exalted to the position of covering cherub; it was not his by nature.²³ It was

¹⁸ Ellen G. White, *Education*, 103.

¹⁹ GC 494.

²⁰ *Maranatha*, 79.

²¹ *Special Testimonies on Education*, 57.

²² Ellen White describes Gabriel as “the angel who stands next in honor to the Son of God” (DA 99; see also 234). This was Lucifer’s position before his rebellion.

²³ She wrote, “The first sinner was one whom God had greatly exalted. . . . Not content with his position, though honored above the heavenly host, he ventured to covet homage due alone to the Creator” (4BC 1162). She also comments, “Satan, who was once an honored angel in heaven, had been ambitious for the more exalted honors which God had bestowed upon His Son. He became envious of Christ, and represented to the angels, who honored him as covering cherub, that he had not the honor conferred upon him which his position demanded. He asserted that he should be exalted equal in honor with Christ. Satan obtained sympathizers. Angels in heaven joined him in his rebellion, and fell with their leader from their

1 “appointed to him” by God.²⁴ He had developed the gifts the Creator gave him above the rest of
2 the angels.²⁵ At the end of the conflict he will realize that had he remained faithful he would
3 have been given other positions of honor.²⁶ Since positions were assigned by God on the basis
4 of service, the submission of angels to new angelic leaders was voluntary in the sense that they
5 could see the reasons why the Creator assigned to them their new roles of service. As time
6 passed the functions would change as a result of God bestowing new honors to other angels. No
7 one was limited to a particular role within the Kingdom of God. There was a harmonious order
8 within which each intelligent creature could freely develop the potential God gave them without
9 any predetermined and arbitrary restriction; for sure not on the basis of gender. “So long as all
10 created beings acknowledged the allegiance of love, there was perfect harmony throughout the
11 universe of God. It was the joy of the heavenly host to fulfill the purpose of their Creator.”²⁷ If

high and holy estate, and were therefore expelled from heaven with him” (*Confrontation*, 9). Notice that when the Son received more exalted honors from the Father Lucifer thought that he should also receive them.

²⁴ GC 495. There is a statement by Ellen White that could give the impression that Lucifer was created to fill the specific role God assigned him. She stated: “God had made him noble, had given him rich endowments. He gave him a high, responsible position” (SSW, March 1, 1893, par. 2). But it was as a result of the use of the gift given to him that God assigned him major responsibilities: “The Lord himself gave to Satan his glory and wisdom, and made him the covering cherub, good, noble, and exceeding lovely. But beauty, wisdom, and glory were bestowed upon God's creature as a gift of love. For like reasons the Lord has bestowed upon human agencies talents of intellect, qualities of mind and character, that they may be able to fill positions of trust, and glorify their Creator and Redeemer” (ST, September 18, 1893 par. 3).

²⁵ “The greatest talents and the highest gifts that could be bestowed on a created being were given to Lucifer, the covering cherub” (*The Day with God*, 287). Because of his talents he “was given a position next to Jesus Christ in the heavenly courts” (4BC 1143).

²⁶ Satan and the wicked will be allowed to see the coronation of Christ and at that moment there is deep reflection: “Satan seems paralyzed as he beholds the glory and majesty of Christ. He who was once a covering cherub remembers whence he has fallen. A shining seraph, ‘son of the morning;’ how changed, how degraded! From the council where once he was honored, he is forever excluded. He sees another now standing near to the Father, veiling His glory. He has seen the crown placed upon the head of Christ by an angel of lofty stature and majestic presence, and he knows that the exalted position of this angel might have been his” (DD 56).

²⁷ Ellen White, PP 35.

1 we were to use the term “headship” within this pre-sin condition we would have to identify God
2 as the head of the cosmos and no one else.

3 **Pre-Fall Headship and Adam and Eve**

4 The arguments used by the opponents to women’s ordination to support the pre-fall
5 headship of Adam are under the influence of evangelical scholars. They use their interpretation
6 of 1 Timothy 2:13 (Adam was created before Eve) and I Corinthians 11:8, to interpret Genesis 1-
7 3.²⁸ In other words, they went to Genesis with the preconceived idea of Adam’s pre-fall headship
8 and claim to have found it there.²⁹ This is how they argue: Although the creation of Adam

²⁸ This is clearly stated by Moon: “In the NT we find an inspired commentary on Gen 3. In two places, that apostle Paul makes explicit what is implicit in Gen 2” (9). He then quotes 1 Timothy 2:13 and 1 Corinthians 11:8. Based on these passages he concludes that “there was an authority structure implicit in the original creation of the human race.” What is to be demonstrated is simply assumed to be the case using the term “implicit.” He believes that the human race needed an authority structure and that Adam was the primary authority figure and that this shows that “the entire Bible is consistent, and Paul is in perfect harmony with Genesis” (9-10). Those who support the ordination of women to the ministry also believe that the entire Bible is consistent and that Paul is in harmony with Genesis. The question is whether we are going to study each passage on its own merits before trying to harmonize them or not. Is their understanding of what Paul is saying really present in Genesis? We will show that this is not the case.

²⁹ In fact, their papers suggest to me that they brought with them the idea of pre-fall headship to Genesis 2-3 and then claim to have found it there. Peters provides a list of twenty -six points to show the presence of headship/submission in Genesis 1-3 (7-26), finding in the text what he brought to it. I will evaluate some of the most important arguments but let me mention here some of the others in order to demonstrate that we should distinguish between opinion and fact. He finds headship in the fact that man takes the initiative in marriage but what the text says is that he leaves his parents to join the wife. It would be easier to argue that the man is leaving the headship of the parents to live under the headship of the woman! This type of interpretation happens when the immediate context is ignored. They also find headship in the fact that God gave Eve to Adam as a gift. This tends to devalue the woman who is defined now as an object owned by the man. But we should remember that the greatest gift God gave us was His Son! He is certainly not under our headship. The idea that Eve usurped the headship of Adam reveals originality in their thinking but, as we will show, is not supported by the biblical text or Ellen White. Approaching a biblical text with a preconceived idea could lead us into an improper interpretation unless we are willing to listen to the text and to correct our preconceptions. Let me give you an example to illustrate how easy it is to find in a text what we are looking for instead of allowing the text to tell us what it means. If I were to argue (let it be clear that I am not arguing for this) that in the pre-fall headship Adam was under subjection to Eve, I could provide a list of points to support my assumption: (1) Eve was created after Adam and according to the order of creation that which is created second has dominion over what was created first; (2) in 1 Timothy 2:14 Paul is arguing that even though Eve was superior to Adam she was deceived, thus emphasizing the power of deception and the need to stay away from the enemy; (3) Satan went after Eve because she was the head of Adam and Adam would follow her; (4)

1 before Eve does not necessarily imply the headship of Adam, there is enough evidence in
2 Genesis 1-3 to interpret the priority of Adam in terms of headship. Among these they mention
3 that Eve was created from his rib, for the benefit of Adam, was brought to him, and he gave her a
4 name. Besides, Adam was entrusted with the law of God—to work the ground and not eat of the
5 tree of good and evil—before Eve was created. In other words, he was expected to instruct Eve.
6 Sin came in when Eve usurped Adam’s headship. After sin, God restored headship to Adam by
7 calling him first into account as the representative of the human family and by officially
8 reinstating him to headship over Eve.

9 In evaluating these arguments we need to distinguish between facts and opinions. If we
10 examine the biblical text in Genesis, it is clear that the idea of headship or authority over
11 something is present. God placed the flora and the fauna under the power of Adam and Eve
12 (1:26-28). It is also clear that the subjection of the woman to Adam was announced after the fall
13 (3:18). Nothing is said in the text about God placing a human being under the authority of
14 another human being before the fall. There are some other facts: Adam and Eve were created in
15 God’s image; Adam was created first and named the animals; God asked him to take care of the
16 garden and not to eat from the forbidden tree; God created Eve from Adam’s rib; she was
17 brought to him as his helpmate; Eve sinned first and then Adam; Adam was the first one called to
18 give an account of his sin; and Adam was appointed as head over Eve. The rest is interpretation
19 or opinion based in most cases on the silence of the text. Let us examine some of the most
20 important arguments in more detail.

Adam acknowledged her superiority when after seeing her for the first time he praised her, thus showing his willingness to exist under her; (5) God assigned servile work to Adam but not to Eve—he was going to be her servant; (6) man was to leave his parents in order to exist under submission to the woman; and (7) Adam existed for a while as an incomplete being but Eve enjoyed fullness of life from the very beginning. We can find in the text what we are looking for. The only safety is an interpretation that is based on the context of the passage. Based on that principle I can easily conclude that the headship of Eve over Adam is not found in the creation narrative; neither is there the headship of Adam over Eve.

1 *1. Adam Created First:* Although our friends argue that the priority of Adam in creation
2 does not necessarily mean headship, they believe that within its context it in fact points to
3 Adam’s headship; he had authority over her. It is clear that in Genesis 1-2 temporal priority does
4 not mean or imply headship. If that were the case the animals would have ruled over Adam and
5 Eve. They were also created before the Sabbath was created/instituted but as far as I know no
6 one claims that humans have authority over the Sabbath. On the contrary Jesus stated that only
7 the Son of Man has authority over the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).

8 But the question remains: Why was Adam/the male created first? This is an invitation to
9 *speculate*; the text does not answer it. We can argue from our post-fallen condition that his
10 priority points to headship but this is not found in the text. Perhaps what we could find in the text
11 is a veiled attack against the superiority of man over woman by interpreting the priority of Adam
12 as a sign of an unfinished being. But this is pure speculation. One thing is contextually clear,
13 namely his priority means that the creation of humans was not yet completed. The narrative is
14 not seeking to show his superiority over Eve but rather his incompleteness.³⁰ The Adam of
15 Genesis 2 is not the Adam of Genesis 1. The Adam of Genesis 2 is the male of the Adam of
16 Genesis 1 that was created in the image of God as male and female. The *’ādam* of Genesis 2 is
17 the *hā’ādam* of Genesis 1 in the process of being created. It could be said that the *priority* of
18 Adam in creation is negative in that it points to an unfinished being; to incompleteness. To argue
19 that it points to his superiority over Eve is to miss the intention of the biblical author provided by
20 the context of the narrative.

21 The creation of human beings was a unique event in the creation narrative in Genesis.
22 God was creating two free beings in His own image to exist in perfect union with each other and

³⁰ Richard Davidson, “Should Women be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations.”
Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Baltimore, MD, June 2013, 6.

1 with Him. In order to achieve His purpose, God decided to create each one as a separate entity
2 and at a different time. He then brought the two together in order to constitute them into one.
3 Their union was not to be driven by instinct but by self-awareness and by the discovery of the
4 other as an equal—a Thou. This seems to be what this narrative addresses. The priority of Adam
5 is depicted in Genesis as part of the creation of humans. Genesis 2 is an anthropogony based on
6 Genesis 1:27-28. The narrative does not conclude until the two are created in the image of God.
7 It was at this moment that, according to Genesis 1, humans as male and female were appointed to
8 rule over creation and not over another human being. We need to read Genesis 1 and 2 together.

9 2. *Adam as Custodian of God’s Law*: The argument is that God gave Adam two orders
10 before Eve was created thus constituting him into a custodian of God’s law. He was responsible
11 “as head of the family to share these instructions with the woman and to ensure that these
12 instructions were followed.” He became “the instructor within the human family.”³¹ These
13 arguments are the strongest they have and if proven to be correct their theory would have some
14 foundation. But the problem they face is that the conclusions they draw from them are based on
15 the silence of the Bible. Let me begin with the question of the teacher of Eve. Here the Bible is
16 silent but not Ellen White. She indicates that, “The Garden of Eden was the schoolroom, nature
17 was the lesson book, the Creator Himself was the instructor, and the parents of the human family
18 were the students.”³² They both functioned as students and both have the same privilege:

19 *Adam and Eve received knowledge through direct communion with God, and they*
20 *learned of Him through His works.* All created things, in their original perfection, were
21 an expression of the thought of God. To Adam and Eve nature was teeming with divine
22 wisdom. *But by transgression the human family was cut off from learning of God through*
23 *direct communion* and, to a great degree, through His works.³³

³¹ Ratsara and Bediako, 25.

³² Ed 20.

³³ *Education*, 16. Italics mine. She adds, “The holy pair [Adam and Eve] were not only children under the fatherly care of God, but students receiving instruction from the all-wise Creator. They were

1
2 In these statements we do not find any traces of Adam’s headship or the privileged position of
3 teacher over Eve. God did not only create them equal but He also treated them as equal. In this
4 case we do have a “Thus says the Lord.”

5 Now, concerning Adam being in charge of the law of God, the Bible is not really silent.
6 The command given to Adam not to eat of the forbidden tree was also given to Eve by God. Eve
7 herself stated, “God did say, ‘You [plural in Hebrew] must not eat fruit from the tree that is in
8 the middle of the garden’” (3:3). One could question the *plain meaning of the text*—God told
9 Adam and Eve—arguing that God did not personally tell Eve but that He did it through Adam.³⁴

10 I will stay with the plain meaning of the text because it is also supported by Ellen White:

11 As children are educated by faithful parents, so *Adam and Eve were instructed as to what*
12 *was required of them as intelligent creatures of God.* Every provision was made whereby
13 blessings might be secured to the human race, and but *one mild restriction was placed*
14 *upon the sinless pair to test their loyalty to God. The Lord had said unto them, ‘Of every*
15 *tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and*
16 *evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.’*³⁵

17
18 According to her Genesis 2:17 was addressed by God to both Adam and Eve. There is no need to
19 explain such a clear statement.

20 But, how should we interpret the order given to Adam to “work” and to “take care” of the
21 garden? Would not this point to a functional differentiation that gave to Adam a leadership role?
22 I am not sure how working the garden would even suggest pre-fall headship unless we interpret it
23 in terms of the post-fallen condition in which man was responsible to work the land to obtain
24 food for the family. Our friends have concluded that since the biblical text does not say that Eve

visited by angels, and were granted communion with their Maker, with no obscuring veil between. They were full of the vigor imparted by the tree of life, and their intellectual power was but little less than that of the angels” (CE 207; see also PP 50).

³⁴ This is how Peters explains away the plain meaning of the text (10).

³⁵ ST, October 8, 1894 pars. 2, 3 (italics are mine).

1 was also to work the land, this was Adam’s exclusive responsibility. We are once more in the
2 realm of speculation. But we do not need to speculate. We know exactly what happened in Eden
3 with respect to this specific point. Ellen White writes,

4 In their happy innocency, *the Lord placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and*
5 *gave them employment in dressing and keeping the garden which he had made for them.*
6 In activity of body and mind they had the means of obtaining good, and of glorifying
7 their Heavenly Father. Like the angels of God, who are ever engaged in doing good, in
8 carrying out God's commands, man was ever to engage in earnest work.³⁶
9

10 In case there is any doubt, she clearly stated, “*He who taught Adam and Eve in Eden how*
11 *to tend the garden* would instruct men today.”³⁷ This requires no further comments but it does
12 have a domino effect on other arguments. Any argument based on the on the alleged
13 differentiation of functions between Adam and Eve related to his exclusive work in the garden
14 and as custodian of the law can be immediately dismissed. What we have found is not pre-fall
15 headship but a loving God who created them as equal and who also dealt with them as equal.
16 Evidence for the headship of Adam is still lacking.

