

POSITION SUMMARY #1

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OUTLINE

Summary Statement	3
Introduction	3
Three Reasons for Our Position	5
The Bible clearly says that the elder must be “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6)	5
The Seventh-day Adventist Church should continue to be Bible-based in all matters of faith and practice	5
Allowing competing methods for interpreting Scripture brings greater disunity	6
Relating the Bible to Culture	7
Principles of Biblical Interpretation	8
The “Bible and the Bible Only” Standard of Interpretation	8
The Bible was Written for Everyone	8
We Must Take the Bible as it Reads	8
Interpretation and the Three Angels’ Messages	9
Application of Principles of Biblical Interpretation to Key Texts	10
Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2 and 3	10
1 Timothy 2	10
1 Timothy 3	13
Implications	14
Relation of Men and Women in 1 Corinthians 11	15
Galatians 3:26–29	16
Male-Female Equality and Difference in Genesis 1 to 3	17
Male-Female Equality in Genesis 1 and 2	17
Male-Female Difference in Genesis 1 and 2	18
Relationship of Man and Woman after the Fall in Genesis 3	20
Biblical Ordination	21
Old Testament	21
New Testament	22
Offices and Gifts	25
The Gift of Pastoring	25
New Testament Church Offices and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit	26
Ordination and the Laying-on of Hands	27
Ordination and Authority	28
The Authority of Ministers	28
The Authority of Elders	28
Ordination and Worldwide Unity	29
A Summary of Biblical Ordination	29
Answers to Some Questions About Ordination	31

POSITION SUMMARY #1

SUMMARY STATEMENT

This document presents the biblical qualifications for ordination to the offices of elder/pastor/minister and examines whether women in ministry should function in these offices.

First it gives the fundamental reason why we understand from Scripture that only certain qualified men may occupy those offices. Next it discusses the principles of how to interpret the Bible and how to apply these principles to 1 Timothy 2 and 3, 1 Corinthians 11, Galatians 3, and Genesis 1 through 3. Then it shows biblical examples of ordination and its practice, the differences between offices and gifts, and the meaning of laying-on of hands; addresses ordination and authority, and ordination and the unity of the church; and offers a response to some arguments in favor of women's ordination.

INTRODUCTION

God calls women to ministry. His service needs their labors, and He is honored when they devote their talents to ministering to the needs of others in His name. They are an essential part of the spiritual forces that Jesus Christ has deployed into the world to conquer for Him.

In both the first-century church and the early Adventist movement, women were important to the functioning and growth of the church. Female believers were called to significant roles in the ministry of Jesus: learning lessons from Him (Luke 10:39), providing financial means for advancing His ministry (Luke 8:3), and supplying moral encouragement during the crucial closing week (John 12:1-8), not least by their determined presence at the cross (Mark 15:40, 41; John 19:25). They were also His witnesses before and after His resurrection (Luke 8:1, 2; 24:9, 10). Jesus asked Mary Magdalene to carry the news to the other disciples (John 20:15-18) and, together with the other women who went to the tomb, she was among the first witnesses to His resurrection (Luke 24:2-10). Despite Jewish cultural sensitivities, Jesus invited women to fulfill these important tasks.

The Bible names other women who worked in local churches: Priscilla (Acts 18:1, 18, 26; 1 Cor 16:9; Rom 16:3), Phoebe (Rom 16:1; cf. 15:25-32), and Mary (16:6). Junia, with Andronicus, was "well-known to the apostles" (v. 7, ESV); Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis "worked hard in the Lord" (v. 12).¹ But there is no clear evidence that any of these women ever exercised a church leadership role. Their labors appear to have been supportive of the

¹ Unless otherwise noted, Bible quotations are from the New King James Version.

work being carried forward by the apostles and other men whom God had called to lead His church. Every worker has an important role to fill, but it is God's empowerment at work that makes no individual more important than another. Equality of service is not incompatible with different roles; we are all servants of Christ, and the glory belongs to God for the growth of the church and the abundant final harvest.

In the Advent movement, women such as Annie Smith, Ellen Lane, S. M. I. Henry, and Hetty Haskell filled important roles in publishing and evangelism, and many others served in conference positions and in various lines of local church work. Ellen White wrote that women "are recognized by God as being necessary to the work of the ministry."² "A mistake is made when the burden of the work is left entirely upon the ministers."³ She explained that women "can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach."⁴ "Through the exercise of womanly tact and a wise use of their knowledge of Bible truth, they can remove difficulties that our brethren cannot meet."⁵ Further, she advocated that women who devote their full time and talents to ministry should be paid from the tithe.⁶ It is clear, then, that Ellen White considered the participation of women in the work of the gospel to be not merely an option but a divine mandate, the neglect of which would result in diminished ministerial efficiency,⁷ fewer converts,⁸ and "great loss" to the cause,⁹ compared to the fruitfulness of the combined gifts of men and women in ministry.

This document upholds the right and duty of women to serve God actively and fully in ministry of various kinds, in harmony with the Bible's guidelines for church leadership. Those guidelines are not to be set aside or ignored. We are convinced that we can remain united as a world church only by remaining faithful to the Church's long-standing biblical position.¹⁰ Simply put, while the Bible and Ellen G. White's writings encourage the active participation of women in the work of the church, in neither of these sources is there any clear support for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry. We believe the Bible is normative for all parts of the world; therefore we cannot support appeals to culture from various world divisions. While those who hold other positions have brought forward seemingly plausible arguments,

2 GW 452.

3 DG 111.

4 WM 145.

5 Ev 491.

6 GW 452-453; Ev 492.

7 Ev 491.

8 Ibid., 472.

9 Ibid., 493.

10 "There is nothing to show early Adventists arguing for women's right to baptize, to preside over the ordinances, to organize local churches—no evidence of any commitment to ordination." David Trim, "The Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Policy and Practice, up to 1972," 7, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/the-ordination-of-women-in-seventh-day-adventist-policy-and-practice.pdf>.

we do not find these arguments to be biblically well founded. This paper explains our own position and summarizes why we cannot accept the arguments of our friends who hold a different position.

THREE REASONS FOR OUR POSITION

There are three vital reasons for the position we hold. First, the Bible seems quite clear on the matter of the ordination of women. Second, we believe that we should continue to have the Bible as our supreme authority in all matters of faith and practice. Third, if we are influenced by culture to depart from a biblical basis for our practice in this area, we are more likely to depart from Scripture in other areas.

THE BIBLE CLEARLY SAYS THAT THE ELDER MUST BE “THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” (1 TIM 3:2; TITUS 1:6)

This instruction was given in two different settings, so it cannot be just a response to a local problem that is not applicable elsewhere. Rather, it is instruction for the church at large for all time (1 Tim 3:15). Furthermore, in 1 Timothy this specification occurs just five verses after instruction restricting women from a certain teaching authority in the church (1 Tim 2:12). Since the church leader described in 3:2 must also be “able to teach,” the prohibition and the requirement seem to be related. Paul restricts the leadership of women in the church on the basis of Adam’s priority in Creation as well as the respective roles of Adam and Eve before and after the Fall (2:13, 14). This grounding of his instruction in the early chapters of Genesis indicates that the matter relates to God’s original plan for human beings and is not just His response to the sin problem. There is something fundamental here that we should not dismiss or ignore.

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE BIBLE-BASED IN ALL MATTERS OF FAITH AND PRACTICE

While the impetus to change our Church’s practice may appear to have arisen in the last 40 years or so, in fact it dates back to societal changes in America that began in the mid-19th century—changes that led many Protestant churches to begin ordaining women to the ministry during that period.¹¹ This campaign was decidedly rejected by the Advent move-

¹¹ The women’s rights movement in America is usually traced to a conference held in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. One of its resolutions called for women clergy. The first known ordained woman in America was Antoinette Louisa Brown, ordained to the Congregational ministry in 1853, and many others followed in many denominations (a partial list: 1853, First Congregational Church; 1863, Wesleyan Methodist Church; 1865, Salvation Army; 1888, Disciples of Christ Church; 1895, National Baptist Convention). Although our church papers discussed the role of women in worship, supporting the right of women to speak and participate in worship, not one article during Ellen White’s lifetime advocated the ordination of women as elders or pastors. Some articles explicitly rejected placing women in those roles. Our pioneers recognized that doing so was not biblical (see, e.g., D. T. Bourdeau, “Spiritual Gifts,” RH 21/1, Dec. 2, 1862: 6; [J. H. Waggoner,] SOT 4/48, Dec. 19, 1878: 380). In recent years, though, some Adventists have taken positions that align with what many other churches have done. The Adventist Church must now decide whether this really is new light that it should follow.

ment.¹² Our Church first took up the matter of ordaining women at the General Conference session in 1881 but declined to make a change. This did not mean Seventh-day Adventist women had no part in gospel work. Before 1881 as well as afterward, Adventist women were actively working for God in such areas as evangelism, medical missionary work, and welfare ministry. They gladly and enthusiastically functioned in these capacities without being ordained.

In Western society today, some within our ranks again feel pressure to be in step with the surrounding culture. We must speak meaningfully to the culture around us, but should this lead us to disregard biblical principles and the clear teaching of Scripture on the leadership of the church? Such a change, we believe, would have serious implications for our unity as a church. It could also have serious consequences for our evangelistic outreach as Bible-believing Christians who accept the Word of God “as the one infallible rule of faith and practice.”¹³

ALLOWING COMPETING METHODS FOR INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE BRINGS GREATER DISUNITY

Seventh-day Adventists generally use the historical-grammatical method of interpretation. In 1986, the Annual Council of Seventh-day Adventists in Rio de Janeiro approved the Methods of Bible Study (MBS) document which outlines the components of the historical-grammatical method. It states that the student should “seek to grasp the simple, most obvious meaning of the biblical passage being studied” (4c). It further advises, “Recognize that the Bible is its own interpreter and that the meaning of words, texts, and passages is best determined by diligently comparing scripture with scripture” (4e). The principles of the historical-grammatical method as found in the MBS are not new; they have been used by Protestants since the time of the Reformation.¹⁴

Recently, the *NAD Theology of Ordination Report* introduced a new method of interpreting the Bible, which is described as a “principle-based, contextual, linguistic and historical-cultural” method or, for short, the “principle-based reading” of Scripture.¹⁵ One of the principles on which this method is based is “the complete reliability and trustworthiness of the Bible in terms of its salvific message. . . .” The report further states: “A plain and literal reading strategy would be sufficient to understand most of the Bible. Yet the committee be-

12 “This judgment that no women have been ordained with the sanction of the organized denomination runs contrary to the trend of much of the recent historiography on women’s ordination in Adventist history, which is written by proponents of ordaining women to gospel ministry. The sheer volume can seem impressive. However, this body of scholarship does not actually prove its case, due to a critical misunderstanding of what early Adventists supported when it came to the involvement of women in the church.” David Trim, “The Ordination of Women,” presented at the second session of TOSC, p. 4, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/the-ordination-of-women-in-seventh-day-adventist-policy-and-practice.pdf>.

