

1 **Shall the Church Ordain Women as Pastors?**  
2 **Thoughts toward an Integrated NT Perspective**  
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8 How shall we as a global Seventh-day Adventist church, seeking to be faithful followers  
9 of Jesus Christ, read the New Testament in order to correctly understand God’s will concerning  
10 the ordination of women as pastors in the Seventh-day Adventist church? Care and humility is  
11 required of every individual approaching this question. The complexity and breadth of the issue,  
12 and of the related literature, make it challenging and time-consuming to fully evaluate all sides,  
13 to identify accurately the intended meaning of related Scriptural passages, and to put the results  
14 together into an unbiased whole.

15 The natural solution is to grasp and build on those points that intuitively make sense from  
16 one’s own point of view, and no one is exempt from personal and cultural bias on this issue. We  
17 are, every one of us, pulled in one direction by the so-called “progressive” trends of post-modern  
18 culture, and in the opposite direction by the soothing assurance of tradition and “the way it has  
19 always been” in Christian history and in the other cultures and institutions of which we are a  
20 part. Despite our best human efforts to the contrary, the direction each of us goes is influenced  
21 much more than we would like to admit by our own personal upbringing, temperament, and  
22 experience, and by the resulting construction of life and reality we carry with us. It would be  
23 foolish for a group of any persuasion to suggest that they are exempt from the pull of culture in  
24 these ways. For every Scriptural story of God’s people straying from Him by following the  
25 example of surrounding culture, there is another story of Jesus’ struggle with religious leaders  
26 who were so sure of their own (cultural) understanding of Scripture and God’s law that they  
27 rejected Him, God’s own Son, when He did not conform to their traditional expectations.

28 These realities have left us facing a deep divide concerning potential answers to our  
29 question. Yet we have reason for optimism, for we all agree that our hope rests alone in Jesus  
30 Christ and in the Holy Spirit’s guiding, as we humbly seek to take Scripture and the whole of  
31 Scripture alone as our highest rule of faith and practice. On the basis of this shared understanding  
32 of Scripture, I pray that we will allow God’s Spirit to help us put aside our distrust and our  
33 frustrations with each other and work closely together, observing and seeking to build from  
34 where we do agree, and granting honestly and exploring thoroughly where difficulties arise on  
35 either side. I am confident that, if we do so, God will lead us as a community through the  
36 minefields of our human failings toward God’s answer to our common dilemma.

37 The task given me in this paper is to present to you the rationale for believing that the NT  
38 supports, in cultures where it would enhance rather than hinder or discredit the gospel, the  
39 ordination of appropriately gifted and qualified women for pastoral leadership in the church.  
40 Although the size of this paper does not allow me to deal with each critique of this position, I  
41 have taken them very seriously, and continue to wrestle with some of them. I look forward to  
42 your input and to our continued discussion to point out areas I have missed, correct me where I  
43 am wrong, and strengthen those points in need of improvement.

44 Naturally, the ideal would be to discover a “Thus saith the Lord” explicitly addressing the  
45 ordination of women as pastors for His church today. Because there is no such declaration, it is  
46 necessary both to consider carefully those passages that appear to relate most closely to this

1 specific issue, and to explore the larger picture of the NT (in the context of the Old Testament) in  
2 regards to the related concepts of *ministry, authority, ordination, and women*. Each of these tasks  
3 is essential and must be completed before trying to discern whether God would have us ordain  
4 women for ministry. This paper will begin by seeking a clear understanding of the larger  
5 concepts in the big picture, before moving on to listen faithfully to specific passages that have  
6 been suggested to have a particular bearing on the question.