17 *3. The Creation of Eve:* The creation of Eve is used to affirm the leading role of man in
18 Genesis using several arguments. First, it is suggested that the gender differentiation addressed in
19 the narrative is about “the husband role differentiation.”³⁸ In other words, this is about a

³⁶ ST, October 8, 1894 par. 1. She also indicates that at the moment Adam was created, before Eve was created, the Lord assigned that function to Adam: “God placed our first parents in Paradise, surrounding them with all that was useful and lovely. In their Eden home nothing was wanting that could minister to their comfort and happiness. *And to Adam was given the work of caring for the garden.* The Creator knew that Adam could not be happy without employment. The beauty of the garden delighted him, but this was not enough. He must have labor to call into exercise the wonderful organs of the body. Had happiness consisted in doing nothing, man, in his state of holy innocence, would have been left unemployed. But he who created man knew what would be for his happiness; ***and no sooner had he created him, than he gave him his appointed work.***” (YI, February 27, 1902 par. 2). We will also suggest that at the moment he was created he was also appointed as monarch but this role was, like the command to work the garden, also given to Eve after she was created.

³⁷ AH 143. Italics mine. She clearly stated, “To the dwellers in Eden was committed the care of the garden, ‘to dress it and to keep it’” (PP 50).

³⁸ Ratsara and Bediako, 15.

1 different role of man that points to his leadership function. It is clear that the main emphasis of
2 the story is on gender differentiation—God created them male and female. With the creation of a
3 woman the creation of the *'ādām* of Genesis 1:26 is completed. When it is suggested that we are
4 dealing here with functions that point to the leadership role of Adam, we have gone beyond the
5 biblical text. First, we should understand that gender is not about function but about being.
6 Maleness and femaleness are not functions but who we are. I am a male human being and some
7 of you are female human beings. Gender differentiation is about equality within gender
8 differentiation and about the mystery of oneness within a plurality. The two are one (2:24). This
9 is not about the leading role of the husband within the differentiation.³⁹ Although gender
10 differentiation is not a functional distinction it implies different functions. It certainly does not
11 imply that the primary responsibility of the woman in the garden was to bear children and that of
12 the man to work in the garden. We already saw that this type of argument cannot be supported by
13 the evidence. We should add that parental responsibility was given by the Lord to both of them
14 (Gen 1:28).

15 Second, it is also argued that since Eve was created from the rib of Adam to be his
16 helpmate, he was the immediate cause for her creation and she was to serve him. Headship is,
17 they argue, at least implied. This type of argumentation may be possible if we separate Genesis 1
18 from Genesis 2. The reason for the creation of Eve is not that Adam had some needs that she was
19 to supply, but that God intended to create Adam as male and female. One without the other was
20 incomplete. With respect to the Hebrew phrase *'ezer kenegdo*, “helpmate,” it is generally agreed
21 by most of our friends that it could express equality.⁴⁰ But unfortunately they go on to argue
22 that since the phrase is about gender distinctions it also points to a functional differentiation in

³⁹ This is the argument used by Ratsara and Bediako, 15.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

1 which man has the leading role. This is assumed to be the case and consequently there is no
2 attempt to demonstrate it from the context. No one would deny functional differentiations, but
3 functional differentiation does not mean and does not even require headship. This raises the
4 question of equality of nature versus functional differentiations. Headship for them is grounded
5 on gender differentiation.

6 *4. Being versus Function:* When it is stated that from the very beginning God placed Eve
7 under loving subjection to Adam, not only because he was created first but also because she was
8 created as a woman, they are in fact eliminating the distinction between function and nature.
9 Since headship belongs to the order of creation, to the way God created them, it is not functional!
10 The headship of Adam over Eve would indicate that she was by nature created to be under him.
11 But not only that, this type of submission was a permanent one. Throughout eternity Eve would
12 be under the headship of Adam. This is not willing submission to man but something that
13 belongs to the very structure of their relationship and of creation itself. She was created to be
14 under him and there was nothing she could do about it.

15 If one were to ask why God created them this way, the only possible answer would be,
16 “Because He so wished it to be!” In other words, it was an arbitrary decision. God created him
17 first in order for him to rule over her. The biblical ground for leadership was no longer service
18 based on character development but on the order of creation. One was created to rule while the
19 other was created to be ruled. Here function and nature are inseparable because they are linked to
20 the divine act of creation. This also impacts in a negative way freedom of the will and tends to
21 support Satan’s charge that God’s will is arbitrary. Ellen White wrote: “Lucifer took the position
22 that as a result of the law of God, wrong existed in heaven and on this earth. *This brought*
23 *against God's government the charge of being arbitrary.* But this is a falsehood, framed by the

1 author of all falsehoods. *God's government is a government of free-will, and there is no act of*
2 *rebellion or obedience which is not an act of free-will.*"⁴¹

3 The pre-fall headship of Adam over Eve implies that at the moment Eve was created she
4 realized that she already was under subjection to Adam. This is fundamentally different from the
5 willing subjection of the Son to the Father and that of the angels to other angels. In these two
6 cases there was a reason, but not so in the case of Eve. Here subjection implied the imposition of
7 permanent limitations to her free will. This has to do with ontological distinctions because it
8 implies that Adam had a superior nature.

9 Fortunately Ellen White makes clear that Eve was under subjection only to God as
10 Creator. Satan knew this and misused it to tempt and deceive her: "He told her that God had
11 forbidden her to eat of the fruit, in order to show his arbitrary authority, and to keep the holy pair
12 in a state of dependence and subjection. He told her that in the violation of this commandment,
13 advanced light would be hers; that she would be independent, untrammelled by the will of a
14 superior."⁴² Satan tempted her to aspire and go after a new role in life in total independence *not*
15 *from Adam but from God.*

16 White also affirms the functional and the so-called ontological equality of Adam and
17 Eve: "In the creation, God had made her the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to
18 God—in harmony with His great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each
19 other."⁴³ This is about ontology because it is a reference to the moment they were created. But it
20 is also about equality in function. The divine order was to consist not in the subjection of Eve to
21 Adam but in their obedience to God's "great law of love." Instead of headship we find harmony

⁴¹ ST, June 5, 1901 par. 4. Italics mine.

⁴² YI, July 1, 1897, par. 5. There was no deficiency on any of the two to be supplied by the other.

⁴³ AH 115.

1 of action that would have resulted in the preservation of divine order. Their own harmony was
2 not determined by the subjection of the one to the other but was located in their mutual
3 subjection to God.

4 Ellen White is very clear concerning the equality of Adam and Eve in function, apart
5 from gender related matters. She states,

6 Graceful and symmetrical in form, regular and beautiful in feature, their countenances
7 glowing with the tint of health and the light of joy and hope, they bore in outward
8 resemblance the likeness of their Maker. Nor was this likeness manifest in the physical
9 nature only. *Every faculty of mind and soul reflected the Creator's glory. Endowed with*
10 *high mental and spiritual gifts*, Adam and Eve were made but “a little lower than the
11 angels” (Hebrews 2:7), that they might not only discern the wonders of the visible
12 universe, but comprehend moral responsibilities and obligations.⁴⁴

13
14 The faculty of mind and soul of both reflected the glory of God, they both had high mental and
15 spiritual gifts, and they both could comprehend their moral responsibilities and obligations. She
16 also states that “Adam and Eve came forth from the hand of their Creator in the perfection of
17 every physical, mental, and spiritual endowment.”⁴⁵ Being that the case we have to ask, why
18 would Eve need Adam as her head since both had the same perfection of character and mind? A
19 pre-fall headship was unnecessary in the garden of Eden.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ed 20.

⁴⁵ RH, February 24, 1874, par. 4.

⁴⁶ Ellen White is very clear when it comes to the equality of Adam and Eve and the absence of a pre-fall headship: “Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with His great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord, and *now their union* could be maintained *and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other*. Eve had been the first in transgression; and she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was now placed in subjection to her husband. Had the principles joined in the law of God been cherished by the fallen race, this sentence, though growing out of the results of sin, would have proved a blessing to them; but man's abuse of the supremacy thus given him has too often rendered the lot of woman very bitter and made her life a burden” (PP 58-59).

1 5. *Eve Created from Adam and for Adam*: This is one of the main arguments used by our
2 friends to support the pre-fall headship of Adam.⁴⁷ The argument is taken from 1 Corinthians
3 11:8-9: “For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created
4 from woman but woman for man.” Having concluded that in this passage Paul is teaching male
5 headship before creation they look for it in the creation account in Genesis. In other words, this
6 idea is brought by them to Genesis and becomes a hermeneutical tool to interpret the narrative. A
7 proper hermeneutical approach would require that we interpret the creation of Eve “from” Adam
8 and “for” Adam within its immediate context in Genesis. When we read the text in Genesis it is
9 clear that the Creation of Eve is partially from Adam and then for Adam.⁴⁸ In other words we are

⁴⁷ Ratsara and Bediako, comment that “for him” means that “the woman would naturally find in him a head or leader” (20). This is an opinion, without an effort to demonstrate that this was the case. What was to be demonstrated is assumed, probably based on their reading of 1 Corinthians 11.

⁴⁸ As indicated this argument is used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 to argue that the woman is the glory of man. He goes to Genesis 2 and provides an excellent reading of it. He notices that in Genesis the woman is created from man—this is her immediate origin—and not man from woman. These are the facts. According to Paul the woman came to enrich the man and in that sense she added honor/glory to him. She was created for the benefit of man not man for her benefit because he had already been created when she was created. For Paul and Genesis this is the very foundation for gender differentiation. This argument is used by Paul to indicate that when a woman participates in worship she should cover her hair in order to give glory to God, not to man. When doing this she also avoids self-glorification because her hair is her glory (v. 15; see our discussion of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 below). There is another passage in the New Testament in which we find a similar grammatical structure similar to the one in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9. Since it is also used in the context of creation it could help us to understand what Paul means when he says that woman was created for the benefit of man. We are referring to Mark 2:27: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” There are some important parallels between these two passages. The first one is the concept of creation. Jesus was talking about the moment when God instituted the Sabbath; when it came into existence (*ginomai*, “to come into existence, be made, be created”). In the case of Paul the reference to creation is even more evident. He uses the verb *ketizo*, which means “to bring something into existence, to create.” Second, in both passages a temporal sequence is assumed. In the saying of Jesus the temporal sequence is implicit when he says that man was not created for the benefit of the Sabbath. Man was created first. In Paul, the priority of man is also implicit in the phrase “for man was not created for benefit of woman.” Third, in both passage something is denied and something is affirmed in connection with creation. The grammatical formulation is the same in both cases: The proposition *dia* is followed by a noun in the accusative. Fourth, what is denied is that something/someone was created for the benefit of another: Man (*anthropos*) was not created for the benefit of (*dia* + accusative) the Sabbath and man (*aner*) was not created for the benefit of (*dia* + accusative) the woman. The positive side is that the Sabbath was created for the benefit of (*dia* + accusative) man (*anthropos*, the human race) and the woman for the benefit of (*dia* + accusative) man (*aner*). These are the facts. The question is whether the fact that something is created for the benefit of

1 informed about a divine act of creation similar to and yet different from God’s previous acts of
2 creation recorded in Genesis 1.

3 In Genesis 1, after God’s creation by fiat, He creates through separation. He separated
4 light from darkness (v. 4); He separated the waters from bellow from those from above (v. 7); He
5 separated the land from the waters (v. 9); etc. In the creation of man, God gathered the dust from
6 the ground, separated it from the ground, and created a male human being (2:7). In the case of
7 Eve, He took from (separated from) Adam a rib and created a female human being (2:22). In the
8 previous cases the separation was permanent and resulted in radically different creation
9 phenomena. In fact, bringing together what God separated would have resulted in de-creation
10 (e.g. the flood) or the end of human life (e.g. returning to the dust means that humans have died;
11 3:19). In the case of Eve we witness a new phenomenon in the creation account. What was
12 separated—“from Adam”—is now brought back “to Adam.” There is a reunification. The
13 creation of the woman was through separation and reunification. She was taken from his flesh
14 and now they are united and become one flesh (2:24).⁴⁹ This means that God did not create two

another means or implies that the one who receives the benefit has power or authority over the other. The obvious answer is that this is not the case. Humans have no authority over the Sabbath. Jesus said that only the Son of Man has authority over the Sabbath. It is only the creator who has authority over both the Sabbath and humankind.

⁴⁹ Genesis 2:24 deserve some attention because it has been used to support pre-fall headship. Davidson, 16-17, has correctly indicated that the formula used here—“a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become on flesh”—is not what we find throughout the Old Testament. The common practice was for the woman to leave her parents and join her husband. One could read in this last practice an element of subordination but not in the passage in Genesis. The emphasis is on their unity or oneness in all aspects and on the mutuality of their common commitment to each other. The use of this passage in Ephesians 5:31 also emphasizes this unity and mutual commitment and does not support the idea of a pre-fall headship. Using the quotation of Genesis in Ephesians, Bohr, 30, simply states that “the entire context of this passage [Eph 5:22-33] indicates that oneness and submission are both a part of God’s creation order.” But Paul is using it to argue for the mystery of the union between Christ and the church, marriage being a pallid reflection of it. Within its immediate context it is not an argument for the headship of man over the woman. Bohr’s interpretation is based on his conviction that a pre-fall headship is found Genesis 1-3. But now that we know that such a position is not tenable, there is no need to read it into Ephesians.

1 radically different beings but two of the same kind who could coexist in perfect harmony; not in
2 chaos. Otherwise they would have remained separated. Therefore, the phrases “from Adam/for
3 Adam” emphasize the equality of the two within gender differentiation and not the subjection of
4 the one to the other. Subjection in Genesis is grounded in radical differences. For instance,
5 humans rule over the fauna and the flora; the light of the sun and the moon rules over the day and
6 the night thus preserving the separation of light from darkness that is part of the creation order.
7 This reading of the creation of Eve is contextually based and makes it unnecessary to try to find
8 in the text what is not there, namely, the pre-fall headship of Adam.

9 6. *Adam Named Eve*: Much has been made of the alleged naming of Eve by Adam (2:23).
10 Supposedly giving a name means or implies superiority. Here they use the context. Adam named
11 the animals because they were under subjection to him (2:19-20). After the fall, he gives a name
12 to the woman reaffirming her previous subjection to him (3:16). A few comments are in order.
13 First, Genesis 2:23 is a poetic exclamation of joy and wonder in which their equality is the main
14 point, not naming her: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called
15 woman [*'iššah*], for she was taken out of man [*'iš*]. Adam celebrates the fact that now he has a
16 companion that corresponds to his own nature. She is his counterpart and equal to him—bone of
17 my bones and flesh of my flesh. The terminology he uses does not suggest at all that she was to
18 be under his leadership but emphasizes their equality. She does not belong to the realm of the
19 animals but is, like him, a human being.

20 Second, we should notice that in the second part of the verse the verbs are in the passive
21 form (“shall be called;” “was taken out”). There is no doubt that the second verb is a divine
22 passive: God took something out of/from man. This suggests that the first is also a divine

1 passive: God named her woman.⁵⁰ The verb is not only passive but it is also a third person
2 masculine singular and could be translated: “This one is called [by the Lord] woman.” The
3 context supports it because the title woman is used before Adam uses it. God brought to him the
4 woman and Adam acknowledges that fact. Third, even if one were to argue that Adam is giving a
5 name to the woman, this does not mean that God gave him authority over her. Name giving does
6 not necessarily mean subjection or headship.⁵¹ In naming her Adam is recognizing the
7 magnificence of the work of God and His magnanimity, not his dominion over her. In fact, in
8 naming her he also names himself thus emphasizing their equality and gender differentiation (she
9 is *'iššah* and he is *'iš*).⁵² Fourth, naming the animals is usually taken to mean that Adam had
10 dominion over them. The context indicates that by assigning to Adam the task of naming the
11 animals God wanted him to realize that he needed a companion and not that he had dominion
12 over them. In this case, naming leads to the self-realization that he is different from the animals.
13 Notice also that in contrast to 2:23, the text says that God brought to Adam the animals and birds
14 to name them (2:19). This explicit divine intention is absent in 2:23—it is not said that God
15 brought Eve to Adam to name her.