13 Ellen G. White, “The Faith that Will Stand the Test,” *Review and Herald*, January 10, 1888, par. 11.

14 This section has been adapted from Gerhard Pfandl, “Evaluation of Egalitarian Papers” (presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, July 22-24, 2013), 10-11, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/evaluation-of-egalitarian-papers.pdf>.

15 See *Theology of Ordination Study Committee Report* (Silver Spring, MD: North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, 2013), 8; see also Kyoshin Ahn, “Hermeneutics and the Ordination of Women,” in NADTOSC Report, 25.

believes that there are occasions when we should employ principle-based reading because the passage calls for an understanding of the historical and contextual setting.”¹⁶ According to the MBS, whenever we interpret or exegete a text we need to take into consideration the context and historical circumstances. Adventists generally use this method when interpreting Scripture. So why is there a need for a new method? The differences between the two methods are twofold. In contrast to the historical-grammatical method, the “principle-based reading” of Scripture sees the Bible as reliable and trustworthy only in matters of salvation, and there is a strong emphasis on Scripture as culturally conditioned. In regard to the ordination of women, with the help of the “principle-based reading” method, all the texts used to support the church’s longstanding view are reinterpreted to allow for the ordination of women as elders and pastors/ministers.¹⁷ In other words, a “principle-based reading” helps advance the effort to ordain women. However, it does so at the cost of reinterpreting Scripture in harmony with modern cultural preferences, which raises the issue of relating the Bible to culture.

RELATING THE BIBLE TO CULTURE

Regarding cultural issues, the Bible itself provides us the key as to how to handle them. For example, while some Evangelical Christians would classify the Sabbath as a temporary, cultural institution, Genesis 2:1-3 and Exodus 20:11 show that it originated as part of God’s perfect plan for humanity and is therefore applicable in all cultures and for all time. Circumcision began with God’s command to Abraham. Like the presence of the temple, it was no guarantee of God’s favor without a right covenant relationship (Jer 4:4; cf. 21:10-12; 22:5). In fact, the time would come when God would treat the circumcised like the uncircumcised (Jer 9:25; cf. 1 Cor 7:18, 19). The New Testament teaches that baptism (John 3:3-8; Col 2:11-13) represents the reality symbolized by circumcision (Deut 30:6; 10:6)—a change of heart and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:7-11; Rom 2:28, 29). Unlike circumcision, baptism is for either gender. It symbolizes the believer being washed from sin, identifying with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and accepting Him as Savior (Rom 6). Furthermore, the command to baptize is given in a universal setting (“all nations,” Matt 28:19), indicating its applicability worldwide and throughout history. By contrast, circumcision was the sign of Jewish identity. In addition, such institutions as slavery and polygamy, though tolerated in Scripture, are never commanded there. Instead, based on Bible principles, these practices have subsequently been rejected by the church.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

THE “BIBLE AND THE BIBLE ONLY” STANDARD OF INTERPRETATION

From the beginning, Seventh-day Adventists have maintained the motto, “the Bible and the Bible only.” On the interpretation of Scripture we are in harmony with the Protestant Reformers, who regarded the Bible as the final authority for doctrine and practice. The Bible claims that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16, 17).

Ellen G. White affirms that “*the Bible must be our standard for every doctrine and practice. . . . It is the word of the living God that is to decide all controversies.*”¹⁸ As the Bible is the standard for every practice, it does not leave us to wonder who should be ordained to the biblical leadership offices and whether women qualify for the offices of elder or minister.

The Bible was Written for Everyone. In studying the question of ordination, it is important to know the purpose and audience of the Bible. Ellen White writes, “The Bible was given for practical purposes.”¹⁹ It “was written for the common people as well as for scholars, and is within the comprehension of all.”²⁰ The Bible “was designed for the common people, and the interpretation given by the common people, when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus.”²¹

Surely the matter at hand, regarding leadership in the church and ordination for it, is included in these statements. The priesthood of all believers that Peter notes (1 Pet 2:9) implies full access to the Bible by all believers and a Spirit-guided ability to understand it.

We Must Take the Bible as it Reads. When opponents disputed with Jesus, He questioned them about the Scriptures: “What is written in the Law?” he asked. “How do you read it?” (Luke 10:26, NIV). Jesus pointed out that the way we read the Scriptures is important in understanding its truths. Ellen White expresses similar thoughts, showing how to determine whether to take a word, text, or passage literally or symbolically. “The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed.”²² The MBS says, “Seek to grasp the simple, most obvious meaning of the biblical passage being studied.”²³

18 1888 44-45.

19 ISM 20.

20 RH, Jan. 27, 1885; CSW 23.

21 5T 331.

22 GC 599.

23 MBS, section 4c

INTERPRETATION AND THE THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES

Adventists interpret the Bible guided by their understanding of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12. In 1844 the Protestant churches in America rejected the first angel's message with its warning to prepare for the Second Advent. As a result of this rejection, Jesus directed Adventists to the second angel's message and made them aware that Babylon had fallen, indicating that the moral fall of the non-Adventist churches had become a reality.²⁴ Since 1844 when the churches rejected the present truth, there has been a rise of the historical-critical method of Bible study among Christians. Consequently, these fallen churches have departed progressively farther from the Word of God.²⁵

One area of departure involves a campaign that arose for women clergy in America as part of the larger women's rights movement, starting in 1848, which we have noted already. These historical facts, as well as the counsel of Ellen White referred to above, should be a warning to Adventists to be very cautious about adopting teachings and practices from non-biblical sources. Ellen White warns, "Satan will use every advantage that he can obtain to cause souls to become beclouded and perplexed in regard to [1] *the work of the church*, in regard to [2] *the word of God*, and in regard to [3] *the words of warning which He has given through the testimonies of His Spirit*, to guard His little flock from the subtleties of the enemy."²⁶ The issue of women's ordination affects all three of these areas, endangering the mission of the Remnant Church. The seriousness of this matter is illustrated by the fact that all sides of the issue claim the support of the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White for their views. This claim of equal validity has the effect of neutralizing these divinely inspired sources, leading us to think that we cannot look to them for solutions. However, as Ellen White reminds us, God's Word "is to decide all controversies."²⁷

²⁴ EW 235, 237-240, 247; GC 381, 388-390.

²⁵ Ibid., 273, 274; GC 389.

²⁶ SpT"B" Nos. 2, 9, emphasis and bracketed numerals added.

²⁷ 1888 45.

APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION TO KEY TEXTS

INTERPRETATION OF 1 TIMOTHY 2 AND 3

At the heart of the ordination debate lies Paul's gender-specific counsel of 1 Timothy 2-3. The apostle crisply states the purpose behind his counsel: "These things I write to you . . . that you may know how you ought to [Greek *dei*, "must"] conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3:14, 15).

1 Timothy 2. Paul begins 1 Timothy 2 by indicating that prayer is to be offered for all people. He gives several reasons: God is the Savior of all, He desires all people to be saved, and Christ gave Himself as a ransom for all (2:1-6; 4:10). This gender-inclusive language shows that elsewhere, when Paul discusses the respective roles of men and women, his use of the gender-specific terms "man" (*anēr*) and "woman" (*gynē*) is deliberate. Men are to lead out in prayer and worship (1 Tim 2:8); women are to submit to God's arrangement, whereby they are not to be placed over men as the teaching authority in the church (1 Tim 2:11, 12). These instructions are designed to promote harmony in worship by following God's order for the church.

The structure of 1 Timothy 2 and 3 includes clearly gender-specific sections: men (2:8), women (2:9-15), male elders (3:1-7), male deacons (3:8-10), women (3:11), male deacons (3:12, 13). Paul's mandate in 2:11 is gender-specific: "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission." In Acts 22:2 and 2 Thessalonians 3:12, "silence" or "quietness" emphasizes respect and the humble pursuit of relational peace and harmony. Here and elsewhere in Paul's writings (1 Cor 14:34; Eph 5:21; Col 3:18; Titus 2:5), "submission" sensibly governs male-female relations. In context it always takes place within the framework of divine authority and submission to God; it does not refer to an abusive subordination of all women to all men.

Paul then expands his mandate: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence" (1 Tim 2:12). Rather than providing instruction just for a supposed isolated local situation (in Ephesus, where Timothy was working), Paul's wording ("I do not permit") underscores the universal nature of the apostle's mandate. This prohibition against women teaching does not target false teaching, as in 1 Timothy 6:3, which uses the specific term *heterodidaskaleō*, "teach something different." Throughout Paul's letters, teaching means positive instruction (1 Tim 3:2; 4:11; 6:2; 2 Tim 2:2). Paul is not requiring complete silence. Women may pray and prophesy (1 Cor 11:5) and engage in much-needed personal ministry (e.g., Aquila and Priscilla, Acts 18:26). They are also encouraged to bring up godly children (1 Tim 5:10, 14), and older women should instruct younger women (Titus 2:3-5).

Since the Greek phrase translated “to have authority over a man” (1 Tim 2:12) is used only once in the Bible, it cannot be defined by examining occurrences elsewhere. But the immediate context makes its meaning clear:

TEACHING AND LEARNING	SUBMISSION AND AUTHORITY
“Let a woman learn in silence	with all submission
And I do not permit a woman to teach	or to have authority over a man,
but to be in silence.”	