## 9 **What Does the NT Tell Us about Ministry, Authority and Ordination?**

### 11 *Ministry in the NT*

13 The NT leaves no room for doubt regarding the nature of the church and its mission. As  
14 often stated, the church is not primarily a building or an administrative structure but people—a  
15 community of believers, repentant and redeemed, who call God ‘Savior and Lord.’ The stated  
16 task of this community is to participate together, under God, in His mission to reconcile  
17 humanity to Himself through Jesus Christ, a mission to be completed in the full restoration of  
18 His kingdom when He comes (Luke 12:8, 9; 2 Cor. 5:17-20). Every believer is to be a part of the  
19 church’s work of proclaiming this good news in word and deed, making disciples of those who  
20 believe by nurturing their relationship with and obedience to Him (Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20; 1 Pet.  
21 2:9; Rev. 14:6-12). Thus we see Jesus, after initially sending twelve (Luke 6:13; 9:1, 2), sending  
22 seventy more (Luke 10:1, 9); and the Holy Spirit, after being poured out on all believers with  
23 power for witness (Acts 1:8; Acts 2:38), leading believers to follow Jesus’ pattern in advancing  
24 God’s mission through loving service and praise of Him (e.g. Acts 4:31; 9:36; 11:19, 20; 18:24-  
25 26).

26 The epistles describe further the ways in which God empowers the entire church for  
27 ministry. Through the Holy Spirit every believer is provided with divinely endowed abilities  
28 known as spiritual gifts (*charismata*), which He has chosen for that individual to employ in  
29 sharing God’s good news with the world and in edifying and serving the believing community  
30 (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 28; Eph. 4:7, 11-13; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). Several overlapping lists of  
31 gifts are found in the epistles, suggesting that none of them are exhaustive. These gifts are not  
32 described in detail, but allow us to observe the breadth of the Spirit’s gifting. No gift is presented  
33 consistently as standing at the top of a “hierarchy of gifts.” No differentiation of honor or care is  
34 to be made between those holding the various gifts and ministries (1 Cor. 12:4-7; 1 Cor. 12:22-  
35 25).<sup>1</sup> And in none of the lists are any of the gifts said to be restricted according to gender.<sup>2</sup> With

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<sup>1</sup> This is affirmed by Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief 14: *Unity in the Body of Christ*: “The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children (Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; Matt. 28:19, 20; Ps. 133:1; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Acts 17:26, 27; Gal. 3:27, 29; Col. 3:10-15; Eph. 4:14-16; 4:1-6; John 17:20-23).”

<sup>2</sup> Because all nouns must have a gender in Greek, the use of the masculine ending is the normal usage for designating a mixed group. These masculine endings are used of all the gifts in these lists, and since none of us would restrict gifts such as faith or prophecy to men alone it would be inconsistent to insist that the endings related

1 the giving of the gifts comes the responsibility to make use of them (Matt. 5:14-16; 1 Cor. 12:7;  
2 Eph. 4:11-12) in the most effective possible way (Matt. 25:14-30; 1 Cor. 9:19-23; 10:31-33) in  
3 order to win and disciple to Jesus Christ the people among whom believers live and work.

4 Many of the tasks we associate today with pastoring are included among these divinely-  
5 assigned spiritual gifts and ministry functions (1 Cor. 12:4-5). In addition to concretely oriented  
6 gifts such as healing, and intellectually-oriented ones like knowledge, the Holy Spirit also  
7 bestows a number of socially-oriented gifts relating to leadership, that is, to the ability to act in a  
8 manner that influences others.<sup>3</sup> Romans 12:8 speaks of a gift of *leading* (*proistēmi*). This Greek  
9 word is used to express a variety of actions from caring for someone, to guiding, to ruling.<sup>4</sup> (As  
10 with all language, it would be erroneous to simply select a preferred definition, rather a careful  
11 consideration of the context of each usage is essential to learn how this and the other words in  
12 this paper were actually meant to be understood.) In the NT *proistēmi* is used in a variety of  
13 ways, including to indicate: individuals who labor among the believers (1 Thess. 5:12); the  
14 ability to deal with a household in such a manner that the children are submissive (1 Tim. 3:4, 5,  
15 12); the valued work of the elders (1 Tim. 5:17). *Administrative abilities* (*kubernēsis*), a gift  
16 mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28, refers literally to the skill with which a pilot guides a ship.  
17 Some uses in Greek literature include managing a household and also of leadership in general. In  
18 the NT it is used only here, but in the Greek Bible used by the New Testament church (the LXX)  
19 it is used several times in Proverbs to mean counsel, or guidance, from (a plurality of) others,  
20 which Proverbs proclaims it wise to receive (1:5; 11:14; 24:6).<sup>5</sup>

21 Also included in these gift lists and fundamental to the work of the Adventist pastor are  
22 what might be spoken of as ministries (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:4-5) such as apostle, evangelist, pastor and  
23 teacher. These ministry gifts are likewise assigned by the Holy Spirit and do not directly refer to  
24 roles formally appointed by the church (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11), although they may lead to such  
25 a formal appointment. The divinely appointed ministry function of apostle (*apostolos*) refers

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to the leadership gifts should be so understood. In 1 Corinthians 12:1, Paul's use of the masculine term "brethren" to encourage Christian men and women to "covet earnestly the best gifts" (12:31), should be understood in the context of passages like Deuteronomy 15:12—"If your *brother*, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him [or her] go free" (cf. 1 Cor. 7:16, 24).