⁵⁰ It does not make sense to argue that the verb is being used here impersonally (“one will call her”). Had the noun “name” (Hebrew *šēm* is masculine) been used the third person masculine singular could have been justified, but it is not there (“her name will be called”). The best possibility is a divine passive.

⁵¹ In some cases naming could express absence of dominion or of authority over the object or person (Gen 26:17-21; Exod 15:23). In Genesis 16:13-14, Hagar gave a name to the Lord (she called the name of Yahweh *'ēl ro 'y*, “The One Who Sees”). In this case the naming is an expression of joy and gratitude to the Lord for providing for her and her child (see also, Gen 4:24; 29:31-32, 33; 30:6; 2 Chr 20:26). See, George W. Ramsey, “Is Name-Giving and Act of Dominion in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere?” CBQ 50 (1988): 24-35.

⁵² There are cases in the Bible where “the *šēm* [name] points to the function to be performed by the bearer of the name” (TDOT 15:135). This applies well to Adam and Eve because they will function as male and female.

1 7. *Eve Usurped Adam's Headship*: Once it is assumed that Genesis 1-2 teaches the
2 headship of Adam, it is necessary to explain how it come that Eve sinned first. The answered is
3 that Eve usurped Adam's headship and this led her into sin.⁵³ The implications of this type of
4 speculation are very serious. It implies that the first sinner was not Eve but Adam. He failed the
5 Lord by not fulfilling the responsibility assigned to him as head of the human family. This
6 obviously goes against what Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:14—Eve was the first one to sin. But even
7 if we were to ignore this theological problem, we still have to face the problem of Eve rebelling
8 against God and her husband by assuming a function that had not been assigned to her. In other
9 words, sin came into the world because Eve did not submit to the headship of Adam and not
10 because she ate of the forbidden tree. Both of them would have been sinners before eating of the
11 fruit. This goes against the clear teachings of the Bible and Ellen White.⁵⁴

12 The following statement is used to indicate that Adam did not fulfill his responsibility as
13 head over the woman:

⁵³ It is even suggested that when the Lord said to Adam, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree” He was accusing Adam of surrendering his headship to Eve (Gen 3:17). “Listening to Eve” is understood by our friends to mean that Adam obeyed her instead of Eve obeying him as her head. The reasoning is logical but flawed. The implicit contrast is not between Adam listening or not listening to Eve but between listening to the temptress or to God—to what he had already told Him (to His voice). The implicit headship is not that of Adam or Eve but that of God. He was the “head” of both of them and they rejected Him. From the grammatical point of view the Hebrew phrase *šāma^c l^c qôl* (“to listen to the voice of”) emphasizes assent rather than obedience (see U. Rütterswörden, “*šāma^c*,” *TDOT* 15:267).

⁵⁴ A statement from Ellen White is improperly used to support this idea. It is found in PP 59: “Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband's side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it. A similar result will be reached by all who are unwilling to take up cheerfully their life duties in accordance with God's plan. In their efforts to reach positions for which He has not fitted them, many are leaving vacant the place where they might be a blessing. In their desire for a higher sphere, many have sacrificed true womanly dignity and nobility of character, and have left undone the very work that Heaven appointed them.” The higher sphere she aimed at was not usurping the headship of Adam, but being like God. She was appointed by God to be with her husband as equal partners but she wanted to be like God. See the comments on this quote by Davidson, 24).

1 Adam understood that his companion had transgressed *the command of God*, disregarded
2 *the only prohibition laid upon them* as a test of their fidelity and love. There was a
3 terrible struggle in his mind. *He mourned that he had permitted Eve to wander from his*
4 *side*. But now the deed was done; he must be separated from her whose society had been
5 his joy. How could he have it thus?⁵⁵

6
7 Notice that the statement establishes the fact that they were both accountable to God
8 because God ordered *both of them* not to eat from the tree. The fact that Adam laments
9 permitting Eve to wander from His side does not mean that he was her head. In another place
10 White phrases the statement in a slightly different way: “Adam *regretted* that Eve had left his
11 side, but now the deed was done.”⁵⁶ The divine instruction to stay together was given to both of
12 them and each one was responsible for obeying it. Staying together would have protected them
13 from the enemy.⁵⁷ Ellen White describes the instructions given to both as follows: “The *angels*
14 *cautioned Eve not to separate from her husband* in her employment, for she might be brought in
15 contact with this fallen foe. *If separated from each other they would be in greater danger than if*
16 *both were together.*”⁵⁸ The reason for not separating was not that Eve was under the control of
17 Adam but that if *any of the two* separated from the other they would both be in greater danger.
18 This has nothing to do with headship before the fall. They were to work in perfect harmony
19 moved by divine love.

20 8. *Adam as Monarch*: There are several statements from Ellen White where she refers to
21 Adam as the monarch of the earth. These are used to support his headship before the fall. She
22 says, “Adam was crowned as king in Eden. . . . He made Adam the rightful sovereign over all the

⁵⁵ CC 16.

⁵⁶ SR 36.

⁵⁷ The fact that White states that Eve was “to stand by his [Adam’s] side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him” (PP 46) does not mean that he was her head. See our discussion below.

⁵⁸ SR 31.

1 works of his hands.”⁵⁹ We should read her statements carefully before reaching any final
2 conclusions.

3 First, let us take at face value the statement that Adam was a monarch in Eden. We could
4 assume that this may have been a particular function that God assigned to him and not to Eve.
5 Does this mean that she was under subjection to him? White is very clear with respect to the
6 nature of Adam’s kingdom. She says that “to him was given *dominion over every living thing*
7 that God had created;”⁶⁰ God “made him ruler *over the earth and all living creatures. . . . All*
8 *nature* was in subjection to him.”⁶¹ She specifically says, “Among *the lower creatures* Adam had
9 stood as king.”⁶² His kingship is restricted to the earth and all lower creatures. Eve was not under
10 subjection to him as monarch.

11 But the statements need more careful analysis. It is clear that when Ellen White calls
12 Adam “king/monarch” she is depending on Genesis 1:26-28: “Adam was appointed by God to be
13 monarch of the world, under the supervision of the Creator.”⁶³ In Genesis the role of ruler or
14 monarch over the world was given to both Adam and Eve. Why would she limit it to Adam? The
15 answer: She does not limit it to Adam. Both were monarchs in Eden. She is very clear about this:
16 “While they remained true to God, Adam and his companion were *to bear rule over the earth*.
17 Unlimited control was given them *over every living thing*.”⁶⁴ But still, why would she be so
18 emphatic with respect to the status of Adam?

⁵⁹ RH, February 24, 1874 par. 6.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ CC 18.

⁶² Ibid., 19.

⁶³ Becho, August 28, 1899 par. 1.

⁶⁴ PP 50. See also, “Adam and Eve were in possession of Eden, and they fell from their high and holy estate by transgression of God’s law, and forfeited their right to the tree of life and to the joys of Eden” (ST, April 28, 1890 par. 3).

1 There is another way of harmonizing her statements about Adam as monarch and
2 humans, male and female, as monarchs. Since Adam was created before Eve, he was
3 immediately crowned as king after his creation and before the creation of Eve. The previous
4 statement from Ellen White would then be describing what took place immediately after his
5 creation. Once Eve was created, they both were appointed as kings over creation as indicated in
6 Genesis 1:26. After Eve sinned, Adam was the only faithful monarch left on earth before he also
7 fell into sin thus losing all dominion over the world. White would be referring to this tragedy
8 when she writes, “Having conquered Adam, the monarch of the world, he [Satan] had gained the
9 race as his subjects, and he should now possess Eden, and make that his head-quarters. And he
10 would there establish his throne, and be monarch of the world.”⁶⁵

11 Independent of how we harmonize what Ellen White says about Adam as monarch in
12 Eden, it does not support a pre-fall headship of man over woman. Human dominion over another
13 human being is not found in Genesis 1-2.

14 9. *The Nature of Adam’s Headship over Eve*: Those who argue for headship before the
15 fall face the difficult task of defining the nature of that headship or what it involved. They
16 searched the writings of Ellen White in an effort to find answers to this pressing question and
17 found one statement that appears to provide an answer. Here it is:

18 Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to
19 control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by
20 his side as an equal, *to be loved and protected by him*. A part of man, bone of his bone,
21 and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self, showing the close union and the
22 affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation. “For no man ever yet hated his
23 own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it.” Ephesians 5:29. “Therefore shall a man
24 leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one.”⁶⁶
25

⁶⁵ RH, February 24, 1874 par. 19.

⁶⁶ PP 46.

1 The key sentence is “to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him.”
2 The emphasis of the statement is on their equality. In order to find here the concept of headship,
3 they argue, as we have already pointed out, that there is a difference between equality in nature
4 and functional differentiation. The different functions, according to them, point to headship. Let
5 us assume for a moment that the sentence quoted is describing the nature of Adam’s headship
6 over Eve. His headship consists in loving and protecting her. No one would argue that if she
7 were to love and protect him she would be usurping Adam’s headship. No one would dare to
8 argue that Eve was not to love Adam. In fact, Ellen White says that for Adam, before the
9 creation of Eve, “there was none of the same nature to love and to be loved.”⁶⁷ The fact that she
10 was expected to love her has nothing to do with headship. To “protect her” could suggest some
11 form of headship, particularly if it was Adam’s responsibility to protect her from the fallen angel,
12 as they suggest. This would imply that Adam was spiritually superior to Eve and that she was not
13 required to protect him. This is somewhat strange because the Bible explicitly says that she was
14 created to be his helper. What then does Ellen White mean when she says that he was “to
15 protect her?” This is another case in which silence is used to support headship.

16 Since Ellen White does not say that Eve was to protect Adam, it is concluded that he was
17 the leader. But for Ellen White protection from a common enemy was a matter of mutual
18 responsibility: “The angels cautioned Eve not to separate from her husband in her employment,
19 for she might be brought in contact with this fallen foe. *If separated from each other they would*
20 *be in greater danger than if both were together.*”⁶⁸ In other words, there was interdependence of
21 functions between Adam and Eve: “When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess
22 neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that *in all things* she should be his equal. *The*

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ SR 31.

1 *holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other.*⁶⁹ They both were also to enjoy the
2 protection of God against their common enemy.⁷⁰ They were to protect each other by staying
3 together and by claiming divine assistance when tempted.

4 The papers we are analyzing offer other definitions of the nature of the pre-fall headship
5 without being able to provide the evidence needed. We find statements like this: Adam was to
6 receive her, provide for her, and protect and guide her.⁷¹ This would imply that the woman
7 possessed some inner weaknesses for which Adam was to provide. In fact this idea is explicitly
8 stated: “It would appear that the serpent tempted the woman because she betrayed some
9 weakness on her part in obeying the command.”⁷² This seems to suggest that she was the weak
10 link in the garden and Satan took advantage of her. It is further argued that Adam’s headship was
11 self-sacrificing⁷³ and that Eve’s submission was “spontaneous and effortless.”⁷⁴ She
12 spontaneously and effortlessly agrees with and supports the man in his leadership role. No
13 evidence is provided to support these suggestions. It is even suggested that she was not aware of
14 the fact that Adam was her head. But, we ask, how could that be the case if “the proper response
15 to designated authority is submission honor, and respect for that authority”?⁷⁵

⁶⁹ 3T 484.

⁷⁰ She writes, “Oh, if they had but heeded the instruction that God had given them,—to call upon him when they were threatened with evil from the fallen foe,—they would have had the presence of angels to shield them in the hour of temptation, and the fascinating charm of Satan would have been broken!” (ST, October 8, 1894 par. 6).

⁷¹ Ratsara, 27.

⁷² Ibid., 35.

⁷³ Ibid., 30.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 33.

⁷⁵ Reynolds, 41.

1 The situation becomes more difficult when it is said that man is the woman’s “spiritual
2 head by virtue of priority in creation.”⁷⁶ The implications of such a statement are staggering. It
3 implies that the woman was spiritual inferior to man. Her spiritual well-being was dependent on
4 her husband who was his spiritual head. In other words he was the mediator between her and
5 God. Recognizing the implications of such statement they argue that “woman does not need to
6 come to God through any man, including her husband;”⁷⁷ she has direct access to God.⁷⁸ One is
7 left wondering what they mean when they say that Adam was “the spiritual head” of the woman.
8 Not to say anything about the lack of biblical support for these suggestions. They attempt to
9 describe a pre-fall headship whose logistics are not explained in the Bible or in Ellen White.

10 Perhaps the main problem with their understanding of pre-fall headship is that it is based
11 on a fallacious premise. They clearly believe that diversity of functions presuppose headship.
12 Consequently they do not even try to demonstrate that this is the case; they simply assume that
13 this is so. Therein lays one of the main weaknesses of their position. They unconsciously argue
14 from the fallen situation to the pre-fall situation. It should not be a problem to assume that Adam
15 and Eve may have had some specific responsibilities or functions to perform as intelligent
16 creatures. The problem is that our friends seem to assume that Adam assigned them to Eve and
17 this, in turn, is taken to mean that she was under his leadership. It is often the case today that the
18 person who assigns responsibilities to others has a leadership role, but there is no reason to
19 assume that this was also the case with Adam and Eve before the fall. But perhaps more
20 important, neither the Bible nor Ellen White state that Adam assigned any specific functions to
21 Eve. On the contrary, as we already indicated the evidence we have points to God as the One

⁷⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 21 n. 44.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 29 n. 66.

1 who assigned specific responsibilities to each one of them. This was even the case after the fall,
2 as recorded in Genesis 3. Each one of them was directly accountable to God for their behavior.

3 **Post-Fall Headship**

4 The discussion of the post-fallen headship of Adam attempts to demonstrate that headship
5 existed before the fall. Two main arguments are used to support this idea. First, after the fall God
6 calls man first into account as the representative head. Second, the headship of Adam after the
7 fall confirms his headship before by identifying him as the one who works the land and the
8 woman as being in charge of bearing children at home. Allegedly this was the situation before
9 the fall. This last argument has already been demonstrated to be invalid because both Adam and
10 Eve were responsible for the garden and for parenthood.

11 The first argument deserves some attention. Why did God call Adam first into account
12 and not the Eve? After all she was the first to sin. We can provide several answers to this
13 question and one of them is provided by our friends on the opposite side of the argument: It
14 shows that Adam was the leader who represented the woman. The answer is problematic in a
15 number of ways. First, it suggests that before the fall Eve did not directly answer to God for her
16 actions but had to do it through Adam. There was a distance between her and God and the man
17 was her mediator. There is no hint of this in the creation narrative. In fact, this was not even the
18 case after the fall. The only Mediator between God and humans (male and female) is Christ. We
19 all, individually, have to give an account to God for what we do. Secondly, it is important to
20 notice that if Adam was being called into account as representative or as the head of the woman,
21 he did not know it. Instead of explaining why they sinned he simply spoke for himself: “*I heard*
22 *you in the garden, and I was afraid . . .*” We would have expected him to say, “*We heard you in*

1 the garden, and *we were* afraid . . .” Then God called Eve into account suggesting that each one
2 was speaking for him/herself. God was the “head” of both of them.