Sandwiching the prohibition of teaching and having authority over a man between two admonitions of silence clearly puts these phrases in relation to one another. Learning and not teaching are parallel counterparts, as are “submission” and not having “authority.” The logical complement of women learning is men teaching, and consequently the complement of submission to God’s plan for church order is for a woman not to have authority over a man by occupying the office of elder.

Here and elsewhere in Paul’s writings (1 Cor 14:34; Eph 5:21; Col 3:18; Titus 2:5), “submission” governs male-female relations, not only in the home but also in the church, which is “the household of God” (1 Tim 3:15, ESV). Such submission is always to be understood within the framework of divine authority and submission to God; it does not refer to an abusive subordination of all women to all men. Rather than providing instruction just for a supposed isolated local situation (in Ephesus, where Timothy was working), Paul’s wording (“I do not permit”) underscores its universal application. It does not target false teaching, as in 1 Timothy 6:3, which uses the specific term *heterodidaskaleō*, “teach something different.” Throughout Paul’s letters teaching means positive instruction (1 Tim 3:2; 4:11; 6:2; 2 Tim 2:2). He indicates that women may pray and prophesy during the worship service (1 Cor 11:5) and engage in much-needed personal ministry (e.g., Aquila and Priscilla, Acts 18:26). Thus, they are not prohibited from all teaching.²⁸

Paul bases key points of his instruction on information from Genesis 2 and 3, giving two reasons for male leadership in the church:

1. The order of creation: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Tim 2:13). By reaching back to Genesis 1 and 2, Paul bases his argument on a universal principle of creation, not culture or a concern for mission. While both man and woman were made in the image of God and thus are equal in nature (Gen 1:26, 27), Adam was created first (Gen 2:7, 18-

²⁸ They are also to help raise godly children and the older women in the church are to teach the younger women (1 Tim 5:10, 14; 2 Tim 1:5; 3:15; Titus 2:3-5).

24). It is the woman who is brought to the man (Gen 2:22) and, subsequently, the man is the one who is to initiate a new family entity (Gen 2:24). God presents Eve to Adam as a helper for him, not the other way around (Gen 2:18). The creation dynamics designed by God underline the distinctions between a man and a woman and, with these distinctions, a difference of roles.²⁹ Equality of personhood is never in question, nor is man ever given license to abuse his authority.

2. The nature of the deception: “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression” (1 Tim 2:14). Genesis 3, in recounting the sad history of the Fall, describes the overthrow of selfless male leadership: the serpent talks to the woman as if she were the head and representative of the family; the woman accepts the role accorded her by the serpent.³⁰ Significantly, it was a questioning of the word of God—“Has God really said?” (Gen 3:1, NIV)—that led her into being deceived. The man’s activity and initiative had been the focus in Genesis 2, but now, in chapter 3, the woman takes the initiative. She *reasons* to a decision, takes of the forbidden fruit, eats it, and gives some of it to Adam (v. 6). In short, there is a total reversal of the principle of leadership based on the creation order. The man ate the fruit second, following the initiative and example of the woman. Paul points to the respective roles of men and women established at creation and the consequences that followed the reversal of that leadership role as the Scriptural basis for preserving male teaching authority in the church.

Significantly, Paul places the responsibility for the fall of humankind on Adam, not Eve (Rom 5:12-19; 1 Cor 15:22), again confirming Adam’s leadership role. Several facts from Genesis already make this point: the realization of nakedness comes to the pair only after the man eats the fruit; God seeks out Adam (“Where are you?” in the Hebrew of Genesis 3:9 refers only to the man); and God holds the man primarily responsible as His questioning makes clear (vs. 10, 11). Adam’s role as head of the first home and spiritual leader of the human family is reaffirmed after the Fall (Gen 3:16). Even after the cross, these gender-specific stipulations remain intact: “the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” (Eph 5:23, 24). The fact that Paul bases this instruction on the relation of man and woman before the Fall shows its validity also for us today.

Paul’s instruction safeguards the family. Within the context of faith in Christ and submission to God’s will, a man is to have an important role as the spiritual leader of the home. His teaching and example are to have a positive influence; he must not be dictatorial, de-

²⁹ 6T 236: “Under God, Adam was to stand at the head of the earthly family to maintain the principles of the heavenly family.”

³⁰ Cf. Con 13-14, amplifying Genesis 3:5, includes the deeper issue of power among the temptations: the serpent claimed the prohibition “was given to keep them [Adam and Eve] in such a state of subordination that they should not obtain knowledge, which was power.”

meaning, or indulgent. That is why Paul insists that a man's eligibility for church leadership be based on key character qualities and his successful spiritual leadership in the home (1 Tim 3:2-5). At a time when culture is fast redefining gender and challenging the very fabric of the family, the church would do well to follow the wise directives of the Word of God in the relations between men and women, as well as in all other matters of faith and practice.

1 Timothy 3. Based on this understanding of Genesis, in 1 Timothy 3 Paul turns to the matter of elders. This was an important subject for him, and more especially for the church. Elsewhere Paul wrote to Titus that he “should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city” (Titus 1:5). Detailed instructions are given to Timothy and Titus as to the qualifications for the elder, who is God's steward (Titus 1:7).

Regarding the historical background of these instructions, there is no evidence in the epistle itself or from first-century historical sources to think that the church situation Timothy faced in Ephesus was somehow unique or that 1 Timothy is primarily addressing a problem in the local church there. Unlike Paul's other epistles, which are clearly addressed to individual churches and their local situations, the epistles to Timothy and Titus are addressed to ministers. These men did not stay in one place to serve a single congregation only; Paul expected them to apply these instructions wherever churches were established (Titus 1:5). If any of Paul's epistles were meant as general instructions for the church at large, it is these—especially in view of indications Paul gave that his life might soon be cut short (2 Tim 4:6).

Throughout the discussion of church officers in 1 Timothy 3, Paul uses very specific language. He employs the technical terms “overseer” (*episkopos*) and “deacon” (*diakonos*). He also uses the words “man” and “woman” in their most specific sense of “husband” and “wife.” Thus, a clear progression can be seen in 1 Timothy 2-3 from general terms (“all people”) in 2:1-6 to more specific (“men” and “women”) in 2:8-15 to most specific (“husband of one wife”) in 3:2, 12 (cf. Titus 1:6). The overseer/elder “must be” (*dei . . . einai*) the husband of one wife because he is responsible for the oversight of teaching and instruction in the word (3:2; Titus 1:7).

The use of the generic “anyone” (*tis*) in verse 1 does not negate the gender specification; rather, the gender specification “husband of one wife” limits who qualifies. First Timothy 3:1 speaks of an office (*episcopē*) to be occupied. The following verses reveal that only a man who meets special qualifications can fill that position. A woman does not meet the gender qualification and consequently cannot be ordained to the office of overseer or elder (terms Paul used interchangeably in Titus 1:5-9).³¹ If Paul had meant to allow for women to be included among the elders, he could have specified both possibilities, as we see him doing extensively elsewhere in terms of the husband-wife relationship (1 Cor 7:1-16). Thus, “husband of one wife” means just what it says: that an elder must be a man who is married to one wife, as 56

31 See Sorke, “Adam, Where Are You?” 31, 32, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/adam,-where-are-you.pdf>.

of 61 English translations consulted (including the most recent) show.³² The recognition of this masculine element by so many teams of translators through the years up to the present is eloquent testimony that on this point Paul is clear and unambiguous. Only four translations, intent on gender neutrality, depart from the widely agreed and established meaning of the phrase “husband of one wife.”

The qualifications given for the elder in 1 Timothy 3:2-5 focus on the *kind of person* he is at home, in the church, and in society. Paul points out that only those who meet the qualifications he sets forth should lead God’s church. These qualifications are that a church leader, specifically an overseer or elder, is to be a faithful husband of one wife who gives evidence of successful leadership in his own family, which qualifies him to fulfill the leadership office in “the house of God,” the church (1 Tim 3:15), which is made up of many families. In addition, he is to be blameless, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach, to exhort and convict by sound doctrine those who contradict, and to have a good reputation with outsiders, among other stated qualifications (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-7). It is obvious that not all qualify for the sacred calling of leading a church congregation, but only men who have a proven record of successful leadership in the home and have a high spiritual commitment and a godly moral lifestyle. A man’s fitness for leadership in the church is based on how well he has managed his home. The mention of children at the end of verse 4 (“having his children in submission with all reverence”) tells the church where to look for supporting evidence for the qualification in the first half of the verse (“one who rules his own house well”). This is important because “if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?” (v. 5).

It is true that we live in a less than ideal world. This causes us to elect elders who may not meet every ideal of the biblical qualifications. Some are less “temperate” than others; some engage in more or less “good behavior;” some are more or less “hospitable;” etc. These qualifications are measured in degrees. Where degrees are involved, it is not safe for us to draw arbitrary lines when Scripture has not given us guidance. But it is not so with the fundamental requirement of gender. Men are not more or less male. Gender is not measured in degrees. It is a clear, unambiguous requirement that gives us no room for misinterpretation or misunderstanding.

Implications. Although 1 Timothy 3:2 excludes women from the office of overseer or elder, nothing prevents them from continuing to serve the church in many different capacities, assuming they are willing to work in cooperation with the leadership authority that God has established for the church and not try to undermine it or call it into question. The biblical principle of godly male leadership in both the home and the church is to be carried out in loving service under the lordship of Christ “as is fitting in the Lord” (Col 3:18).

32 See Wahlen, “Is ‘Husband of One Wife’ in 1 Timothy 3:2 Gender-Specific?,” 29-30, 35-39.

RELATION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN 1 CORINTHIANS 11

Another place where Paul touches on the relationship of men and women in the church is 1 Corinthians 11, where the context is division and disorder in the church. In the previous chapter, Paul asks the Corinthians to give no offense to the church of God (10:32), and he cites himself as a model (10:33-11:1).

Verse 3 establishes the principle: “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” In the sequence, Paul places the relationship of the man and woman between the headship of Christ over man and the headship of God (the Father) over Christ, indicating that it is just as valid as the other two headship relationships. Since neither of those other two relationships can be challenged, the relationship God has established between the sexes cannot be challenged either. In fact, 1 Corinthians 15:28 shows that the headship of God over Christ continues even in the new creation, far beyond the reign of sin.