3 The second way to explain why Adam was called first is based on the *context* of the
4 story, on Paul’s view of the entrance of sin into the world, and on some information from Ellen
5 White. The Pauline information is quite clear. According to him, sin came into the world through
6 the sin of one person, Adam (Rom 5:12). In this particular case he understands sin as a power, a
7 king that oppressively rules over humanity. This is not just sin defined as transgression of a law,
8 but sin as a cosmic power that usurped the dominion of humans over the world. With this we can
9 go back to Genesis. God gave to both Adam and Eve dominion over creation (Gen 1:26). I would
10 suggest that when Eve sinned the dominion that God granted to humans was not yet totally lost.
11 Adam was now the only faithful steward of the Lord. It is only after Adam sin that the dominion
12 is lost. This suggestion may border in speculation but that is not the case. Ellen White provides
13 more explicit information to support it. She states that “Adam and Eve were in possession of
14 Eden.”⁷⁹ She goes on to say that once Satan “*succeeded in overcoming Adam and Eve*, he
15 claimed that their Eden home was his. He proudly boasted that the world which God had made
16 was his dominion. Having conquered Adam, the monarch of the world, he had gained the race as
17 his subjects, and he should now possess Eden.”⁸⁰ It is only after the fall of both of them that
18 their dominion of Eden and the earth was lost. This means that the sin of Adam was in a sense

⁷⁹ ST, April 28, 1890 par. 3.

⁸⁰ RH, February 24, 1874 par. 19. She also writes, “Adam was not deceived as was Eve, but he was influenced by her to do as she had done—eat and risk the consequences since no harm, she said, had come to her. Adam yielded to the temptations of his wife. He could not endure to be separated from her. ***He ate and fell from his integrity.*** Since ***this lamentable occurrence***—which has ***introduced sin into our world***—intemperate, lustful appetite, and the power of influence that one in the wrong exerts over another, have brought an accumulation of misery that it is not possible for language to describe.” (CTr 111.3). It appears that the “lamentable occurrence” is referring to Adam’s disobedience.

1 more damaging than that of Eve⁸¹ and consequently God called him to account before calling
2 Eve. He was fully aware of what he was doing; he was not deceived. It was indeed through him
3 that the dominion was lost and sin came into the world. Far from demonstrating that he was the
4 head of the woman, calling him first points to the grievous nature of his sin. If after the fall the
5 woman is placed under his headship it is not because her sin was worse than Adam's but because
6 she led Adam into sin.⁸²

7 In conclusion, we search in vain for clear evidence in favor of a pre-fall headship in
8 Genesis 1-3. We could not find it. Although our friends firmly believe that it is there, they are in
9 fact unintentionally importing it into the text from their reading and interpretation of other
10 biblical texts. This reflects a serious weakness in their argument and hermeneutics. In the
11 kingdom of God leadership, or if you prefer "headship," is based on loving and disinterested
12 service to others and not, for instance, on being created first. The suggestion of a pre-fall
13 headship of Adam over Eve creates more theological and doctrinal problems than it seeks to
14 solve and is incompatible with the law of love and service that rules the cosmic kingdom of God.

15 **Headship in the New Testament**

16 We will examine the interpretation of the key passages of the New Testament used by our
17 colleagues to support male headship over women in church.

18 **1 Corinthians 2:2-17**

⁸¹ White comments, "The sin of Adam plunged the race in hopeless misery and despair. But God, in His wonderful, pitying love, did not leave men to perish in their hopeless, fallen condition. He gave His well-beloved Son for their salvation. Christ entered the world, His divinity clothed in humanity; He passed over the ground where Adam fell; He bore the test which Adam failed to endure; He overcame every temptation of Satan, and thus redeemed Adam's disgraceful failure and fall" (4T 293). It could be that, as in other places, White is using the name Adam to refer to both Adam and Eve. In that case it was the sin of both that caused such a tragedy.

⁸² This is what Ellen White says: "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 under subjection to her husband*" (AH 115). It is at this moment, as we already indicated, that Eve is placed under subjection to Adam; not before.

1 When dealing with 1 Corinthians 11:2-17 we need to ask ourselves several questions. The
2 first one is, what does Paul mean when he says, “The head of every man is Christ, and the head
3 of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (v. 3)? One of the papers finds here
4 headship in the sense of having authority over someone—Christ over men, man over woman,
5 God over Christ.⁸³ The phrase “every man” is interpreted to mean every male member of the
6 church. If this is the case, then this passage would appear to be saying that Christ is not the head
7 of female members of the church; they are not under subjection to Him!⁸⁴ Of course it could be
8 argued that they are under subjection to Him through their husbands. But then the husbands
9 become their spiritual mediators. Next is the phrase “the man is the head of the woman.” It is
10 argued that it is primarily referring to men and women in church; not to husbands and wives.⁸⁵
11 Headship is pushed out of the realm of the family into the church. This position claims that
12 *kephale* means “head.”⁸⁶ But it is a fact that the Greek term has several meaning among them
13 “source,” a meaning that is supported by the context (vv. 8-9, 11-12).⁸⁷

⁸³ Reynolds, *ibid.*, 18-23. According to him, “headship, then, has to do with a nonreciprocal relationship in which one party submits to another in a trust relationship of submission to the headship authority of the other” (20).

⁸⁴ This comments also apply to Clinton Wahlen who finds in the phrase “the head of every man is Chris and the head of woman is man” the structure of the human family established at creation (“Husband,” 22). He does not provide exegetical evidence to support his views. He refers to the male headship as “man’s spiritual leadership” over woman (23), which as we suggested above places man in the role of mediator between God and women.

⁸⁵ Talking about the view that “women” could refer to “wife,” Reynolds comments, “This reading is certainly in harmony with the sentiment of Eph 5; however, whether it is the best reading here is debatable. . . . Certainly, the principle is minimally valid for husbands and wives, if not for gender groups as a whole” (20). He further comments that “the headship of Christ and the headship of God the Father form the pattern for the headship of husband-wife (in the home) and man-woman (in the church). Since the context of 1 Cor 11 is the church (vv. 4, 5, 16), not the home, the primary significance in this passage would seem to encompass gender relationship in the church” (22). His final conclusion is that “while it is possible to translate a few of the verses in terms of husbands and wives, the larger context does not permit such a translation” (30). Part of the problem faced by Reynolds is that he placed himself into a strait jacket when he insisted that the term “man” should be consistently translated “man” and not “husband.”

⁸⁶ Reynolds does not attempt to justify his decision to interpret “head” as headship except by quoting other passages where it seems to be used in the sense of headship. He uses 1 Corinthians 12 to

1 The second question we need to raise is related to the alleged headship of male leaders
2 over women in the church. Is the primary purpose of 1 Corinthians 11:2-17 to reaffirm the
3 subjection of women to church leaders? We search in vain for any contextual evidence that
4 would support this idea. In fact the discussion is not even about ordination to the ministry. The
5 paper was not able to provide the evidence because it is not there. The author only gives an
6 opinion: “Spiritual headship authority has been entrusted to man, at least to particular individuals

argue that in that passage the head is not described as the source of the body but the first among equals (18). He overlooked that fact the term “head” is not used in that passage. He concedes that in Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 2:19 “head” could be interpreted as “source” (19), but he simply states that this meaning does not work for 1 Corinthians 11:3.

⁸⁷ Ellen White seems to support this interpretation when she writes: “God has sent his Son to communicate his own life to humanity. Christ declares, ‘I live by the Father,’ my life and his being one. ‘No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him,’ ‘For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man.’ The head of every man is Christ, as the head of Christ is God. ‘And ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.’ ” (Ellen G. White, “A Call to Work,” HM, June 1, 1897 par. 11). She brings together several passages in order to summarize some theological ideas. Before quoting the passages she says, “God has sent his Son to communicate his own life to humanity” (ibid., par. 11). The biblical quotes are supporting this main idea. She is talking about the origin and mission of Christ; He came from the Father. She proceeds to clarify what she means: “Christ declares, ‘I live by the Father,’ my life and his being one.” This is about the unity of Christ and the Father; their oneness. She quotes another passage: “ ‘No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.’ ” This is once more about the source, the “place” from where the Son came to us. She quotes again, “ ‘For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man.’ ” The mission of the Son is to give life and, as sovereign Lord, to judge the world. Finally, Ellen White introduces our passage, “The head of every man is Christ, as the head of Christ is God. ‘And ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.’ ”

Christ’s own life is indissolubly united with that of the Father. He came from the bosom of the Father to reveal God to humanity as the fountain of life. She adds another passage, 1 Corinthians 3:23: “ ‘And ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.’ ” This is about our union with Christ and Christ’s union with God. It means for her that life is ours in union with Christ and that Christ is God’s in the sense that He came from God to give us life. As she states at the beginning of the paragraph, “God has sent his Son to communicate his own life to humanity.” If the phrase “God is the head of Christ” means that He came from the Father, then “man is the head of woman” would mean that he was the source from which the woman/wife came. This would perfectly agree with Genesis 2 and with what Paul proceeds to say in 1 Corinthians 11:8, 11-12. She is clearly stating that Christ came from the Father in a saving mission and therefore *kephale* is taken by her to refer to source or origin and not to headship. The phrase “the head of every man is Christ” means for her that humans find in Him the only source of life; their true spiritual origin.

1 designated as spiritual fathers or leaders, whether in the home or in the church.”⁸⁸ This statement
2 assumes what it is expected to demonstrate. If opposition to the ordination of women as ministers
3 is based on the alleged fact that they are to be under submission to church elders or to men in
4 general, this passage does not provide any support for that theory.

5 The fourth question we need to address is whether the passage is a discussion of headship
6 at all. It is suggested that according to the passage women in church and at home are under
7 headship. It is interesting to observe that the paper does not tell us why Paul is addressing the
8 topic of headship. It simply says, “There is no clear indication of his [Paul’s] motivation for
9 writing to them on this subject.”⁸⁹ This is true if Paul’s intention was to demonstrate that women
10 are under the authority of men in the church.

11 First Corinthians 11 is a very difficult passage. It has been interpreted throughout history
12 in several different ways. Teresa Reeve has provided a good alternative that is consistent with the
13 rest of the Bible and loyal to the context of the passage.⁹⁰ Let me add a few thoughts to her
14 suggestions. The passage is about regulating male and female participation in prayer and
15 prophesying in church (vv. 4-5). *It is not about restricting the role of women in Church.* The
16 passage provides instructions about gender differentiation, expressed through a cultural practice,
17 and about making God the center of worship. Men are not to wear a veil while women should
18 wear a veil when leading in prayer or in the proclamation of the word of God through a prophetic

⁸⁸ Reynolds, 42. Peters discusses the passage in pages 29-37 but is not able to demonstrate that in it Paul is discussing the headship of church leaders over women. In fact he does not even address this topic although he seems to assume that this is the case. The problem continues to be the proper hermeneutics of contextual interpretation. When context is ignored we are free to speculate.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹⁰ Teresa Reeve, “1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and the Ordination of Women to Pastoral Ministry,” Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Columbia MD, January 2014.

1 message. Thus is gender differentiation, established by the Lord at creation, reaffirmed in the
2 church among those providing leadership to it.

3 The practice is supported by a theological reason. When men pray or prophesy they
4 glorify God by not wearing a veil and women glorify God, not their husbands or the men in
5 church, by wearing the veil. By wearing a veil that covers their hair women also set aside their
6 own glory which according to Paul is displayed through their long hair (11:15). Women should
7 not allow men to deprive them from giving glory to the Lord. When leading in worship they both
8 should point to God and not to each other or to themselves.⁹¹ In a sense this idea is a
9 development of 1 Corinthians 10:31: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all
10 for the glory of God.” The rest of the arguments revolve around these fundamental ideas.

11 The veil frees the woman to only give glory to God. In fact, when she does this she “has
12 authority on her head” (v. 10). The Greek reads “the woman ought to have authority on/over/ her
13 head.” This is about the authority a woman has and not about the authority someone else has
14 over her. It could be that “her head” means “her own person.” This means that she is authorized
15 to pray and prophesize in the church by wearing a veil that covers all human glory and her own
16 glory making God’s glory the most important thing in the church.⁹² The angels also rejoice when

⁹¹ Ellen Whites sates, “Heavenly intelligences can work with the man or woman who will not absorb the glory to himself, but who will be willing that all the glory shall redound to the honor of God” (LHU 358.3).

⁹² Reynolds takes the phrases man is “the image and glory of God” and the woman “is the glory of man” (v. 7) as the reasons for man not to cover his head. He goes on to say that man and woman were created for different purposes. Man “was created to be the image and glory of God, while woman, although also created in the image of God [my comment: This is not what Paul says!], was created for the glory of the man, not for the glory of God” (27). He finally seems to interpret it to mean that man was created first and Eve was created to help and accompany him. So, he appears to take the phrase “woman is the glory of man” to mean that “the woman was created to meet the man’s need for companionship, according to the Genesis record, to which Paul appeals for his theology” (28). From this he jumps to the conclusion that according to Paul “man’s headship was established already in Gen 2, prior to the entrance of sin” (29). Reynolds does not really discuss the meaning of phrases “man is the image and glory of God” and “the woman is the glory of man.” It seems strange that Paul would say that only man is the

1 both men and women come together to give all glory to God. This is about equality in both
2 essence and function. First Corinthians 11:2-16 is not about the headship of male church leaders
3 over women in church.

4 **1 Corinthians 14:33-34**

5 There is not a significant difference of opinion on the meaning of this passage among
6 those who support the ordination of women to the ministry and those who oppose it. The passage
7 is dealing with “disruptive speech by both men and women in church. Verses 3eb-35, which
8 forbid women from speaking in church, must be understood in this setting.”⁹³ It has been

image of God and not the woman. It is unquestionable that in Genesis 1 both man and woman were created in the image of God. This is confirmed by Ellen White when she writes, using the phrase Paul uses: “Created to be ‘the image and glory of God’ (1 Corinthians 11:7), Adam and Eve had received endowments not unworthy of their high destiny” (Ed 20). How can we harmonize what Paul says with Genesis and with the statement of Ellen G. White? We can suggest that Paul, in this polemical passage, decided to use a popular interpretation among Jewish interpreters of Genesis 1:27 without necessarily considering it to be the final reading of Genesis. In the Jewish exegesis of Genesis 1:27, the first part of the verse was interpreted to be about man (“God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him”) and the second about the woman (“male and female he created them”). According to this interpretation only man was the bearer of the image of God. See, Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology*, trans. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), 533, who was relaying on Jacob Jervell, *Imago Dei: Gen 1, 26f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis, und in den paulinischen Briefen* (FRLANT 76; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 107-112, for the Jewish examples. Paul would then be arguing from within the Jewish reading of the text. His main point would remain valid independent of this particular interpretation of the text if his intention was to emphasize the importance of giving all glory to God in Christian worship.

Some of you may feel uncomfortable with this harmonization. Let me offer you another possibility. When Paul says “man is the image and glory of God” he is not necessarily denying that woman is also the image and glory of God. What he is saying is correct—man is the image and glory of God—but because of the polemical nature of the text he chose not mention the inclusive nature of the statement. It is also true that the “woman is the glory of man” as explained by Paul. According to him, since Adam was created first the creation of the woman provided for him what he was missing, fullness of being (Weinfeld, “*Kābôd*,” TDOT 7:24, points out that the Hebrew term *kābôd*, [“glory”] “can mean ‘substance, being’ ”). She was created for him and for his benefit. She added existential weight (“glory”) to his life. The woman knew from the very beginning fullness of being because she always had Adam with her. But she did add something to him (see footnote 48). In this sense Paul is in complete agreement with Genesis. The disagreement among us comes when the text is read as promoting the headship of males over females at creation using this reading to argue that it is also found in Genesis. As we already demonstrated this idea is not found in Genesis. Our reading of the text harmonizes both of them and allows each one to express itself.

⁹³ Reynolds and Clinton, 206.