Verses 4 and 5 point out that this principle applies to conduct in the church. Verses 7-9 provide the biblical and theological rationale for this principle: man “is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.” Paul is here pointing to the order and purpose in the creation of man and woman as the reason why man is the head of the woman and why the application of the principle is different for men than it is for women. The man was created first, for the glory of God, whereas the woman was created second, for the glory of the man, as “a helper comparable to him” (Gen 2:18). Thus, when women appear in God’s presence, they are to show their reverence for God differently: every man’s head is Christ, but the woman’s head is man, so the man should not cover his head, which represents Christ, but the woman ought to cover her head, as a symbol of her submission to the headship authority that God has established in the church. The text provides no evidence for a local, cultural reason for male headship. Although respect for authority may be expressed differently in Adam’s day, in Paul’s Corinth, or in today’s societies, wherever the principle is honored it will show respect towards God’s plan for leadership in the home and in the church.

Verse 10 adds an important fact to the rationale in verses 7 through 9—that the head covering is a symbol of authority: “For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head.” This clarifies what the issue is: that the woman is operating under someone else’s authority. The principle of submission to godly headship in the church remains valid, even if the outward symbol of a woman’s submission to this headship authority (a head covering) may be expressed differently in many cultures today.

Verses 11 and 12 warn against abuse of headship privileges, reminding the men that they are not independent of the women, but that just “as woman came from man, even so man

also comes through woman; but all things are from God.” This interdependency is different from the non-reciprocal relationship of male headship, and it clearly shows that Paul is not limiting his concern to husbands and wives within the home, but speaks of men and women in general since the husband does not come into existence through his wife, but a man comes into existence through his mother.

A few chapters later, Paul discusses disorderly conduct in the church. For the sake of those who wish to debate his instruction, he adds: “If anyone thinks that he is a prophet or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized” (14:37, 38, ESV). Thus Paul excludes any basis for challenging his teaching.

GALATIANS 3:26-29

Galatians 3:26-29 addresses the relationship between God and his people. Every verse focuses on this connection: “For you are all *sons of God* through faith in Christ Jesus (v. 26). For as many of you as were *baptized into Christ* have put on Christ (v. 27). There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave or free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all *one in Christ Jesus* (v. 28). And *if you are Christ’s*, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise (v. 29).”³³

Paul does not write that in Christ “man is no longer the head of the woman” or that “males and females can now serve as elders/overseers in the church.” Such statements would conflict with his own testimony in 1 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 5:22-33, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, and Titus 1:5-9. Paul’s point is clear: not ethnicity, economic circumstances, nor gender grant one person a privileged status over another before God.

Furthermore, the cross did not erase the functional distinctions that God established before sin. Man is still to fulfill the role of the father and husband and woman the role of the mother. The wife must still submit to the loving headship of her husband “in the Lord,” and husbands must still love their wives (Eph 5:22-25). There is no hint in Galatians 3:28 or its context to indicate that Paul was addressing roles in the home or in the church.

The context of Galatians 3 indicates that Paul was addressing the issues of justification, baptism into Christ, and the reception of the Spirit at the *beginning* of the Christian life, not offices or leadership positions in the church. If we wish to know what Paul had to say about qualifications for church leadership offices, we must go to the places where he addresses these specific issues in the pastoral epistles of First Timothy and Titus.

The New Testament passages on leadership and male-female relations within the church consistently indicate a God-appointed plan for qualified men to lead the church. As Ellen White states, “The Scriptures are plain upon the relations and rights of men and women.”³⁴

³³ Emphasis added.

³⁴ 1T 421.

MALE-FEMALE EQUALITY AND DIFFERENCE IN GENESIS 1 TO 3

As we have seen, Paul establishes his understanding of leadership in the home and in the church based on the early chapters of Genesis. His interpretation reveals inspired insight into the meaning of these passages. Paul is not placing a construction on them that is foreign to their original setting. In God's kingdom, the relationships among human beings are designed to reflect the relationships among the Godhead and among the angels, which are characterized by equality as well as functional differences.³⁵

Male-Female Equality in Genesis 1 and 2. The first chapters of the Bible present the divine design for the relationships between men and women. The first chapter of the book of Genesis reveals that *both male and female were created in the image of God*. The scriptural record states, "God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.' . . . So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen 1:26, 27). They were commanded to be fruitful and multiply, to populate the earth and subdue it, and to exercise dominion over all living things (Gen 1:26-28).

This chapter shows that both male and female have a basic equality of nature, essence, or being, because both are created in the image of God. This view is in harmony with the plain teaching of the apostle Paul with regard to the equal value of men and women as heirs of salvation (Gal 3:26-29).³⁶

Genesis 2 builds on Genesis 1, revealing a relationship between godly men and women that is derived from the way in which God created man first and then created the woman from the man. "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: 'This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh'" (Gen 2:21-23). Ellen White comments on this event:

God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided "an help meet for him"—a helper corresponding to him—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second

35 EW 167. For these functional differences, see Jerry Moon, "Ellen White, Ordination, and Authority" (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, July 22-24, 2013), 3-6, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/ellen-white,-ordination,-and-authority.pdf>; Damsteegt, "Headship, Gender, and Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White" (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, July 22-24, 2013), 10-14, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/headship,-gender,-and-ordination-in-the-writings-of-ellen-g.-white.pdf>.

36 For an exposition on Galatians 2:28, see Stephen Bohr, "A Study of 1 Peter 2:9, 10 and Galatians 3:28" (presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, July 22-24, 2013), <http://www.adventistarchives.org/a-study-of-i-peter-2.9,-10-and-galatians-3.28.pdf>.

self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it." Ephesians 5:29. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one."³⁷

This statement shows that the woman is to stand by the man's side as an equal—not to be inferior or superior, but equal to the man. Ellen White further adds, "The holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other; and yet each had an individuality in thinking and acting."³⁸

The above statement on the importance of equality also introduces the concept that Adam and Eve have differences in function. The first Ellen White statement quoted above indicates that even in pre-Fall Eden, with no threat of physical harm, one of Adam's tasks was to protect his companion, who was "to be loved and protected by him."³⁹ Nowhere does it state that Eve must protect Adam. Knowing the future, God brought Eve to Adam because she was created for him and from him. This indicates an important distinction in roles between male and female.

Male-Female Difference in Genesis 1 and 2. While Genesis 1 indicates that God made human beings physically different, as "male and female,"⁴⁰ the second chapter explains in detail how this creation, with functional differences, took place and the responsibilities given to the man before the woman was even created. It describes the formation of the man from the dust, (Gen 2:7), the garden God prepared and the responsibility He gave to the man "to tend and keep it" (2:15), the command concerning what he could eat (2:16), and the warning about the forbidden tree (2:17). After this God brought the animals and birds to Adam and gave him the responsibility to name them. "And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name" (2:19). As a result, Adam discovered his own need of a companion: "There was not found a helper corresponding to him" (2:20). So "the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept, and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. From this rib the Lord God made a woman and brought her to the man" (2:21, 22), giving to Adam the privilege also of naming his companion: "She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man," he said (2:23).

Based on this divinely-established relationship between Adam and Eve, God indicates also that in the marriage relationship the man is to take the initiative, leave his family, and be joined to his wife (Gen 2:24). At this time Eve considers Adam "her husband" (Gen 3:6).

³⁷ PP 46.

³⁸ 3T 484.

³⁹ PP 46.

⁴⁰ About their physical differences, Ellen White writes, "Eve was not quite as tall as Adam. Her head reached a little above his shoulders" (3SG 34).

Ellen White interprets the term “husband” to mean “he is the house-band of the family, binding the members together, even as Christ is the head of the church and the Saviour of the mystical body [Eph 5:23].”⁴¹ Thus the internal evidence within Genesis prior to Adam’s fall reveals his leadership role and his responsibility toward the woman.

What type of relationship existed between the man and the woman at this time? Here we need to follow the important rule of interpretation by consulting the whole Bible to see if there are any other references indicating the relationship between the man and the woman in Genesis 2 before sin, because “the New Testament explains the Old.”⁴² We return to 1 Corinthians 11, where Paul points out that Adam and Eve’s relationship before the Fall was based on a headship/leadership principle that already existed within the Godhead. Within the context of faith, Paul wants believers to know that “the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3).

The New Testament brings out further evidence regarding these relationships. In 1 Timothy, referring to Genesis 2, Paul illustrates the leadership principle with the creation of the man. In connection with order in the church, “the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15), Paul writes that he does not permit women to teach or “to have authority [KJV: “to usurp authority”] over the man” (1 Tim 2:12), “for Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Tim 2:13).

The New Testament’s explanation of the relationship between the man and the woman before sin clearly teaches that the man has been given the leadership function in the home and in the church. As headship and submission are principles in heaven (1 Cor 11:3), so on earth human beings have been created to reflect the image of God.

In the following statements Ellen White confirms Adam’s role in the Garden of Eden: “Under God, Adam was to stand at the head of the earthly family, to maintain the principles of the heavenly family;”⁴³ “Adam was appointed by God to be monarch of the world, under the supervision of the Creator;”⁴⁴ “The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the father and representative of the whole human family;”⁴⁵ “Adam was lord in his beautiful domain.”⁴⁶ Although both were given dominion over the earth (Gen 1:26, 27), the leadership in this relationship was given to Adam. “Adam was crowned king in Eden. To him was given dominion over every living thing that God had created. The Lord blessed Adam and Eve with intelligence such as He had not given to any other creature. He made Adam the rightful sovereign over all the

41 AH 215.

42 Ev 578.

43 CT 33; See also 6T 236.

44 White, “Marriage in Galilee,” BE Aug. 28, 1899 (cf. ST Apr. 29, 1875). See also RH Feb. 24, 1874.

45 PP 48.

46 FE 38.

works of His hands.⁴⁷ Co-equal leadership roles and titles for Adam and Eve are completely missing from the inspired writings. Adam alone is designated as the head.⁴⁸

Both the Bible and the writings of Ellen White present Adam as having the leadership role in terms of the man-woman relationship and even in terms of their dominion over the earth before the Fall. What do the inspired writings tell us about their relationship after the Fall?