1 correctly stated that the issue here “is simply disruptive behavior that brings dishonor to the Lord
2 and confusion to the worship service. That is certainly the context in which this passage is set.
3 The silence here is willingness to set aside one’s own interest in the worship setting in favor of
4 the edification of the whole church.”⁹⁴ Unfortunately the writer goes on the argue that “the role
5 of the woman is especially appealed to here in harmony with the spirit of the Law, which expects
6 women to manifest a submissive spirit, especially in the presence of men in the context of
7 worship, where, according to chap. 11 [1 Cor], men have a spiritual headship. This passage must
8 be read in the light of 1 Cor 11.”⁹⁵

9 Realizing that this passage does not teach male headship in the church, the writer decides
10 to introduce it into the text by stating that what he found in 1 Corinthians 11 should be read into
11 this other passage. But this goes against the context of the passage according to which the issue
12 being discussed is not male headship but disruptive behavior in the worship service (see 1 Cor
13 14: 33a, 40). In such a context to be silent and submissive are offered as the solution for the
14 disruption of worship.⁹⁶ This submission is shown in silence during worship and applies not only
15 to women but also to men (14:28, 29-31).⁹⁷

16 **1 Timothy 2:11-15**

17 I found to paper dealing with 1 Timothy 2:11-5 to be an interesting paper in that it pulled
18 together all the basic arguments used by those who oppose the ordination of women to the

⁹⁴ Reynolds, 37.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Paul’s reference to what “the Law” says about women being in silence and in submission is far from clear. There is not such a law in the Old Testament. Consequently scholars have speculated about the nature of this law. He most probably had the Old Testament in mind, but which passage? Reynolds mentions two possibilities but at first he remains uncommitted. It could refer to Genesis 1-2, the created order, or to Genesis 3:16. He simply concludes that submission is “something ordained by God in the earliest part of Scripture, from the very beginning of time.” No evidence is provided to support this opinion. The only clear passage on the topic is Genesis 3:16.

⁹⁷ In this we agree with Reynolds, 36.

1 ministry. The author begins with a discussion of the context of the passage arguing that the
2 primary theme in 1-2 Timothy and Titus is the importance of teaching the right doctrine of the
3 church. The authority to teach was granted to the church by Jesus, and according to 1 Timothy
4 Paul was called to exercise it. He entrusted it to Timothy and to church elders; all of them males.

5 It is then stated that in the specific passage under discussion, Paul is making clear that in
6 the church women are not to assume the teaching role of the elder. He is not talking about wives
7 and husbands but about gender distinction and the specific functions that God assigned to men
8 and women particularly in the church. Paul is speaking to the universal church in all ages.
9 Women are to keep silence, be submissive to men, and are not to exercise authority over them.
10 The condition of the women in the church is the same as at home because the church is the
11 family of God. Men who manage well their homes are called by God to manage His family, the
12 church. They have authority over women. The ecclesiastical authority to teach in the church is
13 restricted to males. Women can teach other women and probably children. Paul, the paper
14 argues, gives two reasons for this ecclesiastical order. The first is the pre-fall headship of men
15 over Eve based on the fact that Adam was created before Eve. The second is that Eve was
16 deceived by Satan in that she assumed the headship role of Adam and in doing that she sinned.
17 Her transgression consisted in usurping Adam's headship. On the positive side, God gave to
18 women one of the most important responsibilities given to any human being, namely rearing
19 children at home.

20 **General Remarks**

21 *1. Limited Analysis of the Immediate Context:*⁹⁸ The paper places the emphasis on the
22 importance of proper teaching authority⁹⁹ but pays little attention to the role of false teachers in

⁹⁸ For my more detailed exegesis of this passage see, Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, *Jewelry in the Bible* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, 1999), 76-90.

1 the church. It recognizes that Timothy is to oppose false teachers and that these are males but
2 there is no discussion on their influence in the church and among women. The author’s
3 discussion of the context is very limited and as we indicated he makes no effort to set the content
4 of the passage within the full conceptual world provided by the epistle itself. In doing that he
5 misses some important exegetical elements.

6 2. *Basis for Limiting Headship to Elders:* If Adam represents all men and Eve all women,
7 on what grounds is the male headship limited to male church elders? The author does not explain
8 how he moved from male universal headship to the specific headship of the elder in the church,
9 who, by the way, is not mentioned in the passage.¹⁰⁰ If the concept of headship is based on the

⁹⁹ Sorke, 11-14.

¹⁰⁰ Peters, 43 (revised), finds a link between 2:11-14 and the headship of elders in the phrase “Here is a trustworthy saying,” used in 3:1. According to him, in this phrase “Paul is linking the qualification for elder (man of one wife/able to teach) in 1 Timothy 3 with the substance of 1 Timothy 2, especially 2:12, (no permitting a woman to teach or have authority over man.” He is making a real effort to find contextual support for the headship of elders over women in church. But he comes short. He recognizes that the saying could come after or before the formula, but in the case of 3:1 he argues that it refers to both what preceded and follows. This is a special pleading since the formula is used to affirm the veracity and reliability of the preceding or following statement but not to both at the same time. Scholars still debate whether in 3:1a the formula refers to 3:1b or to the previous discussion about women in church (2:11-15). Making a decision is not that simple. There are cases in which the formula “This is a trustworthy saying” is followed by a particular saying (1:15: “Christ came into to world to save sinners;” 2 Tim 2:11: “If we died with him, we will also live with him . . .”). This would support the suggestion that in 3:1a it introduces what Paul says in 3:1b: “Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task” (NIV). In this case it is not connected at all with what precedes it. There are other cases in which we do not find a specific saying but a particular teaching that is emphasized as trustworthy. If we were to assign 3:1a to what precedes it, the best statement would be the idea contained in 3:15: Women would be saved if “they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.” This would fit well with the fact that most of the usages of the formula deal with the idea of salvation (1:15; 4:9-10; 2 Tim 2:11-13; Titus 3:7-8). In 3:1, the formula either closes the previous discussion or begins a new one. It is unquestionable that in chap. 3 Paul begins a new section dealing with the qualifications of church leaders. Clinton Wahlen, “Is ‘Husband of One Wife’ Gender Specific?” Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Columbia MD, January 2014, points to the formula but he is not clear with respect to its relevance in the interpretation of our passage (19). To argue that church elders have authority over women because they are required to be able to teach and because women have been forbidden to teach or have authority over man, is not grounded in exegesis but in a conjecture. The teaching qualification of the elder is not restricted to their ability to teach women. It deals with their pedagogical expertise in general—teaching both men and women. Besides, we will argue that the context indicates that the instructions given to women deal with their proper attitude as students of the Christian faith. For discussions on the function of the formula “This is a trustworthy saying” in the Pastoral Epistles

1 creation order and is not restricted to marriage, then every male should be identified as the head
2 of every woman everywhere and at any time. Of course, the author is not arguing for this. But
3 this methodological question remains.

4 3. *The True Head of the Church*: Although the paper argues that the subjection of women
5 to men in our passage is not that of the husband over the wife, it uses the husband-wife
6 relationship to justify male headship in the church. This is done through the use of the metaphor
7 of the church as the family of God. At home the man is the head and in church the elder is the
8 head.¹⁰¹ But there is no need to go through all of this complex argumentation if we simply
9 recognize that never in the Bible or in Ellen White are church elders or pastors called heads over
10 female church members. Male headship in the church is not found in Scripture.¹⁰² The only head

see, I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 326-330; Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 41-44.

¹⁰¹ I have to wonder whether when the couple goes to church the husband stops being the head of the wife. The question may sound silly but it raises the issue of the logistics of this arrangement.

¹⁰² Bohr, 45-46, struggles trying to find biblical evidence that would support male headship in the church as an extension of male headship at home. I suppose he means exclusive male headship or the headship of church elders over women. We would all agree that there was and continues to be male leadership in the church. The question is whether it is only males who, as heads in the church over women, could be ordained as ministers. The New Testament affirms the headship of husbands at home. Knowing this Bohr asks, “Does headship in the home ‘spill over’ to male headship in the church?” His answer is a resound “Yes.” What evidence does he provide to support his position? He goes to 1 Timothy 3:4-5. He writes, “The elder/overseer who is a one woman *man* should be ‘one who rules [*proistemi*] his own house well, having *his children* in submission [*hupotage*] with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule [*proistemi*] *his own house*, how will he take care of [*epimeleomai*] *the church of God*?’” (Italics are in the original; I inserted the Greek terms). I wished Bohr would have been as careful in his reading of the text as Paul was when he wrote it. He uses two different terms to describe the leadership skills at home of the person who could be appointed as an elder. The verb *proistemi* expresses the idea of management and it means to be in a position of leadership and show concern. When used for elders, as those who lead well, the emphasis is on preaching and teaching (1 Tim 5:17). The noun *hupotage* (“subjection, subordination”) refers to the ability of the leader of the household to keep his children under subjection (notice that nothing is said about the wife). The idea is probably not only that they obey him but that they are submissive to the Christian message, as Titus 1:6 indicates. It is used in 1 Timothy 2:11 to establish the need for women in church to be submissive to the teacher and to the instruction received. The verbal form, *hupotassō* is employed to refer to the submission of the wife to the husband (Col 3:18; Eph 5:22-24; 1 Pet 3:1; Titus 2:5), never to her subjection to church elders. When it comes to the role of the elders in the church, Paul only uses the verb *epimeleomai* (“to care for,” “to take care of”). It defines

1 of the church is Christ. Ellen White is very emphatic about this matter. She breaks away from the
2 family metaphor as supporting a literal headship of church leaders over women when she says,
3 “The husband is the head of the family, as Christ is the head of the church.”¹⁰³ While affirming
4 the metaphor of the church as the family of God, she does not apply the headship metaphor to
5 church elders. She emphatically states, “Let it be seen that Christ, not *the minister*, is the head of
6 the church.”¹⁰⁴ It was the misuse of this metaphor that to some extent led Catholicism into the
7 concept of a Pope (Father) for the universal church.

8 4. *Definition of Teaching Authority*: According to the paper, official teaching authority is
9 to be exercised only by males.¹⁰⁵ What is missing is a definition of the nature of this official

the leadership of the elders not in terms of one who rules over but as one who serves with diligence. If we were to retain the idea of headship, we would have to define it not as having authority over but as taking care of others with devotion and self-giving. This does not appear to be the common understanding of headship promoted by our friends. Their emphasis is on having authority over someone else. Bohr uses a number of statements from Ellen White to try to show that she transfers the headship of the husband to the headship of the church. What he misses is that in none of the statements she describes the elders as heads in the church. Yes, they do have a leadership role, but it is not defined by her as having authority over the congregation. But even more important is the fact that none of the quotes used by him even suggest that women in church are under the headship of the elder. In Ellen White the headship of the husband never “spills over” to male headship in the church. I will come back to this topic.

¹⁰³ 1T 307 (italics in the original).

¹⁰⁴ ST, January 27, 1890 (PaMin 101). The context is not about the Catholic Church, but about the work of the pastor in the church. Here is the full statement: “The success of a church does not depend on the efforts and labor of the living preacher, but it depends upon the piety of the individual members. When the members depend upon the minister as their source of power and efficiency, they will be utterly powerless. They will imbibe his impulses, and be stimulated by his ideas, but when he leaves them, they will find themselves in a more hopeless condition than before they had his labors. I hope that none of the churches in our land will depend upon a minister for support in spiritual things; for this is dangerous. When God gives you light, you should praise him for it. If you extol the messenger, you will be left to barrenness of soul. Just as soon as the members of a church call for the labors of a certain minister, and feel that he must remain with them, it is time that he was removed to another field, that they may learn to exercise the ability which God has given them. Let the people go to work. Let them thank God for the encouragement they have received, and then make it manifest that it has wrought in them a good work. Let each member of the church be a living, active agent for God, both in the church and out of it. We must all be educated to be independent, not helpless and useless. *Let it be seen that Christ, not the minister, is the head of the church.* The members of the body of Christ have a part to act, and they will not be accounted faithful unless they do act their part. Let a divine work be wrought in every soul, until Christ shall behold his image reflected in his followers.”

¹⁰⁵ Sorke, 14. On Moon’s views on this topic see further below.

1 teaching authority. Is this about teaching the right doctrines? Are we dealing here with a
2 woman's incapacity to teach a man? Is this because she is defective? What is it that a man/elder
3 can specifically do that a woman cannot do in the church? We know that they can teach, so this
4 is probably about teaching some specific subjects. Does anyone know what the subjects are? The
5 paper under consideration suggests that this is not about "the *kind* of teaching but to *whom*."¹⁰⁶
6 The logical implication of this statement would be that since women were under the headship of
7 elders they could not teach them but that they could teach everybody else including males who
8 are not elders.

9 Over against this confusion, according to the Bible the teaching authority of the church,
10 understood as the community of believers, is to be exercised by all of its members in accordance
11 with their gifts. Elders, as overseers, are responsible for making sure that what is taught in
12 church is the apostolic truth, this is emphasized in the Pastoral Epistles, but they are not the only
13 teachers. There is a gift called teaching and I think we can all agree that it is not limited to
14 church elders or to male members of the church (Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28). Through the gift of
15 prophecy, exercised by men and women, God teaches and edifies His church (cf. 1 Cor 14:3).
16 Paul also mentions that when the church gathers, any one can share a "hymn," a "word of
17 instruction/teaching," a "revelation" or even a "tongue," but this should be done "for the
18 strengthening of the church" and in an orderly way (14:26; also Col 3:16). Believers are expected
19 to be teachers (Heb 5:12). The authority of the teaching is determined by its loyalty to Scripture
20 rather than by the gender of the person who proclaims it (e.g. Isa 8:20).

21 Exegetical Comments

¹⁰⁶ Sorke, 22.

1 The paper is not primarily an exegetical study of the passage but a study of some of the
2 terminology used in it in the light of the question of whether women should be ordained to the
3 ministry.

4 *1. Missing the Main Idea:* In the discussion of the passage the author misses the main
5 idea that Paul is discussing: “A woman should learn.” This is a positive idea and one should try
6 to explain why Paul is asking the church to make sure that the ladies should be properly trained.
7 The epistle (the immediate context of the passage) makes clear that this is necessary because
8 false teachers are promotion false teachings.¹⁰⁷ Women have the right to learn but they should be
9 taught the Christian message by reliable teachers in the church. Then Paul proceeds to discuss
10 how this teaching is to take place.¹⁰⁸ They are going to learn “in silence and in full submission.”
11 This is an excellent pedagogical advice. Notice that “in full submission” is not followed by the
12 name of the person to whom they submit.¹⁰⁹ The *context* clearly indicates that they are to be
13 submissive to the teacher. Verse 12 Paul develops both ideas—in silence and in submission.
14 Learning in silence means that they are not yet ready to teach and therefore Paul clearly states
15 that he does not permit those who are learning to function as teachers. “In full submission”
16 means that they are not to have authority over man. The question is who this man is and the
17 context indicates that this is the teacher. We agree that the passage is not about husbands and

¹⁰⁷ See Cosaert, “1 Timothy 2:8-15,” 23.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰⁹ Wahlen, “Husband,” 24, suggests that “within the larger context of Creation and the Fall that Paul outlines here, it makes far more sense to understand him commanding obedient submission to God and to His plan for human beings.” This ignores the fact that within its own context Paul is going to say that he does not permit a woman “to have authority over man” implying that the subjection is to a man. In the context of the passage this man is the teacher.

1 wives.¹¹⁰ The teacher could be an elder or a person with the gift of teaching. Paul closes v. 12 the
2 way he began in v. 11: Women are to be silent. This is the expected attitude of a true student.

3 2. *Meaning of “Being Silent”*: The paper lacks a careful study of the term “silence”
4 (*hesuchia*, “silence, tranquility, rest”).¹¹¹ The verbal form means “to be silent, to be
5 calm/tranquil.” Paul is calling “for an attitude of attentiveness and receptiveness”¹¹² on the part
6 of women as students. The Greek word-family emphasizes silence as the absence or avoidance of
7 conflict. Philo wrote, “Has someone said something worth hearing? Pay close attention, do not
8 contradict them, be silent (ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ *en hesuchia*), as Moses taught (Deut 27:9): Be silent and
9 listen.”¹¹³ The use of this term by Paul indicate that the women were not assuming the attitude of
10 students and were disrupting the teaching process making it necessary for him to order them not
11 to discuss with the teacher but to learn in silence. They were to be submissive to both the teacher
12 and to the content of the teachings.

13 3. *The Meaning of Having Authority over Man*: The paper does not adequately deals with
14 the verb *authenteō*. The meaning of the verb is a matter of debate but to say that it simply means
15 “to exercise authority over”¹¹⁴ does not reveal the full meaning of the verb. As Carl Cosaert has

¹¹⁰ Cosaert, “1 Timothy 2:8-15,” 24.

¹¹¹ Sorke, 15-16, mentions the use of the noun in Acts 22:2 and 2 Thess 3:12 and concludes that in both cases the passages are addressing a particular situation in which silence was needed. He argues that in the case of Timothy, Paul is not addressing a particular situation. Sorke, so to speak, removes the passage from the rest of the epistle and argues that its context is “the pre- and post-lapsarian Adam,” allegedly introduced in v. 13. His hermeneutical approach is seriously questionable.

¹¹² Ceslas Spicq and James D. Ernest, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 179. He comments, “In the LXX and the papyri, the most common meaning of *hēsychia-hēsychazō* is remain calm, tranquil; repose is contrasted with agitation, war, or danger. It is commonly said that the land, the city, or the populace was tranquil for so many years, meaning that they enjoyed peace for that length of time: peaceful people live in security and at rest (Ezek 38:11; Hebrew *šāqat*).” See also C. H. Peisker, “*Hēsychia* quiet, tranquil,” *EDNT* 2:126.

¹¹³ Philo, *Dreams* 2.264.

¹¹⁴ Sorke, 21-22.

1 shown, the use of the verb in documents from around the time of Paul indicates that this type of
2 authority is of a negative nature expressing the idea of a domineering and abusive use of
3 power.¹¹⁵ This understanding is not anachronistic.¹¹⁶ This usage of the verb assumes a situation
4 of conflict and this meaning is supported by Paul's desire for women to be in silence. It also
5 implies that they were disrupting the educational process. The verb is never used to describe the
6 authority of a church elder. Therefore, the statement that Paul has chosen "a specific term that is
7 most naturally employed in the contextual conjunction of eldership" needs clarification or is
8 totally unfounded.

9 4. *Universal Command*: It is clear that Paul is addressing a local situation¹¹⁷ otherwise
10 the order to be in silence would not only be universal in nature but absolute. Women would be
11 permanently forbidden by him to speak in church, without any exception. We know that this was
12 not what Paul meant to say (see 1 Cor 11:4). The implications of the universal, permanent, and
13 absolute nature of the order can only be avoided if Paul was dealing with a particular problem in
14 a particular church or churches. Once this is established we can then proceed to identify the
15 universal principles being promoted in the text.¹¹⁸ Several things are of universal value. First, the
16 church is responsible to teach the message of salvation and its implications to Christian women.

¹¹⁵ Cosaert, 30.

¹¹⁶ Sorke, 20, seems to suggest that the meaning we are suggesting is only found in late post-Pauline documents and therefore anachronistic. The evidence indicates that this is not the case. For a full analysis of the evidence, see Payne, *Man and Women*, 361-397. He prefers "assume authority to teach a man" for 1 Timothy 2:12. This is also fine if it is understood to be a self-assumed authority accompanied by a negative, domineering attitude.

¹¹⁷ See Cosaert, "1 Timothy 2:8-15," 28, where he provides two reasons for Paul not allowing women to teach. First, "a large number of the women in Ephesus were mesmerized with the false teachings dividing the church" (e.g. 1 Tim 6:20-21; 1:20; 2 Tim 2:17-18), and, second, they were accepting false teachings and advocating them (e.g. 1 Tim 5:13; cf. Rev 2:20).

¹¹⁸ Reynolds, 26, 40, argues for the identification and application of the principles promoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:2-26 to the church today. We are arguing that the same should be done with 1 Timothy 2:11-15.

1 Second, this is to be done by people who are qualified to teach. Third, those who are studying the
2 message should not function as teachers or challenge the teacher or the content of the teaching.
3 They should not be allowed to teach. Fourth, the students are expected to learn by showing
4 proper respect to the teacher and by not disrupting the educational process. Any attempt to
5 control the process is to be rejected. These guidelines would apply to both men and women who
6 are students of the gospel in any church, anywhere in the world, and are to be enforced by local
7 church leaders.

8 5. *Adam and Eve*: Verses 13-14 are the most difficult to interpret in the passage. Our
9 friends find in the reference to Adam and Eve a creation order that requires women to be silent in
10 church and in subjection to church leaders. In the church women are not to do what Eve did in
11 Eden, namely to usurp male headship. They find in v. 13, two reasons given by Paul to support
12 this view: First, Adam was appointed by God to have authority over Eve at creation by being
13 created before Eve. Second, Eve was to be submissive to him but she chose to usurp his
14 authority. These, it is argued, demonstrate beyond any doubt that Paul's prohibition was
15 universally valid.¹¹⁹

16 Paul mentions the priority of Adam but he does not interpret it. He simply states a
17 biblical fact, Adam was created before Eve. He does not explicitly develop an argument using
18 the phrase. When it is argued that the passage is teaching that Eve usurped the headship of Adam
19 we are dealing with an opinion without any implicit or explicit support from the text or its
20 context.¹²⁰ What is surprising to me is that the alleged usurpation of Adam's headship found in

¹¹⁹ Sorke, 23.

¹²⁰ For them this idea seems to be so obvious that they do not need to demonstrate its trustworthiness. Wahlen categorically states, "He [Paul] understands clearly that this divine intention of man's spiritual leadership was in reality being challenged by Eve when she took things into her own hands at the serpent's urging" ("Husband," 23). This type of comment assumes what needs to be demonstrated, namely that there was a pre-fall headship.

1 the text is then used to re-interpret Genesis 2 while at the same time it is argued that what Paul is
2 saying is based in Genesis 2. But the truth is that what they claimed to have found in Paul is then
3 read into Genesis 2.¹²¹ We have already demonstrated that this is not the case. The other
4 possibility is to interpret Paul in light of Genesis—scripture interprets itself. In this case the
5 “first-then” sequence¹²² would point to their equality and the importance for both of them to
6 work together against a common enemy. They were in perfect harmony. We could even argue
7 that the priority in creation is being contrasted with the priority in sin in order to demonstrate that
8 deception is not inevitable. However, Paul’s main point in his argument is not Adam but the
9 experience of Eve. The reference to her fits the context very well. (1) In both passages women
10 are involved. Paul is advising them and he fills that the experience of Eve could be helpful to
11 them. (2) In both narratives we face the problem of false teachers. In Ephesus women were
12 listening to false teachers promoting their views within the church while in the garden there was
13 an intruder, a false teacher, teaching falsehood to Eve. (3) The fundamental concern of Paul
14 flows out of the experience of Eve. The enemy deceived her and Paul fears that the women in
15 Ephesus were being deceived and, like Eve, could become instruments of deception. He says that
16 “some [women] have in fact already turned away to follow Satan” (1 Tim 5:15). As we can see
17 there is no need to introduce in the text the idea of the pre-fall headship of Adam based on his

¹²¹ Sorke, *ibid.* and Peters (37), in an attempt to support a pre-fall headship or legitimate role differences, use the following statement from Ellen White, “Abel would not only love his brother, but, as the younger would be subject to him” (BibleEcho, April 8, 1912). It is difficult to understand why they would use a statement dealing with conditions after the fall, teaching respect for an older brother, to argue for a pre-fall condition. Sorke even uses the description of Eve given by Ellen White in which she indicates that “Eve was not quite as tall as Adam. Her head reached a little above his shoulders” (ST, January 7, 1879 par. 13) to imply Adam’s headship!

¹²² Cosaert, “Leadership and Gender,” 7, points to the Pauline use of “first-then” in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 in order to show that it does not contain the idea of functional headship. See also, *idem.*, “1 Timothy 2:8-15,” 34-35.

1 temporal priority or on the fact that he named Eve. Contextually, the main interest of Paul is not
2 on the matter of headship but on the danger of false teachers and deception.

3 6. *Women and Childbearing*: Our friends believe that since in our passage “Paul is
4 discussing the responsibilities and restrictions of gender-roles,”¹²³ the reference to a woman’s
5 primary role as child-bearing is appropriate. The place of women is at home. This is a minimalist
6 understanding of the role of women at home and at church. We would only need point to the
7 diversity of roles that women played in the apostolic church that kept them away from home,
8 serving the Lord or to the ministry of Ellen White. The paper provides a list of quotes from her
9 writings on one side of the issue overlooking many other statements that would have provided a
10 more balance picture of her views. A brief example should suffice: “God has blessed woman
11 with talents to be used to His glory in bringing many sons and daughters to God; but many who
12 might be efficient laborers are kept at home to care for their little ones.”¹²⁴

13 First Timothy 2:15 is a notoriously difficult passage. The best way to analyze it is to
14 place it within the general discussion of Paul in the epistle. “He is seeking merely to affirm the
15 value of marriage and childbearing in response to the heretical teachings (and, perhaps, cultural
16 trends) that had caused Christian women in Ephesus to look disparagingly upon such domestic
17 relationships and responsibilities (cf. 4:3; 5:9-10, 14).”¹²⁵ Women will be saved—this is
18 important for Paul—if they persevere in faith, love, and holiness, that is to say by not listening to
19 false teachers and remaining committed to the Christian message.

¹²³ Sorke, 28.

¹²⁴ AH 165.

¹²⁵ Cosaert, “1 Timothy 2:8-15,” 36.

1 The interpretation of this passage offered by those who support the ordination of women
2 to the ministry is contextually based, is in perfect harmony with Genesis 1-3, and is free from
3 unnecessary speculations that cannot be supported from the biblical text.

4 As I look back at the arguments used by our friends, I wonder whether the argument of
5 headship is that important. It is an argument based on inferences and in some cases conjectures
6 that do not strengthen their case against the ordination of women to the ministry. None of the
7 biblical passages discussed by them are dealing with the question of ordination to the ministry
8 and neither do they deal with the question of the headship of elders over women in church. When
9 it is *assumed* that a church elder, following the model of the family, was the head of the church
10 as the family of God, the implication would be that he had authority over everyone in the
11 church—men, women, and children. If the headship of the elder is exercised over all church
12 members, what makes the women so different that they cannot be ordained to the ministry? The
13 headship argument certainly does not seem to help their case, but leads them to a dead end. They
14 need a new argument not based on the idea of headship. They claim to have found it in the
15 statement, “The overseer must be . . . the husband of but one wife” (1 Tim 3:2), interpreted by
16 them to mean that the elder has to be male. This appears to be the *only* significant argument they
17 have to support their position.

18 **I Timothy 3:1: Husband of One Wife**

19 Their interpretation of the 1 Timothy 3:2 passage is based on a reading of the text that
20 assumes that *only* males could be elders. This is supported by the use of the pronoun *tis* (“a
21 certain one”) in 3:1, the gender-specific oscillation found in 1 Tim 2:8-3:12, the phrase “husband
22 of one wife,” and male headship in the family as a prerequisite for eldership.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ In this evaluation I am relying on the paper by Cosaert, “I Timothy 3:1-13.”

1 1. *The Use of the Indefinite Pronoun* *tis*: “If anyone [*tis*] sets his heart on being an
2 overseer, he desires a noble task” (1 Timothy 3:1). The pronoun *tis* is used to argue for the
3 exclusivity of male elders,¹²⁷ but this is not a valid argument. In Greek this is an indefinite
4 pronoun that as such is not interested in defining gender. By using this pronoun it is clear that
5 “Paul is not trying to introduce gender into the discussion, but simply to commend the office of
6 an overseer as a position worthy of aspiration.”¹²⁸ This finds support in the fact that the apostle
7 “did not focus on the duties or skills associated with the office of an overseer, but on the
8 *character* that should define a spiritual leader.”¹²⁹ We certainly agree that in the list of
9 qualifications Paul “is after character and exhibition of spiritual leadership skills.”¹³⁰ Therefore
10 when Paul says “anyone” he means “anyone.” This is the plain meaning of the text. Carl has
11 demonstrated that when Paul uses the indefinite pronoun to refer to a particular gender he uses
12 gender specific pronouns or nouns to make clear what he means. The other cases in 1 Timothy
13 where Paul uses the indefinite pronoun by itself it is a “generic reference to humans.”¹³¹

14 2. *Gender-Specific Oscillation in 1 Timothy 2:8-3:13*: The argument is that since in 1
15 Timothy 2:8 Paul exclusively addresses men, women in 2:9-15, men in 3:1-10, women in 3:11,
16 and men in 3:12-13, the instructions to elders are gender specific and exclusive.¹³² First, there is
17 not shift of gender in 3:1 because the pronoun is indefinite—if “anyone. . .” Secondly, it would
18 be a grave mistake to conclude that since Paul is talking to women in 2:8-15, what he says

¹²⁷ Sorke, 32-33.

¹²⁸ Cosaert, “1 Timothy 3:1-13,” 18.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹³⁰ Sorke, 37.

¹³¹ Cosaert, “1 Timothy 3:1-13,” 20.

¹³² Sorke, 32, 35. The same could be said about Titus 2:2-8. Are only men “to be temperate and sound in faith, in love and in endurance”? Are only women “to be reverent in the way they live” and to be kind? Are only young men to be self-controlled? When Paul speaks to one group he is in fact addressing the whole congregation.

1 exclusively applies to them and not to men. Are only women to dress modestly and not to wear
2 jewelry? Are good deeds only to be expected from females and not from males? Are only males
3 to “lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger and disputing”? Are only women to “learn in
4 quietness and submission”? Although Paul may be formulating the counsel in gender-specific
5 language, what he says is not gender exclusive. The so called gender-specific oscillation is not a
6 strong argument.

7 3. “*The Husband of but One Wife:*” It is argued that this phrase applies only and
8 exclusively to males.¹³³ Our friends do not give enough credit to the fact that this is a highly
9 unusual phrase found only three times in the Bible (1 Tim 3:1, 12; Titus 1:6). First, if the
10 requirement is that an elder should be a married man, single men and even widowers would be
11 excluded from the ministry. We have not biblical evidence to support this position. Paul seems to
12 have been unmarried, at least for some time during his ministry. Besides, Ellen White does not
13 support this interpretation. She never opposed single men in the ministry. He acknowledged
14 them. She wrote, “I was shown that the usefulness of young ministers, married or unmarried, is
15 often destroyed by the attachment shown to them by young women.”¹³⁴ It could be argued that
16 unmarried pastors were ordained after getting married but she does indicate this. She never asked
17 pastors who were widowers to resign from the ministry. On the contrary, she supported them and
18 encouraged those who wanted to get married to marry (e.g. S. N. Haskell and J. N. Andrews).

19 Second, the emphasis of the phrase is not on gender. The order of the words places the
20 emphasis on “one” thus indicating faithfulness and moral purity. As Carl indicated, this is an

¹³³ Sorke, 33.

¹³⁴ GW92 278. She also writes about an unmarried “Elder Y, who has been preaching, has been running after the girls, married women, and widows, and this seemed to be his inclination out of the desk from State to State. Sunday morning I called him out by name and told him and all present we had no use for any such men, for they would only make the work of the burden-bearing laborers double what it is now” (Letter 53, 1884).