RELATIONSHIP OF MAN AND WOMAN AFTER THE FALL IN GENESIS 3

After the Fall, Adam's headship role became even more pronounced. It was only after Adam, as leader, followed his wife in the path of disobedience and sinned that their eyes were opened and they realized their sinful condition and resulting nakedness (Gen 3:7). Next God came down to question Adam (not Eve) as the responsible leader (3:9-12). Then He addressed the woman (3:13). Finally God pronounced judgment on each party, beginning with the serpent and his ultimate defeat (3:14, 15). Adam received the death penalty, which consequently affected every living being (Rom 5:12). Then he was expelled from the Garden, his wife following him.

The Fall of Adam and Eve brought a change to their relationship. The punishment God put upon the woman was pain in childbirth and that "your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen 3:16). Just as pain entered into the experience of childbirth as a result of sin, so we observe a change in the way the headship principle would function. Before the Fall, there was a harmonious relationship in which Eve gladly and willingly accepted Adam's godly leadership, submitting without resentment or duress. However, once their relationship was broken and distorted by sin, it was necessary for God to enforce Adam's role by way of command. The principle itself had not changed, but the woman must now accept his "rule over" her (Gen 3:16), although her new sin-borne desire was to rule over him (note the similar meaning of the terms in the close parallel a few verses later, in Gen 4:7).⁴⁹ The change was not in terms of two pre-Fall heads being reduced to one but in moving from a harmonious, willing cooperation with Adam's leadership to a different relationship that would include tension within the human family between the two genders. As a result, harmony could only be preserved by the (now unnatural) submission of the woman to the man, since there can be only one head/leader in any relationship. Otherwise, there would be constant and open conflict over authority.

⁴⁷ White, *Redemption; or the Temptation of Christ*, 7; also in 1BC 1082

⁴⁸ See John W. Peters, "Restoration of the Image of God: Headship and Submission" (presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Jan. 21-25, 2014), 9, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/restoration-of-the-image-of-god-headship-and-submission-john-peters.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Paul Ratsara and Daniel K. Bediako, "Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3: Ontological Equality and Role Differentiation" (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, July 22-24, 2013), <http://www.adventistarchives.org/man-and-woman-in-genesis-one-thru-three.pdf>.

This authority within the home (as also within the family of faith) is given by God, but must never be demanded, used autocratically, or in an abusive manner. Rather, it should be expressed in loving care for the wife, “just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” (Eph 5:25). That is the nature of headship authority as modeled by God and Christ (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:22, 33).

To Adam God said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife” and eaten from the forbidden tree, the earth will be cursed and you will die (Gen 3:17, 19). Comparing scripture with scripture, we notice that the New Testament also teaches that Adam, as the leader, was responsible for the entrance of sin into the human race, not Eve, despite her being the first to transgress God’s command. “Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life” (Rom 5:18). Clearly, Paul’s contrasting of Adam’s role with that of Christ is rooted in the fact that Adam was the responsible leader. Even though Adam followed the leadership of his wife in disobedience, the Bible continues to honor Adam’s role as head of the human race and of his family.

In subsequent generations, following this divine design of headship, husbands occupied similar leadership roles. Ellen White writes, “In early times the father was the ruler and priest of his own family, and he exercised authority over his children. . . . His descendants were taught to look up to him as their head, in both religious and secular matters.”⁵⁰ Abraham, representative of God’s truth and father of true believers, followed this divine pattern. Ellen White adds, “This patriarchal system of government Abraham endeavored to perpetuate, as it tended to preserve the knowledge of God.”⁵¹ With Israel’s Exodus from Egypt, God established the nation of Israel as His kingdom on earth and appointed men to lead His people. From that time onward, we are introduced to the concept of ordination, which means installing qualified men for service in leadership offices so that they might guide God’s people under His direction.

BIBLICAL ORDINATION

OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament records instances of special appointments to leadership. Although recent translations of the Bible do not use the terms “ordain” or “ordination,” the concept is present throughout Scripture. Many, including Ellen White, have used this term to refer to these appointments to positions of authority among the people of God. While Moses (and

⁵⁰ PP 141.

⁵¹ Ibid.

later Joshua) carried the primary leadership responsibility in Israel, representing a unique combination of religious and civil leadership roles, the office within Israel most illustrative for our understanding of ordination is that of the priesthood. Unlike the civil leadership offices of judge and, later, king, the priest was responsible for leading Israel in worship and religious instruction. Therefore, the priest represents the closest parallel to the leadership offices of the New Testament church.⁵² Shortly after the Exodus from Egypt, God selected Aaron and his sons to lead out in the religious services of the sanctuary. Through a special ceremony during which Moses was to anoint them with oil, they were sanctified or set apart, and consecrated to occupy the office of priest (Exod 29:1-37; Lev 8). In addition, there were Levites who were set apart by the laying-on of hands (Num 8:10) and elders who fulfilled somewhat lesser roles as religious leaders.

In addition to these various leadership roles, the Old Testament identifies a number of women who were influential in Israel, including the prophetesses Miriam, Huldah, and Deborah (who also judged⁵³ the people), and Queen Esther. Although none of these women functioned in the office of priest or elder or were ordained, God used them powerfully, and they fulfilled vital roles at particular times in Israel's history.

NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament mentions the setting apart or ordination of individuals in the appointment of the twelve apostles, the seven deacons, Paul and Barnabas, Timothy, and the elders and deacons. Here is the origin of the New Testament practice of ordination in the early Christian church. The New Testament writers used various Greek words for appointment. Some Bible versions translate them "ordain" while others use different words, but the idea of ordination, installation to a specific office, remains in the text (e.g., Mark 3:14; Titus 1:5).⁵⁴

52 Throughout Scripture, prophets, both men and women, are raised up intermittently by God Himself to communicate His inspired word to the people. As messengers of the Lord, they did not hold an office as such, nor were they ordained by human hands. God called and sent them at particular times in the history of His people when there was need for more direct divine guidance. Similarly, in modern times, God raised up Ellen White as His messenger. According to the Ellen G. White Estate, while ministerial credentials were voted for her by the Michigan conference and, later, by the General Conference, "she was never ordained by human hands, nor did she ever perform a wedding, organize a church, or conduct a baptism" (DG 248). Ellen White, referring in 1911 to her own call to service, wrote the following: "In the city of Portland the Lord ordained me as His messenger, and here my first labors were given to the cause of present truth" (*ibid.*, 252). The White Estate adds: "It will be recalled that Ellen White was given her first vision in December 1844, in Portland, Maine. Shortly thereafter she was prompted by the Lord to tell others what she had seen" (*ibid.*).

53 "Deborah gave 'judgment' (Hebrew *mishpāt*) to the people privately when they came to her. When the text says that 'Deborah ... was judging Israel at that time' (Judges 4:4), the Hebrew verb *shāpbat*, 'to judge,' in this context does not mean 'to rule or govern,' but rather has the sense 'decide controversy, discriminate between persons in civil, political, domestic and religious questions.' That is evident because the next verse tells how she was 'judging': she 'used to sit ... under the palm tree of Deborah' and 'the people of Israel came up to her for judgment.' This is not a picture of public leadership like that of a king or queen, but private settling of disputes through both arbitration and judicial decisions. If we decide to take this as an example for today, we might see it as justification for women to serve as counselors and as civil judges. But the text of Scripture does not say that Deborah ruled over God's people." Laurel Damsteegt, "Women of Influence" (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Jan. 21-25, 2014), 14-15 (quoting Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* [Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers Inc., 2004], 133 [italics are Grudem's]). <http://www.adventistarchives.org/women-of-the-old-testament.pdf>.

54 Edwin E. Reynolds and Clinton Wahlen, "The Minority Report," in the North American Division *Theology of Ordination Study Committee Report* (November 2013), 203, <http://static.squarespace.com/static/50d0e4be4b0ccb6af5fdd33/t/527970c2e4b039a2e8329354/1383690434980/nad-ordination-14-minority.pdf>.

The first major step in the organization of the New Testament church was Jesus' ordination of the twelve apostles, mirroring the establishment of the Old Testament church and its foundation of the twelve patriarchs, the sons of Jacob. Jesus showed the importance He placed on the apostles' ordination by praying all night prior to this momentous event. Then Jesus set apart the twelve apostles from the larger group of disciples. Ellen White wrote, "It was at the ordination of the Twelve that the first step was taken in the organization of the church that after Christ's departure was to carry on His work on the earth. Of this ordination the record says, 'He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach.' Mark 3:13, 14."⁵⁵ On this occasion "Christ appointed them as His representatives, and gave them their ordination charge, their commission."⁵⁶

Later, Jesus explained that it was He who chose these men for their specific function of leading out in establishing the New Testament church (John 15:16). Here it becomes clear that God's call comes first; then, after the individual responds, follows the appointment to a specific office. The apostles were selected, appointed, or ordained for a specific work of preaching, casting out demons, and healing (Matt 10:1, 7, 8).

Because Jesus often laid His hands on people for healing and blessings, it seems natural that He did so during the ordination of the Twelve. The Bible records a similar practice used in the setting apart of the Levites and Joshua (Num 8:10; 27:18). Ellen White confirmed that Jesus "gathered the little band close about Him, and kneeling in the midst of them, and laying His hands upon their heads, He offered a prayer dedicating them to His sacred work. Thus the Lord's disciples were *ordained* to the gospel ministry."⁵⁷

The second major step in church organization took place with the ordination of the seven "deacons." To resolve tensions over equitable distribution of aid to the church's widows, at the apostles' instruction the believers chose seven men to oversee the matter and brought them "before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them." The ordination of these men by the apostles contributed to the unity and rapid growth of the church (Acts 6:1-7).

Although this passage does not explicitly name the office to which the seven were appointed, the Greek words used for "serve" (*diakoneō*, Acts 6:2) and "ministry" or "service" (*diakonia*, Acts 6:1, 4) have the same root as the word for "deacon" (*diakonos*). It appears that Luke, as a careful historian, avoided designating these men as "deacons" because the name for

⁵⁵ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁶ White, "The Regions Beyond," PUR Dec. 4, 1902.

⁵⁷ DA 296, italics added.

the office arose a little later. Paul spells out the qualifications for the ordained offices of both elder and deacon in 1 Timothy 3:1-13. The qualifications for elder are mentioned also in Titus 1:5-9.

In contrast to the apostles who were entrusted with “the ministry of the word,” the seven deacons were ordained to care primarily for the material needs of the church.⁵⁸ According to Ellen White, this development in church organization was “in the order of God.”⁵⁹ Although the seven were “ordained for the special work of looking after the needs of the poor,” they were not prevented from “teaching the faith. On the contrary, they were fully qualified to instruct others in the truth, and they engaged in the work with great earnestness and success.”⁶⁰ The ordination of the deacons was similar to the ordination of the Levites (Num 8:9, 10). In both cases it included the laying-on of hands, the congregation was involved, and those ordained were to serve on behalf of the congregation. Thus two basic offices were established in Jerusalem: apostle (and, later, elder) for the ministry of the word, and deacon for ministry to the material and practical needs of the church. Ellen White wrote that “the organization of the church at Jerusalem was to serve as a model for the organization of churches in every other place where messengers of truth should win converts to the gospel.”⁶¹

The ordination of Barnabas and Paul took place in the church of Antioch, Syria. Here, as certain prophets and teachers ministered and fasted, the Holy Spirit spoke to them: “Now separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” After “having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:2, 3). These men were now “being sent out by the Holy Spirit” as missionaries (Acts 13:4).

Ellen White provides additional insights on the meaning of ordination in connection with the setting apart of Paul and Barnabas. Through ordination, “they were authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority.”⁶² It was “a public recognition of their divine appointment to bear to the Gentiles the glad tidings of the gospel.”⁶³ Inasmuch as Paul and Barnabas “had already received their commission from God Himself,” the ceremony “added no new grace or virtual qualification. It was an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office and recognition of one’s authority in that office. By it the seal of the

58 Since the “deacon” (*diakonos* in Greek) is to be the husband of one wife (1 Tim 3:12), Phoebe, though referred to as a *diakonos* (Rom 16:1), could not have served in this office. The word *diakonos* is used in the New Testament only rarely in the sense of “deacon” (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8, 12). Usually it has the more general meaning of “servant” (e.g., Matt 22:13; Mark 9:35; Rom 15:8, etc.), which is why in most translations of Romans 16:1 Phoebe is referred to as a “servant” of the church at Cenchrea.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid., 90.

61 AA 91.

62 Ibid., 161.

63 Ibid.

church was set upon the work of God.”⁶⁴ When “the ministers of the church of believers” put their hands on Paul and Barnabas, they “by that action, asked God to bestow His blessing upon the chosen apostles in their devotion to the specific work to which they had been appointed.”⁶⁵ Paul considered “his formal ordination as marking the beginning of a new and important epoch in his lifework,” from which he “dated the beginning of his apostleship in the Christian church” to carry the gospel to the Gentiles, as Peter, James, and John had been appointed to preach Christ among the Jews.⁶⁶

During their travels in Asia Minor, as Paul and Barnabas organized groups of believers into churches and “appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (Acts 14:23). Here we observe that the organizational model of the Jerusalem church was being established in the “mission field.” Later, when Paul found disorderly behavior in some of the churches, he sent letters to his associates Timothy and Titus with strict guidelines about the proper qualifications for elders and deacons with the goal to restore order in the churches and prevent problems from arising (1 Tim 3:1-14; Titus 1:5-9). Throughout the history of Christianity, almost all Christian churches have adhered to these qualifications.⁶⁷

Paul’s letters contain two references to Timothy’s ordination (1 Tim 4:14, 2 Tim 1:6). From Timothy’s involvement in Paul’s mission it is clear that Timothy was not merely a local elder but functioned more in the role of an itinerant or traveling elder or minister, representing biblical Christianity to the newly established churches throughout the Roman Empire.

OFFICES AND GIFTS

THE GIFT OF PASTORING

In the New Testament there is no office of “pastor.” In Ephesians 4:8, 11, 12, “pastor” is spoken of as a gift of ministry. Paul referred to this spiritual gift in his commission to the elders of the church in Ephesus. “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd [pastor] the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). The apostle Peter, who considered himself also an elder, referred to this gift in a similar way, stating, “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder . . . : Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving

⁶⁴ Ibid., 161, 162.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 162.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 164, 165.

⁶⁷ Damsteegt, “Women’s Status and Ordination as Elders or Bishops in the Early Church, Reformation and Post-Reformation Eras” (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, July. 22-24, 2013), <http://www.adventistarchives.org/womens-status-and-ordination-as-elders-or-bishops-in-the-early-church.pdf>.

as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet 5:1-3). Among the tasks of elders is the responsibility to shepherd, nurture, and protect church members. Unless one of their gifts is that of shepherding, they do not qualify for this office. However, this gift is not confined to the office of an elder or minister. The gift of shepherding or pastoring can be manifested by persons who work in other callings, professions, or ministries that are benefited by aspects of caring.

Ellen White used “pastor” and “pastors to the flock” in this way, as when she wrote that “responsibilities must be laid upon *the members of the church*. The missionary spirit should be awakened as never before, and workers should be appointed as needed, who will act as pastors to the flock, putting forth personal effort to bring the church up to that condition where spiritual life and activity will be seen in all her borders.”⁶⁸

This appears to be her meaning in her well-known statement about literature evangelists, that “it is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God.”⁶⁹ She was not calling on the church to open the way for women to serve as ministers just as men do, since, a little further on in the same volume, she repeatedly urged “young men” to enter the ministry, with no mention that women were to do so as well.⁷⁰

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OFFICES AND THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

While spiritual gifts include pastoral care, this is not equivalent to the biblical office of elder that today is often referred to as “pastor.” In the New Testament we can distinguish between offices and gifts as follows: (1) Three church offices are mentioned: apostles (Acts 1:21-25), elders/overseers (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), and deacons (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim 3:8-13). However, there are many gifts (1 Cor 12:8-11; 28-30; Rom 12:6-8; Eph 4:11). Every believer has received at least one gift (1 Pet 4:10). (2) Those who occupy offices are ordained, appointed, or chosen based on explicit qualifications (Acts 6:3; 14:23; 1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). Gifts, however, are bestowed according to the will of the Holy Spirit without any stated qualifications (Eph 4:7; Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:11, 18, 28). (3) Though every believer has at least one gift, not every believer has an office (Eph 4:7; 1 Cor 12:7, 11; Rom 12:4). (4) An elder “cannot be a recent convert” (1 Tim 3:6), but gifts are bestowed independently of age or experience. (5) The offices of elder and deacon are limited to “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2, 12;

⁶⁸ 5T 723, italics added.

⁶⁹ 6T 322.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 411-416.

Titus 1:6),⁷¹ whereas gifts are given to both men and women (Acts 21:9-10; 1 Cor 11:5).⁷² Unfortunately, in the ordination debate, some Seventh-day Adventists are confusing the *gift* of pastoring with the *office* of elder/minister, contrary to the biblical pattern.

ORDINATION AND THE LAYING-ON OF HANDS

The church should choose gifted individuals whose lifestyle fulfills the biblical qualifications for the office of elder or deacon. This should be done carefully, with much prayer and fasting, asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the selections made. The ordination service appoints persons to these offices through the laying-on of hands by ordained church leaders—ministers or elders (2 Tim 1:6; 1 Tim 4:14). Although ordination of persons to the biblical leadership office of elder or deacon is accompanied by the laying-on of hands, not every instance of the laying-on of hands is equated with ordination to church office. In a well known example, Ellen White wrote, “Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church.”⁷³

Some have interpreted this to mean that women should be ordained to the gospel ministry. However, Ellen White does not speak about ordination but about setting these women apart for a particular work or ministry. They are part-time workers who are appointed “to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor.” This appointment does not make them church officers because, as Ellen White says, “in some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister.” The church leaders are advised to set them apart to this specific work “by prayer and laying on of hands.” The purpose of this ceremony is to recognize and enable “*another means* of strengthening and building up the church.”⁷⁴ This ceremony, then, is not ordination to one of the New Testament offices, but the laying-on of hands sets these women apart for a specific ministry that will strengthen the church.⁷⁵

71 Although Scripture does not mention an office of “deaconess,” the fact that Paul refers to “the women” while discussing the office of deacon (1 Tim 3:11) suggests that some women were given a role in the early church not unlike deaconesses today. Rather than being ordained to an official church office, they seem to have been designated to assist the deacons in their work, especially in relation to helping other women (21MR 97).

72 This list is adapted from Harold W. Hoehner, “Can a Woman be a Pastor-Teacher?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50/4 (Dec. 2007): 763, 764. See also Pfandl, “Evaluation of Egalitarian Papers,” 10, 11, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/evaluation-of-egalitarian-papers.pdf>.

73 White, “The Duty of the Minister and the People,” RH July 9, 1895.

74 *Ibid.*, italics added. Another example sometimes referred to is the missionary physician, whom Ellen White said is to be “as sacredly set apart for his work as is the minister of the gospel” (Ev 546). In this case, however, she did not explicitly mention the laying on of hands as part of the service, though she may have had this in mind. In any event, her statement makes it clear that such a service was not ordination to the gospel ministry.

75 Ellen White wrote of women who, “although the hands of ordination have not been laid” on them, were “accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry” (GW 452).

This example makes it clear that the laying-on of hands can be used to appoint church members to specific tasks or ministries, affirming the unique abilities, talents, or gifts God gave them, but should not be equated with ordination to the specific biblical leadership office of an elder or minister.

ORDINATION AND AUTHORITY

Ordination functioned throughout biblical history as a means to set apart and appoint qualified men to a specific office of leadership. In this role they are responsible to promote God's mission, protect the believers from false teachings, and preserve order and harmony in the church. What kind of authority is bestowed on them with the ordination to these offices of leadership?

THE AUTHORITY OF MINISTERS

Today's ministers who oversee and serve several churches can be compared to Timothy and Titus, whose gospel ministry was not confined to one church. Ministers who function as teachers of word and doctrine have a special place in God's church on earth. Paul's instruction to Timothy gives some idea of the authority entrusted to them: "Preach the word! . . . Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim 4:2, 3). Titus was instructed to "set in order the things that are lacking," and concerning those who subverted the faith, to "rebuke them sharply" (Titus 1:5, 13). He was to "speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine," and "exhort the young men to be sober-minded," among other things (2:1, 6). "Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you" (2:15).