1 idiomatic phrase that points to the character of the elder and not to gender exclusiveness. The
2 best textual evidence to support this suggestion is found in 1 Timothy 5:9, where Paul writes
3 concerning a widow that she should have been “a one-man women.” In this case a literal reading
4 of the phrase emphasizing gender specificity would be practically meaningless or stating the
5 obvious: “The widow should be a woman married to one man . . .”

6 Third, we have biblical evidence indicating that the phrase is not gender exclusive. A
7 deacon was also expected to be “the husband of but one wife” (3:12). According to the
8 interpretation of our friends, this would mean that only males could be deacons. Fortunately
9 some of them recognize that in Romans 16:1 Phoebe is identified by Paul as a deacon—holding
10 the office of deacon.¹³⁵ This is also supported by Ellen White. There is also a strong possibility

¹³⁵ In fact, they have difficulties trying to fit Romans 16:1 into their model. Sorke believes that Phoebe could not have been a deacon in the technical sense of the term because 1 Tim 3:13 says that a deacon has to be the husband of one wife (42). He harmonizes both passages by silencing the first. This is not harmonization but imposing one’s interpretation of a passage on another without allowing them to speak by themselves. What he should have done was to go back and study more carefully 1 Tim 3:13. When he reads Ellen White he realizes that she does support women deacons but this time he does not have a way of explaining away her statements. He then concludes, “The creation of the office of deaconess is not prohibited, and finds practice in the early Adventist church” (41). This is a big concession on his part and undermines his reading of the biblical texts. If he insists that ordaining women as deacons is not biblical we would then have Ellen White instituting a new church office, which requires the laying on of hands, without biblical support! Besides, if women could be ordained as deacons, then the phrase “husband of one wife” is not gender exclusive. Sorke never resolves this contradiction in his argument. Bohr struggles with the issue and strongly argues that in the case of Phoebe *diakonos* means “servant” and that it is referring to a function that should characterize every believer (55; this is also the position taken by Peters, 73-74). But apparently realizing that his case is not as strong as he thought, he concludes, “I believe that there is a slim amount of evidence in Scripture (possibly 1 Timothy 3:11; Romans 16:1, 2) and significant evidence in early church history to indicate that women served in the office of deaconess. There is also some evidence that women were ordained as deaconess in Adventist history” (ibid.). This would require from him to revise his interpretation of the phrase “husband of one wife” as meaning that the deacon has to be male. Jerry Moon confronts the same problems. He believes that 1 Timothy 3:2 restrict the role of elders to male members of the church. According to him, Paul “assumes that elders would be men” and I suppose that, in order to be consistent, Moon would also say that Paul assumes that deacons would be men. But when it comes to deacons, he recognizes the possibility, based on 1 Timothy 3:11 and Romans 16:1, that a woman could occupy the office of deacon (10). He clarifies that “‘deaconess’ may be understood as a feminine counterpart to the NT deacons” (39). He is wise in allowing for this possibility because he knows that Ellen White supports the ordination of women as deaconesses (33). This would mean that the apparent gender specific language used in the description of the qualifications of deacons and elders is not gender exclusive. They have not been able to

1 that 1 Timothy 3:11 is discussing the qualifications of female deacons. Being this the case, the
2 phrase “a one-woman husband” does not exclude women from being deacons and elders.

3 4. *Managing a Household*: The elder has to be a man because he is expected to manage
4 well his household. The metaphor of the church as the family of God is taken in a literal way
5 requiring a visible male head to rule over it or to lead it. In order to clarify this matter we need to
6 keep in mind two important pieces of evidence. First, a deacon was also expected to “manage his
7 children and household well” (1 Tim 3:12), but this requirement did not exclude women from the
8 deaconate. Second, Paul expected women to “manage their household” (*oikodespoteō*, “to
9 manage one’s household;” 1 Tim 5:14) and not only men. As Carl has shown, women held
10 important administrative positions at home and in society during the time of the New Testament.
11 This particular responsibility is not restricted to male members of the church. After all the main
12 interest in this qualification is that the elder should be a person with good administrative and
13 spiritual experience as demonstrated by the way he has run the household.

14 **Women and Leadership**

15 It is claimed that throughout the Bible the most important leadership positions among
16 God’s people have been in the hands of men and that this is based on the concept of male
17 headship. In order to demonstrate the fallacy of this argument we only need a case in which a
18 woman occupied one of the highest leadership positions in Israel or the church. This is not
19 difficult to find.

prove their case. Peters, 73-74, argue that Phoebe was a servant who helped Paul and many others. This is true, but in addition Paul states that she was a *deacon* in a *particular church*. It seems to me that those mentioned above who acknowledged that women can be deacons have the support of the Bible and of Ellen White.

1 *I. Deborah:* Our friends considered Deborah to have been primarily a prophet whose
2 prophetic role was extended to include a juridical element.¹³⁶ What is overlooked is that very few
3 prophets in the Old Testament are called judges and prophets. These two roles are ascribed to
4 Moses (Exod 18:16) and Samuel (1 Sam 7:6, 15-17). This would suggest that she was the top
5 leader of Israel at that time as prophet and judge. There is no question that the judges were
6 leaders of Israel in pre-monarchical Israel (Judges 2:11-19) and that they also had judicial
7 functions. The place of her residence was located close to the north of Israel but not too distant
8 from the south, making it easier for all Israel to come to her for guidance as judge and prophet.
9 At the moment of crisis she was God’s instrument to deliver His people: “There was dwelling in
10 Israel, a woman illustrious for her piety, and *through her the Lord chose to deliver his people.*
11 Her name was Deborah.”¹³⁷ This was the work of the judges during the time of the judges (e.g.

¹³⁶ Reynolds and Clinton, 201; also Bohr, 67; Laurel Damsteegt, “Women of the Old Testament: Women of Influence,” Theology of Ordination Study Committee, July 2013, Baltimore MD. She writes, “Deborah did not ‘judge’ in the usual manner. Rather people came to her at home” (14). She mistakenly refers to Barak as the judge of the land. It is true that she is called “the mother of Israel,” but what else could she have been called? The “father of Israel”? The title “mother of Israel” seems to indicate that she was the maximum leader of Israel at that time and that she was a woman. Bohr (67; also Peters, 69-70) says that she did not have authority over men but the narrative and in particular her song indicates that she had authority over men. He also adds that she was not chosen to deliver the people (68), but this goes against what Ellen White says (see below on the main text). It is true that her femaleness is emphasized (Reynolds and Clinton, 201), but this is done in order to indicate that her experience was not common in Israel. Our friends try to deemphasize her role as judge by pointing to the fact that she is not mentioned in Hebrews 11 but Barak is mentioned. This is an argument from silence. Many others are not mentioned in the list. Reynolds and Clinton, in their effort to demonstrate that her primary role was that of a prophet, argue that she is not called a judge. Another argument from silence, to which we can say that neither Ehud nor Shamgar or Barak are called judges. They also argue that the formula “X judged Israel Y years” is not used for her. Neither is it used for Othniel or Ehud. They finally argue that her role as judge was temporary, not like that of the other judges and they support this saying that she was judging Israel “at that time” (201). I am not sure how this temporal clause could mean that she was a judge for a limited period of time. It simple states the fact that at a particular time in the history of Israel she was functioning as a judge. It does not tell us for how long. I appreciate their efforts to harmonize the role of Deborah with their particular understanding of the role of women among God’s people, but the truth is that their case is rather weak.

¹³⁷ Ellen White, ST, June 16, 1881 par. 4 (italics are mine). Although the primary responsibility of delivering God’s people was Deborah’s, Barak would be her military leader: “Although he had been

1 Judges 2:16). Guided by the Lord she asked Barak to be the military leader but she was directly
2 involved in mustering the troops (5:13-14). She had authority over men as prophet and judge.
3 The list of tribes that participated in this military action shows that Deborah was recognized as
4 the leader. This explains why Barak wanted her to accompany him. Ellen White supports this
5 description of Deborah when she writes, “He [Barak] refused to engage in such a doubtful
6 undertaking unless Deborah would accompany him, and thus support his efforts by her influence
7 and counsel.”¹³⁸ Her influence over the people is that of a wise prophet and judge. We have no
8 reason to believe that she was directly involved in the actual battle but this was also the case with
9 other military leaders who occasionally used their generals while they stayed at a distance.

10 Her leadership role is so impressive that when Barak hesitates and wants her to be in the
11 battlefield with him, she points out that this would be against the traditional role of women and
12 culturally damaging to Barak; he will experience shame. But he does not care because he wants
13 the best leader of Israel to accompany him. At this point our friends quote Ellen White: “She
14 [Deborah] was known as a prophetess, and in the absence of the usual magistrates, the people
15 had sought to her for counsel and justice.”¹³⁹ They use this statement to show that she was
16 primarily a prophetess. But we must not overlook the obvious, that is, that there is nothing
17 morally or spiritually wrong with having a woman in top leadership roles among God’s people.
18 The so-called exception demonstrates that although at times it may not be necessary to have
19 women in such positions, if the need is there it is correct to do it.

designated by the Lord himself as the one chosen to deliver Israel, and had received the assurance that God would go with him and subdue their enemies, yet he was timid and distrustful” (Ibid., par. 6).

¹³⁸ Ibid., par. 6.

¹³⁹ Ibid., par. 4.

1 2. *Coworker of the Lord*: There are a number of important passages in which Paul
2 mentions different coworkers serving the Lord in the churches. Often these individuals are
3 considered to be persons who worked under Paul or who were his helpers, but this is not the
4 case. They were like Paul workers of the Lord. Talking about Apollos and himself he says, “We
5 are God’s fellow workers” (1 Cor 3:9). Apollos was a well-educated man who knew the
6 Scriptures and taught others about Jesus (Acts 18:24-25). Prisca and Aquila instructed him in the
7 gospel of Jesus, he accepted it, and went on to proclaim it (vv. 26-27). Other fellow workers
8 mentioned by Paul are Urbanus and Stachys (Rom 16:9), Timothy (v. 21; 1 Thess 3:2), Titus (2
9 Cor 8:23), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), Clement (4:3), Aristarchus, Barnabas, Jesus/Justus (Col
10 4:10-11), Philemon (Philm 1:1), Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke (v. 24). They
11 are all, like Paul, proclaiming the gospel of salvation and strengthening up the churches. Among
12 the fellow workers Paul mentions several women. He includes Prisca and her husband (Rom
13 16:3) and Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2-3).

14 The important role of these fellow workers is evident in the way Paul refers to them and
15 their responsibility. He speaks highly about them and when in need of reprimanding some of
16 them he is tactful and considerate. This is the case with Euodia and Syntyche, who apparently
17 were having personal problems that could have damaged the unity of the church. Paul appeals
18 to them to resolve the problem and asks another fellow worker to help them (Phil 4:3). What we
19 have here is fellow workers helping each other to resolve a problem that could have divided the
20 church. These ladies occupied an important leadership position in the church. What were the
21 responsibilities of the fellow workers? They are primarily servants (*diakonoi*) of the church:
22 “What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed” (1 Cor 3:5). In
23 3:9, Paul adds, “We [Apollos and Paul] are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s

1 building.” Since they are servants, they are not to lord over church members (2 Cor 1:24). They
2 proclaim the message of salvation with missionary fervor and strengthen the faith of believers in
3 their communities (Acts 18:27). Like Epaphroditus, they could be located in one particular
4 church from which they would go out to serve (Phil 2:25). This is also the case with Euodia and
5 Syntyche. The function of the fellow workers of God was so important that Paul urged the
6 members of the church at Corinth, to be “in subjection to [*hupotassō*] such men [the household
7 of Stephanas] and *to everyone who helps in the work* [Greek, “to every fellow worker”] and
8 labors [laborer]” (1 Cor 16:16).¹⁴⁰ It would be difficult to argue that the submission to fellow
9 workers is to be limited to males when Paul explicitly calls some women coworkers. We find
10 here ladies functioning in important leadership roles to whom *church members are to be in*
11 *subjection*.

12 Ellen White supports the idea of placing women in high administrative positions. After a
13 discussion of the enthronement of David and the instructions God gave him, she applies the
14 narrative to church leaders:

15 Those placed in *positions of responsibility* should be *men and women* who fear God, who
16 realize that they are humans only, not God. They should be *people who will rule under*
17 *God* and for Him. Will they *give expression to the will of God for His people*? Do they
18 allow selfishness to tarnish word and action? Do they, after obtaining the confidence of
19 the people as leaders of wisdom who fear God and keep His commandments, belittle the
20 exalted position that the people of God should occupy in these days of peril? Will they
21 through self-confidence become false guideposts, pointing the way to friendship with the
22 world instead of the way to heaven?¹⁴¹

23
24 The statement is important in that it makes clear that a woman can be placed in positions of
25 responsibility that would require from them to “rule under God and with him” and to teach God’s

¹⁴⁰ Ellen White echoes the words of Paul when she writes, “These whom God has appointed are workers together with God, and they are to be respected and honored and loved” (RH, October 10, 1893 par. 13). This statement is preceded by a quotation from Ephesians 4:11-13—“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers . . .”

¹⁴¹ Manuscript 163, 1902= CTr 146.

1 will to the people. In another statement, encouraging the education of young men and women
2 and the need for this, she states, “When women are wanted with well-balanced minds, with not a
3 cheap style of education, but with an education fitting them for any position of trust, they are not
4 easily found.”¹⁴² Well-trained women can occupy any position of trust as did Deborah.

5 This counsel is based on the biblical concept of true leadership. Leadership positions are
6 cosmically based on the law of love expressed in service and not on male headship. It was this
7 same important principle that, grounded in the nature of God, Jesus instituted in His church:
8 “The kings of the Gentiles lord over them . . . But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest
9 among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves” (Luke
10 22:25-26). This is not based on gender but in a spirit of service.

11 **Ellen G. White, Ordination, and Authority**

12 The paper discussing ordination and authority in Ellen White¹⁴³ is an interesting paper
13 and builds on the arguments that we have already analyzed and found faulty. We will examine
14 some of the new and more important arguments used in the paper to support the exclusion of
15 females from the ordained ministry.

16 **Adam as Head and Representative**

17 This argument is based on Romans 5:12, which we have already discussed. The author
18 argues that according to this passage Adam sinned as representative of the human race. It is also
19 supported by two statements from Ellen White:

20 The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the father and representative of the whole human
21 family. Its observance was to be an act of grateful acknowledgment, on the part of all
22 who should dwell upon the earth, that God was their Creator and their rightful Sovereign;

¹⁴² RH, June 21, 1887.

¹⁴³ Moon, “Ellen White, Ordination, and Authority.” In order to get a more balance discussion on this topic see, Dennis Fortin, “Ellen White, Women in Ministry and the Ordination of Women,” Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Baltimore, July 2013.

1 that they were the work of His hands and the subjects of His authority. Thus the
2 institution was wholly commemorative, and given to all mankind.¹⁴⁴

3
4 Under God, Adam was to stand at the head of the earthly family, to maintain the
5 principles of the heavenly family. This would have brought peace and happiness. But the
6 law that none “liveth to himself” (Romans 14:7), Satan was determined to oppose. He
7 desired to live for self. He sought to make himself a center of influence. It was this that
8 had incited rebellion in heaven, and it was man's acceptance of this principle that brought
9 sin on earth.¹⁴⁵

10
11 The first thing to observe about these quotes is that they are not dealing with the topic of
12 the headship of Adam over Eve. True, Adam, as a father of the human family, represented it.
13 This is based on the biblical concept of human solidarity according to which the individual can
14 represent the totality or the many.¹⁴⁶ One could equally argue that in a world free from sin Eve,
15 who was the mother of the human family, would have also had a representative role. This finds
16 support in the fact that according to Ellen White the Sabbath was not only committed to Adam
17 but it was also given Eve: “The Sabbath was given to Adam and Eve in Eden *for all their*
18 *posterity.*”¹⁴⁷ In other words, when God gave the Sabbath to Adam and Eve He was giving it to
19 all their posterity because they both represented them.