THE AUTHORITY OF ELDERS

The authority of elders is vested in the Scriptures and in the ordination of these men by the church. Paul told Titus that the elders must "be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict . . . whose mouths must be stopped" (Titus 1:9, 11). To Timothy Paul wrote, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim 5:17). Because of the important role of the elder, Paul specified, "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses" (5:19). Peter wrote that the elders are the "overseers" of the flock, commanded to "shepherd" or "feed" the flock under the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:2, 4). In expounding on the authority of elders, Ellen White noted that they have the responsibility to educate or train members so they will use their talents and spiritual gifts,⁷⁶ the authority to make sure

⁷⁶ White, "The Church Must Be Quickened," RH Jan. 17, 1893.

all members are proper stewards and support the church financially,⁷⁷ the duty to deal with erring members and look after weak and backsliding members to try to help them,⁷⁸ and the obligation to uphold the standards of the church and see that members respect its decisions.⁷⁹

In the days of the Adventist pioneers, when, in spite of the example of many other denominations they followed Jesus' model of leadership in the New Testament, the authority of the elders in the above areas became firmly established and the church grew rapidly.

ORDINATION AND WORLDWIDE UNITY

An important part of Jesus' last prayer for His disciples in John 17 concerns their future unity. He prayed that they might be "sanctified by the truth . . . that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us" (vs. 19, 21). Unity is based on union with Jesus and acceptance of His truth, which comes through hearing His words as revealed in Scripture (John 5:39; Rom 10:17). This unity is in itself a powerful witness, having as its purpose "that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:21). So a Bible-based unity is vital for carrying out the mission of the church.

From our early beginnings as Adventists, the importance of wisely selecting ministers has been impressed upon us by inspiration as being essential to our unity.⁸⁰ Although every one of us is called to share the "reason for the hope" that is in us (1 Pet 3:15), elders and ministers, who "labor in word and doctrine" (1 Tim 5:17) are especially charged to proclaim and teach the word of God accurately (2 Tim 2:15; Titus 1:9). They are set apart to their work through the rite of ordination, based on the call of God and recognition by the church regionally (Acts 13:3) in harmony with the church globally (Matt 28:18-20).⁸¹ The gospel proclamation in the end time culminates in a worldwide, united people "who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev 14:12). Various proposals to regionalize the practice of ordination can endanger our organizational unity and open the door to the regionalization of church organization. It is not clear where this process of progressive regionalization would end. It is best for the church to stay united for its global witness to be most effective.

A SUMMARY OF BIBLICAL ORDINATION

Ordination is a setting apart of men to a sacred office of leadership in the church. To qualify for such office, they need to meet the Bible qualifications. Jesus was the one who instituted this service when He established the New Testament church. In ordaining people

⁷⁷ White, TM 306; SpT"A" Nos. 7, 21.

⁷⁸ White, "Elder Daniels and the Fresno Church," *Pamphlet* 028; see also 5MR 447, 448.

⁷⁹ White, 5MR 296; SpT"A" Nos. 1b, 24, 25.

⁸⁰ See EW 97-104.

⁸¹ LP 43.

today, it is important to remember that it is God who calls them to such office. And He calls only those who meet the qualifications that He has set forth in His word. The leaders of the local church should ordain men to the office of elder only after a careful examination, with prayer and fasting, to see whether the Bible qualifications for that office have been met.

Following the practice in the New Testament, those who participate in laying hands on those being ordained as local elders are to be ordained ministers or elders of the local church. Those who lead out in this service represent the church, not themselves. Before a person is appointed as a minister, ordained ministers also evaluate the candidate's lifestyle and experience in the light of Bible qualifications. Upon a successful evaluation and clear evidence of the Holy Spirit in his ministry, life, and family, he too will be set apart through ordination, but this time for a wider ministry. In this ordination service, he will be invested with full ecclesiastical authority that includes, besides the work of a local elder, the training and oversight of several churches, baptizing of new believers, and the planting and organizing of new churches.

Beyond the local geographical region, this ordination authorizes the minister to serve the worldwide community of Seventh-day Adventists—an expression of our global unity. This is why ordination should not be implemented regionally. Allowing for regional autonomy may bring distrust and disunity into the world field where an “ordained minister” is allowed in one division but prohibited in another.

Paul indicates that each member receives from the Holy Spirit a gift for the good of the church (1 Cor. 12:7) and for its unity (1 Cor 12:12-27). The gift received is not for boasting but “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:12, 13).

From these findings we conclude that women may fulfill many valuable service roles in the church in harmony with the spiritual gifts they have been given. However, the biblical qualifications for overseeing one or more churches as elders or ministers include the stipulation that those charged with caring for God's church as His household must be “the husband of one wife.” At the present time of revival and reformation, as part of its divinely-ordained mission, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to call people out of Babylon and back to the Bible as the Word of God and the rule of faith and practice. All the teachings of the remnant church of Bible prophecy must be established firmly on the Bible's clear message, in preparation for the latter rain and the imminent return of Christ.

The Church's strength lies in its obedience to the Bible. We should not be afraid to do what the Bible calls us to do, even if the surrounding culture does not approve. This is what we call others to do in connection with Sabbath observance, diet, and other matters, and we should be willing to do so as well on this matter. As we know, the time is fast approaching

when a false day of worship will be enforced and Sabbath observance will become even more difficult. Could God be testing us now on lesser points in order to develop the lessons of faith needed to stand these more difficult tests in the future? God will honor faithfulness to Him and His Word. May He find us willing as individuals and as a church to stand for Him at a time when the world and even many Christians are becoming increasingly hostile to the vital, eternal truths of Scripture. Jesus encourages us, “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev 2:10). Let us live so that we may hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt 25:21).

ANSWERS TO SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT ORDINATION⁸²

Does the priesthood of all believers permit women to be ordained as pastors?

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

Although Peter calls Christians “a royal priesthood,” this does not mean that all adults and children, male and female, are serving as priests or ordained ministers. Just as God called ancient Israel a “kingdom of priests” yet established the priesthood of Aaron and his sons as the spiritual leaders, so in the Christian church the apostles and elders were established as leaders, and all of them were males.

Israel was a royal priesthood because every Israelite was a member of the covenant community and was expected to mediate the gospel to the world and prepare it for the arrival of the Messiah. In other words, the objective of God’s call to every member of Israel was to evangelize the world, and the priests and Levites were called upon to lead and teach the people how to do it. Similarly, all Christians are a royal priesthood, called to announce to the world what Jesus has done and that He is coming again, but it is the role of the elders/overseers to lead and teach the people how to do it. The “royal priesthood” concept upholds the leadership of elders and deacons, and it does not open the door for women to be ordained as elders/ministers.

Was hierarchy abolished by Jesus and the Apostles?

Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall

⁸² This section draws on Pfandl, “Evaluation of Egalitarian Papers,” <http://www.adventistarchives.org/evaluation-of-egalitarian-papers.pdf>.

be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all” (Mark 10:42-44).

To say that the words of Jesus in Mark 10:43 constitutes a thorough rejection, or reversal, of the hierarchical model” is misleading. Jesus condemned the selfish, self-seeking, or self-exalting use of authority, but He did not condemn an authority structure per se. When Jesus says, “But it shall not be so among you,” He is especially addressing the Twelve. Each of them desired to be “first” in the kingdom that they all expected the Lord to establish soon (Matt 18:1). They forgot that true greatness requires renouncing greatness as an objective in life. The Twelve were peers to one another in every sense of the word. Jesus warned them not to “lord it over” each other, not to seek the highest place or to exercise power over their peers. Yet the New Testament church was clearly structured with levels of authority (apostles, elders, deacons). Not everyone could be an apostle, elder, or deacon. Apostleship was a spiritual gift distributed by the Holy Spirit according to His will (1 Cor 12:3-11; 28-31). Elders and deacons were to be carefully chosen according to clear qualifications (1 Tim 2:10–3:13). Those holding an office had authority over others (1 Cor 16:15, 16; Heb 13:17; 1 Tim 5:17). Elders had authority in the church. Paul wrote to Titus, “Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you” (Titus 2:15).

So Jesus did not forbid the exercise of godly authority. He opposed the selfish exercise of authority. The New Testament church was clearly organized with levels of authority. Not everyone was given the same authority, but each was to respect and submit to those of greater authority, and each was accountable for serving responsibly, in humility and love, those who were of lesser authority. Nevertheless, levels of authority point to a hierarchy.

Does “head” in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 mean “source” rather than headship authority?

Paul begins his counsel by stating the biblical principle that “the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (v. 3).

The claim that headship is often understood as ruling power but that this is not normal in the Greek language is incorrect. Walter Bauer’s *Greek Lexicon* under the figurative use of *kephalē* (head) says that head “in the case of living beings” denotes “superior rank,” and cites examples of texts both within and outside of Scripture.⁸³ No reference is given for *kephalē* as source; in fact, in the latest edition of the Lexicon, “source” is explicitly rejected as a possible meaning for head.⁸⁴ Clearly the intent of the metaphorical use of “head” is to describe someone who holds superior rank as leader, master, ruler, authority figure, or other person of first status among others.

83 Frederick William Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, third edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 542.

84 *Ibid.*, citing Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Another Look at *Kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11.3,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 503-11. See also, more recently, Fitzmyer, “*Kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11:3,” *Interpretation* 47 (1993): 52-59, esp. 57: “Those who have claimed that ‘source’ is the meaning intended by Paul have offered no other argument than their claim that *kephalē* would not have meant ‘ruler, leader, one having authority over’ in Paul’s day. The evidence brought forth above shows that it was certainly possible for a Hellenistic Jewish writer such as Paul to use the word in that sense [‘ruler’]. Hence, their argument has collapsed, and the traditional understanding has to be retained.”

We need to understand “head” in 1 Corinthians 11 as it is used in the parallel expressions found in other Pauline passages, such as Ephesians 5:23: “For the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church.” The husband is certainly not the source of the wife, and it would be awkward to understand in the same context that Christ is the source of the church, since He is depicted not as Founder of the church but as its Savior, and the relationship is clearly defined in the next verse as one of submission to the head: “Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything” (Eph 5:24). Also, in Colossians 1:18, which declares Christ to be “the head of the body, the church;” the text explicitly states the purpose: so that “in all things He may have the preeminence.” The issue is one of rank, not of source.