20 In the second statement we are told that “Adam was to stand at the head of the earthly
21 family to maintain the principles of the heavenly family.” Here headship is specifically defined
22 as his responsibility to maintain the principles of the heavenly family. This was God’s plan for
23 the human race. There is nothing here about his headship over Eve before the fall. No one would
24 dare to say that Eve was not at all responsible for maintaining the principles of the heavenly
25 family among her descendants. The possibility remains that in describing Adams in this way

¹⁴⁴ PP 48.

¹⁴⁵ CT 33.

¹⁴⁶ Davidson, 7.

¹⁴⁷ ST, July 29, 1897 par. 7.

1 Ellen White was not necessarily excluding Eve from having that same responsibility. In any case,
2 the fact remains that Adam’s headship is specifically limited to his descendants, males and
3 females, but does not include Eve. This type of headship was not assigned or passed on to all his
4 male descendants and therefore the statements do not support the idea that by divine fiat females
5 are under submission to males.¹⁴⁸

6 There was perfect harmony between Adam and Eve but it was not based on his headship
7 over her. Ellen White is very clear: “Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with His
8 great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought
9 discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on
10 the part of the one or the other.”¹⁴⁹ As we already indicated, what held them together, in perfect
11 harmony with each other, was not the headship of Adam or Eve’s submission to him but their
12 mutual submission to God.

13 **Authority in the Church**

14 We tend to agree that there are different levels of authority in the church as represented in
15 the ministry of elders and deacons. But the paper goes on to suggest that ecclesiastical authority
16 resides only in males ordained to the ministry as elders.¹⁵⁰ This is a major flaw in the argument.
17 Christ’s authority was delegated to the church as a community of believers and, with the
18 exception of the twelve apostles, it was not given by Him to any particular group of individuals.
19 It is the church that under the guidance of the Spirit and the Scriptures identifies, ordains, and
20 sets apart individuals who will exercise ecclesiastical authority on its behalf (Acts 15). Even

¹⁴⁸ Moon seems to suggest that both genders were created “unique, with complementary strengths and weaknesses . . . Thus the man had deficiencies that the women would supply, and vice-versa” (11). We would not deny complementarity but we would not use “weaknesses” to refer to the pre-fall state.

¹⁴⁹ PP 58-59.

¹⁵⁰ Moon, 21-22.

1 those appointed by the church to exercise full ecclesiastical authority are accountable to the
2 church for the exercise of such an authority. Paul wrote to Timothy, “Do not receive an
3 accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in
4 sin, rebuke [*elenchō*, “strongly reprove”] in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be
5 fearful of sinning” (1 Tim 5:19-20). Therefore, although there is a distinction between those
6 ordained and the regular church member the final authority continues to reside in the community
7 of believers and not in the ordained clergy.

8 **Office versus Gifts**

9 It is also argued that eldership is an office while pastor-teacher is a gift. Anyone can be a
10 pastor-teacher, male or female, but only males can be elders.¹⁵¹ This radical dichotomy between
11 office and gift is not found in the New Testament. Yes, there are offices and there are gifts but
12 the offices are not assigned independent of the gifts of the Spirit received by the person. There is
13 a gift of administration that an elder should have demonstrated to have. There is a gift of pastor
14 that a church elder is expected to have, and so on. Appointment to an office does take into
15 consideration the gifts of the Spirit. The gift of pastor-teacher enables a person to be an elder but
16 it is the church that, guided by the Lord, makes the appointment. The paper excludes women
17 who received the gift of pastor-teacher from the ordained ministry arguing that the requirements
18 for eldership exclude women. In that case *the fullness of the gift is not received by women*
19 *because its highest expression is realized in eldership.* The Lord would have given them a gift
20 that they would never be able to fully develop because of their gender. This comes very close to

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 23.

1 divine arbitrariness. The gift leaves open the possibility for any person who receives it to be an
2 elder.¹⁵²

3 **Women as Pastors**

4 The author of the paper under consideration makes a significant effort to harmonize a
5 statement of Ellen White with the idea that women cannot be ordained as ministers. Here is the
6 statement:

7 All who wish an opportunity for true ministry, and who will give themselves
8 unreservedly to God, will find in the canvassing work opportunities to speak upon many
9 things pertaining to the future immortal life. The experience thus gained will be of the
10 greatest value to those who are fitting themselves for the work of the ministry. It is the
11 accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, *to*
12 *become pastors to the flock of God*. As they cherish the thought that Christ is their
13 Companion, a holy awe, a sacred joy, will be felt by them amid all their trying
14 experiences and all their tests. They will learn how to pray as they work. They will
15 become educated in patience, kindness, affability, and helpfulness wherever they may be.
16 They will practice true Christian courtesy, bearing in mind that Christ, their Companion,
17 will not approve of harsh, unkind words or feelings. Their words will be purified. The
18 power of speech will be regarded as a precious talent, lent them to do a high and holy
19 work. The human agent will learn how to represent the divine Companion with whom he
20 is associated.¹⁵³
21

¹⁵² Moon tries to demonstrate that the distinction between office and gift is supported by Ellen White. According to her the organization of the church in Jerusalem was to be the model for the church in all places. This organization was established on the basis of three historical steps. First, there was the ordination of the apostles by Jesus; second, the appointment of the seven deacons; and finally the bestowal of the gifts of the Spirit to every church member (25). Nothing is said about the appointment of elders. The idea is that the offices were instituted before the gifts of the Spirit were given. But the fact is that the only office instituted before the gifts were bestowed on the church was that of the apostles. The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost included the empowering and gifting of the church for its mission. The third step was not the reception of the gifts of the Spirit but Paul's exhortation to church members to use their gifts in a harmonious way. This is what Ellen White wrote: "Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers had been formed into churches, the organization of the church was further perfected, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained. *Every member was exhorted to act well his part. Each was to make a wise use of the talents entrusted to him.* Some were endowed by the Holy Spirit with special gifts—'first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.' 1 Corinthians 12:28. But *all these classes of workers were to labor in harmony*" (AA 91-92). It is clear that the offices and the gifts cannot be separated on the basis of the historical development of church organization. They were together from the very beginning.

¹⁵³ RH, January 15, 1901 par. 5.

1 According to the paper, the term pastor is not referring here to pastor/elder. Ellen White,
2 supposedly used the term pastor to refer to a minister of a congregation, to pastoral functions
3 (e.g. visiting people at home), and for lay members who are involved in ministry in general.¹⁵⁴ A
4 few comments are needed. First, when Ellen White uses the term “pastor” for a function
5 associated with a pastor she adds a modifier, e.g. “duties of a pastor.” Second, when she uses it
6 with respect to the work of a layperson she carefully phrases it: “[Members of the church] who
7 will *act as* pastors.”¹⁵⁵ They are not pastors but they are doing a work similar to that of a pastor.
8 The *plain* meaning of the phrase “to become pastors to the flock of God” is a reference to the
9 pastor as a minister of the gospel. In fact, had she not said “both men *and* women,” no one would
10 have had any problem in finding here a reference to the ordained ministry of the pastor. The need
11 to explain it away is based on the fact that the reader comes to it assuming that women cannot
12 function as ordained ministers.

13 The author also used the context of the statement to try to reinterpret it. It is true that
14 White is writing about the work of canvassing. But to suggest that the term pastor is being
15 applied to canvassers who go door to door doing evangelistic work¹⁵⁶ almost contradict what she
16 is saying. According to her, canvassing prepares men and women for the work of a pastor: “The
17 experience thus gained [in canvassing] will be of the greatest value to those who are fitting
18 themselves for the work of the ministry. It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that
19 prepares workers, both men and women, *to become pastors to the flock of God.*” The work of the
20 ministry is here the same as that of a pastor. She then goes on to list what could be learned in

¹⁵⁴ Moon, 27.

¹⁵⁵ 5T 723.

¹⁵⁶ Moon, 28.

1 preparation for the pastoral work. She even says that those who already are in the ministry would
2 benefit by being involved in the canvassing work.

3 **Women and Ministry**

4 The paper uses Ellen White to define the involvement of women in the work of the
5 church. It concludes that according to her a woman can do the following things: Home visitation
6 to church families; pastoral and evangelistic work in partnership with ordained men; giving
7 evangelistic Bible studies; door-to door sales of Christian literature; teaching in various
8 capacities (e.g. elementary schools, Sabbath schools, camp meeting Bible classes); Preaching,
9 pulpit ministry; chaplains for medical and other institutions, personal counseling, and
10 temperance leadership.¹⁵⁷ The obvious question is, according to Ellen White, what is it that only
11 a male elder can do in church that a woman cannot do? His conclusion is that based in 1 Timothy
12 3:12, “The teaching restricted to men must be the teaching associated with leadership and full
13 ecclesiastical authority.”¹⁵⁸ This is “the teaching that pertains specifically to the office of elder or
14 overseer.”¹⁵⁹ According to the author, this teaching refers to the “definite teaching of God’s
15 Word.”¹⁶⁰ He does not explain what he means and neither does he provide any evidence to
16 support the statement. Is he saying that the elders’ deep knowledge of truth is inaccessible to a
17 woman or that she is unable to attain it? Anyone in the church should be able to proclaim the
18 “definitive teaching of God’s Word.” When Ellen White speaks about the ordination of Paul and
19 Barnabas she says that they “were authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to
20 perform the rite of baptism, and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 28-30.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 30.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 31.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

1 authority.”¹⁶¹ Teaching the truth is expected from any church member, so this is not unique to
2 those who are ordained. Church members cannot perform the rite of baptism¹⁶² and organize
3 churches because they have not been ordained. The author categorically states, “The role of
4 women in the church is not to exercise ‘full ecclesiastical authority’.”¹⁶³ As far as I know, there
5 is not a statement in Ellen White that restricts the exercise of full ecclesiastical authority to
6 men.¹⁶⁴ Therefore women can perform the work of an ordained pastor.

7 The paper we have been evaluating was not able to demonstrate that according to Ellen
8 White it is wrong to ordain women to the ministry. The evidence is lacking. In a case like this we
9 do need a thus says the Lord.¹⁶⁵ It is clear that she was open to the use of men and women as
10 pastors/ministers of the flock of God. The paper quotes the comments written by C. C. Crisler,
11 one of Ellen White’s literary assistants (1900-1915), answering a question about Ellen White and
12 the ordination of women. Among other things he says,

¹⁶¹ AA 160.

¹⁶² Moon feels that he has to explain why a woman who preaches, teaches, and evangelizes cannot baptize. This is a good question. In his answer he speculates: “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” (41). I am sure this is a very logical statement but it is difficult, in fact impossible, to find a place in Paul where he addresses the question of the gate-keeping function of elders. The clear implication here is that the final authority with respect to who joins the church is that of the elder and not that of the church itself (which will include women). This type of reasoning brings us very close to the power of the bishop in other Christian communities whose teachings and model of ecclesiastical authority we reject.

¹⁶³ Moon, 40.

¹⁶⁴ Moon at the end of the paper states, “It appears that there are only three or four roles restricted to men: the administration of baptism, the organizations of churches, the authoritative teaching/disciplinary role, and possibly the conducting of the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper” (41). These limitations are not based on what Ellen White clearly state but on inferences based on their understanding of male headship.

¹⁶⁵ At times Moon makes statements without thinking about their theological implications—we all occasionally do that. For instance, he writes, “God calls men to ministry because masculine qualities are also an essential component of the image of God” (41). I am not sure I understand what he means, but this would imply that only males were fully created in the image of God and therefore women are a little less than humans created in the image of God.

1 Sister White, personally, was very careful about expressing herself in any wise as to the
2 advisability of ordaining women as gospel ministers. She has often spoken of the perils
3 that such general practice would expose the church to by a gainsaying world; but as yet I
4 have never seen from her pen any statement that would seem to encourage the formal and
5 official ordination of women to the gospel ministry, to public labor as is ordinarily
6 expected of an ordained minister.
7

8 According to this statement the only reason given by Ellen White is of a practical nature.

9 We can suggest that “the ordination of women to ministry had not been on Ellen White’s agenda
10 because she was afraid of what the world would say or that some churches would use this new
11 practice as way of disparaging the Seventh-day Adventist message.”¹⁶⁶ This evidences the fact
12 that we as Adventist have had a pragmatic understanding of ordination and not a sacramental
13 one.

14 **Conclusion**

15 In general our friends put together a series of arguments and conclusions that initially
16 seem to support their case. But upon closer analysis of the Biblical evidence and the counsel of
17 Ellen White, the arguments presented by our friends are, to say the least, inconclusive.
18 Consequently the church cannot base a decision against the ordination of women to the ministry
19 based on their arguments. There is not a divine command in the Old Testament, the New
20 Testament, or in the writings of Ellen White against ordaining women to the gospel ministry.
21 Neither is there an explicit command not to ordain them.

22 However, we do find in the Bible and in the writing of Ellen White references to women
23 holding very important leadership positions that required from them to “have authority over
24 men.” If ordination means basically “to have authority over some one” there is no reason to
25 exclude women from being ordained to the ministry. But ordination is not about headship. It is
26 based on gifts, a divine call, the witness of the church, and a spirit of service to God and to others

¹⁶⁶ Fortin, 21.

1 (mission). An overemphasis on authority will distort the nature of ministry and will bring us too
2 close to a type of ministry that is not supported by the New Testament but that is found in some
3 Christian communities. Christ has to be our model.

4 It is important to realize that Ellen White opposes an understanding of the ordained
5 ministry (a theology of ordination) along the lines of “having authority over.” Talking about the
6 ministry of the apostles as illustrating our ministry she writes:

7 The apostles wished it to be understood that *they did not set themselves up as lords over*
8 *the faith and consciences of the believers*. They avoided all the severity they possibly
9 could, and labored to promote the joy of the believers, leading them by kindly persuasion
10 to renounce their errors. *Thus we are to work, by faith in God fulfilling our duty, not by*
11 *exercising authority or dominion, but by revealing Christlikeness of character.*¹⁶⁷
12 No one has been called by God to have authority over other believers, males or females, but to
13 serve them by revealing a Christ-like character. This is leadership through the influence of a holy
14 life. A theology of ministry and ordination is to be grounded in the endowment of the Spirit, the
15 divine calling, and a life of commitment to God, to His people, and to the world. Grounding it on
16 an alleged cosmic principle of male headship must be kindly rejected in order to avoid
17 developing an understanding of ministry that would be difficult to support from the Scriptures.

¹⁶⁷ 21MR 275. She will also discourage an understanding of marriage based on the idea of having authority over: “*Neither the husband nor the wife is to make a plea for rulership*. The Lord has laid down the principle that is to guide in this matter. The husband is to cherish his wife as Christ cherishes the church. And the wife is to respect and love the husband. Both are to cultivate the spirit of kindness, being determined never to grieve or injure the other” (7T 47). It is true that our friends argue that “having authority over” is to be understood as something positive and constructive and not as domineering authority. But there is no way for them to fully avoid the negative aspect because it is understood as not allowing women to teach. The element of control is always present in their use of the phrase. What makes this even more challenging is that this authority is particularly exercised on the basis of gender. This is the only criteria used independent of the quality of service of the woman, her consecration to the Lord, and her commitment to mission.