The meaning of “head” in 1 Corinthians, then, is headship, not source. The leadership that Scripture points to as headship, and which was modeled by Christ, is a loving, nurturing, self-sacrificing leadership to which women voluntarily submit, as called for in Ephesians 5:22-33 and 1 Peter 5:2, 3.

Does mutual submission mean that there is no more male headship?

“Submitting to one another in the fear of God.” (Eph 5:21)—People have used this verse to show that husbands and wives need to submit to each other. The text, they say, calls on all of us to be subject to one another and not just women to their husbands. They conclude that there is no longer a male headship in the family and in the church.

When we read further in Ephesians we see three clusters of relationships that show how people need to relate to each other. First it deals with relations between husbands and wives (Eph 5:22-33), next between children and parents (Eph 6:1-4), and finally between slaves and masters (Eph 6:5-9). In this context, how does mutual submission work in each of these relations?

God does call on all of us to submit to one another, but doesn’t ask us to submit to one another in the same ways. Nowhere in the Bible are husbands called on to obey their wives. Instead, husbands are asked to sacrifice themselves for their wives. The husband is also asked to serve as “the head of the wife,” to whom the wife is asked to submit. Husbandship is headship, not dictatorship. As head, the husband is expected to be the family leader; but he is to lead in the way that Christ leads as “head of the church”—compassionately, graciously, justly, openly, honestly, responsibly, manfully. The wife is asked to submit herself to her husband “in everything”—not meanly or grudgingly, but gladly, wisely, nobly, “as to the Lord.”

In Paul’s next example children are required to obey their parents; parents are not asked to obey their children. The Bible calls for children to obey their parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Yet fathers are not to provoke their children. Slaves are called to obey their masters in everything, not as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart—as serving the Lord

and not men. Masters are not expected to take orders from their slaves, yet masters are to treat their slaves justly and fairly, knowing that “your own Master also is in heaven.”

The Bible requires not only wives but all of us to be in submission to one another. It asks us to do this in the only way it can possibly be done—with our eyes on Jesus. But it calls on us to be submissive in different ways, suitable to our different roles. The Bible asks husbands to shoulder the primary responsibility for family leadership, in imitation of the Lord. And it asks wives to be subject to their husbands, “as to the Lord.”⁸⁵

Can women be ordained because male leadership is an ideal, not an absolute?

It is true that Jesus makes a distinction between the weights of various divine instructions. He told the Pharisees that despite being scrupulous about tithing they had neglected “the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith” (Matt 23:23). But we must remember that He followed this by saying, “These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.” Just because a biblical command is not as foundational as others does not give us authority to alter it as if it were flexible, depending on the situation. The Bible has many examples of those of those who assumed that a command of God was flexible when it wasn’t. Adam and Eve were punished for eating a piece of fruit—an act that certainly isn’t wrong in most circumstances. Cain’s offering was rejected due to a modification of what God asked him to use in worship, and Uzzah was punished merely for steadying the ark—both transgressions of commands not related to the moral law. Nadab and Abihu were punished when they offered a different fire from the one the Lord commanded to be used in the sanctuary—again only a command not found in God’s moral law. Then there were Miriam and Korah—two people who challenged the leadership structure of God’s people. Miriam challenged Moses’ place of leadership and was punished by the Lord. Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and 250 leaders of Israel came to Moses asking for a higher place in the organizational ranks of the Levites. Nearly the entire congregation was on Korah’s side, believing that he and his company should be allowed to serve as priests. What followed was a refusal to make an adaptation to the “functional, ecclesiastical norm” of the Aaronic priesthood, even though the people strongly believed it should be that way.

Are we really safe in this new interpretive method of biblical instruction in which some commands are considered absolute and others flexible? How are we to know which biblical commands are open to adaptation? What about tithing? The ordinances? Lifestyle teachings? Are they flexible, too? Should we give liberty to individual churches to baptize by sprinkling, use leavened bread in communion, or drink alcohol in moderation? Classifying biblical instruction in two different categories is a dangerous slippery slope.

⁸⁵ Adapted from C. Mervyn Maxwell, “Mutual Submission: What is it?” *Adventists Affirm*, Fall 1987, 23-27.

If Adventists already adapt biblical instruction, should we not allow women to be ordained?

Because Paul forbids women to teach and we as a church have women teachers, some see this as evidence that the Adventist Church already adapts non-essential divine commands. But the Bible does not prohibit women from all teaching. On the contrary, it mentions women involved in both teaching and prophesying, and Ellen White concurs by encouraging women to “address the crowd whenever you can” (Ev 473). Paul, therefore, could not have been giving an outright prohibition of teaching. In saying, “I do not permit a woman to teach *or to have authority over a man*” (1 Tim 2:12), he linked the prohibited teaching *with authority over men*. A few verses later, he directs that the official church office of elder must be held by a man who is “able to teach.” So the prohibition given to women was that they could not assume the teaching authority that belongs to the church elder. We needn’t think that we have been “adapting” Paul’s instruction when women are encouraged to teach or preach in various settings; they may do so as long as they are not exercising the authority that belongs to the ordained elder or minister.

Does 1 Timothy 2:12-14 apply only to a local situation, not universally?

Contrary to the claim that in these verses Paul addresses only a specific issue in Ephesus where women are influenced by false gnostic teachings, what Paul says in 1 Timothy 2 and 3 is clearly meant for the universal church, not just for the church in Ephesus. In chapter two he discusses the universality of Christian worship (2:1-15):

- a. Prayers for those in authority (2:1-3) should be made in all churches, not just in Ephesus.
- b. God wants all human beings saved (2:4-7), hence all churches should work for the salvation of souls, not just the church in Ephesus.
- c. The worship procedures 2:8-15 are for all churches, not just for Ephesus.

In chapter three, Paul discusses the prerequisites for Christian leaders in all churches, not just in Ephesus (3:1-13):

- a. The character of bishops (3:1-17) refers to bishops in all churches, not just in Ephesus.
- b. The character of deacons (3:8-13) refers to deacons in all churches, not just in Ephesus.

Thus to claim that 2:12-14 refers only to the local church is to ignore the context, which is clearly universal. The immediate context of verses 12-14 begins in verse 8 with the words, “I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting,” indicating that Paul is speaking to the universal church and not just to the local

church in Ephesus. In verse 9, where Paul begins his admonition to women with the words, “in like manner also” (i.e., speaking to women everywhere), he addresses the issue of adornment and good works. The whole of chapter two is addressed to the universal church.

In the text, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man” (v. 12), the Greek word *didaskō* (teach) refers to sound instruction. It does not refer to false teaching, for which Paul uses the word *heterodidaskaleō* (teach something different, i.e., false doctrine) in 1 Timothy 1:3 and 6:3. Does Paul mean that women can never speak in church? Certainly not; he has women praying and prophesying (preaching?) in church (1 Cor 11:5). What is prohibited to women is the authoritative teaching that is part of the ecclesiastical office of minister/elder, which involves the exercise of spiritual authority. In other words, teaching in combination with having “authority over” refers to the authoritative teaching of the ordained minister/elder.

The fact that Paul addresses certain false teachings in his letter to Timothy does not mean that everything he says has meaning only for the local situation in Ephesus. For example, what he says in chapter 3 about elders and deacons is repeated in Titus 1, indicating that his counsel is meant for all churches, not just for the Ephesians. Similarly, what Paul says about the apparel of women in 1 Timothy 2:9, 10 is also emphasized in 1 Peter 3, again showing its universal meaning, not just for the church in Ephesus.

Does the creation-fall-re-creation motif establish full gender equality at the first advent that allows the ordination of women?

The New Testament continues to teach the leadership of men in the home and church. This is especially clear from the writings of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11, 1 Timothy 2 and 3, and Titus 1, in which to the end of his life he advocated male leadership in the Christian church. The above discussions on these passages show that the distinctions in function between male and female continue after Christ’s First Advent without any provision for women to function as elders or ministers. Only an incorrect interpretation of the text would eliminate male leadership. The re-creation of humans to the pre-Fall condition, whatever that may entail, takes place at the Second Advent, not at the First Advent.

Does religious liberty demand that we allow for women to be ordained?

This understanding of the concept of “religious liberty” is not supported by the Bible. The church’s loyalty must be to God and His Word, not to the varying individual convictions of its members. The Bible gives instructive examples of how church leadership is to relate to the individual convictions of its members. Though the whole congregation cried out for a change in leadership, Aaron’s effort to honor their convictions with a golden calf was met with punishment. Though the people pleaded with Saul to accept an offering from the flock

of the Amalekites, when he accepted the plan, God rejected him as king. Though the whole congregation was strongly convicted of the need for a change in organizational structure, Korah and those with him were denied their convictions. And though many were convicted that circumcision must be required of the Gentiles, the Jerusalem Council rejected their convictions in every case, stating that circumcision was *never* to be required of the Gentiles.

Using “freedom of conscience” to shape the Church’s beliefs and practices, as seen in other churches, can pave the way for the promotion of homosexuality, academic freedom to teach evolution in Adventist schools, etc. These things, it will be rightly claimed, are for many just as much a matter of conscience as is the ordination of women. Even if it were not church members but civil authorities that required ordination as a matter of equality, it would not pay for the church to acquiesce. We must not be afraid to take a stand for Bible truth, even now.

While we observe the sincerity of many who try to keep the Church together while it is currently divided on the issue of women’s ordination, we see no safety in opening the doors of ordination to women in direct contradiction to clear biblical commands. “God has placed in His word no command which men may obey or disobey at will and not suffer the consequences” (PP 360).

Rather than simply allowing for everyone to do as they wish in regard to the ordination of women as ministers, the church should focus on opening a broader range of ministries to women. It should train godly women in ministry areas in which they can do a greater work than that of men. “The Saviour will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of His countenance, and this will give them a power that will exceed that of men. They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their work is needed” (ChS 27). The Church should also be giving far greater prominence to promoting the work of the Christian mother. And for those who are employed in ministry, we should compensate women in harmony with the importance of their work. We can do these worthwhile things now, but to make allowance for acting contrary to God’s Word can only result in loss to the church and to the cause of truth. May God help us to remain faithful to His Word while reaffirming and further developing the roles of women in ministry.