<sup>3</sup> John C. Maxwell, for example, says of leadership, "Leadership Is Influence: Nothing More, Nothing Less." (*The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998, [redacted])

<sup>4</sup> W. Bauer, et al., *προϊστημι* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 780.; Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, "Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains," (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988-1989), 2.207.. The idea of ruling is not primary in *proistēmi*, as illustrated in the first-century Jewish writings of Josephus, who quotes Julius Caesar as stating of a certain high priest, "that his children shall rule over (*archō*) the Jewish nation . . . and the high priest, as the head of the Jews (*ethnarchēs*), shall be the protector (*proistēmi*) of those Jews who are unjustly treated." (*Antiquities of the Jews* 14.196). Noted in Walter L. Liefeld, "The Nature of Authority in the New Testament," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2005). 259-261.

<sup>5</sup> The LXX is the earliest Greek translation(s) of the OT. It was the Bible generally used by early Christians, most of whom were unable to speak or read Hebrew. Timothy Friberg, et al., "κυβερνήσις," in *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids Baker, 2000).. J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, "κυβερνήσις," in *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1930), 207. A cognate noun, *kubernētēs*, is used in the LXX and NT to refer exclusively to the pilot of a ship (4 Macc. 7:1; Prov. 23:34; Ezek. 27:8, 27-28; Acts 27:11; Rev. 18:17).

1 literally to one who is “sent out” as a representative or emissary on behalf of another.<sup>6</sup> It is most  
2 often associated with the Twelve appointed by Jesus to represent Him, but is also used more  
3 broadly in the NT to refer to individuals such as Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14), James, the  
4 brother of Jesus (Gal. 1:19) and Andronicus and Junia (Rom. 16:7) who, while they were not  
5 eyewitnesses appointed by Jesus during His ministry, were also recognized as being chosen and  
6 gifted for a representative role.<sup>7</sup> The spiritual gift of *evangelist* (*euangelistēs*; Eph. 4:11) is not  
7 mentioned elsewhere in the NT, but might be exemplified by the work of “Philip the evangelist”  
8 (Acts 21:8), who in Acts 8 communicated the gospel (*euangelion*) to people who had not yet had  
9 the opportunity to hear or accept it.<sup>8</sup>

10 Included in the list of ministries, given by the Spirit to whom He wills, is the function  
11 generally translated as *pastor* (Eph. 4:11). The word in Greek (*poimēn*) literally means  
12 *shepherd*.<sup>9</sup> This is the only reference to any human individual other than Jesus as being a  
13 pastor/*poimēn*, although both Paul and Peter call on elders to participate in shepherding God’s  
14 flock (Acts 20:28; 1Pet 5:2).<sup>10</sup> The characteristics of the shepherd that Jesus identifies with are  
15 his intimate knowing of his sheep, his deep love and concern for them, and his commitment to  
16 guide and protect them—in fact this shepherd is even willing to lay down His life for His sheep  
17 (John 10:11-15; cf. Matt. 2:6; 9:36; 26:31; Rev. 7:17). Paul’s concern in calling the elders to act  
18 as shepherds in Acts 21 focuses on the task of protecting the flock from false teaching. Peter, on  
19 the other hand, already faced the need to warn the elders themselves against understanding their  
20 role of shepherding as one granting them a ruling and controlling authority. Instead Peter called  
21 for the use of an authority based on influence, stating, “Shepherd the flock of God which is  
22 among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but  
23 eagerly;<sup>3</sup> nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet.  
24 5:2, 3).

25 The role of teacher (*didaskalos*) is closely tied to that of pastor in the Greek of Ephesians  
26 4:11. This is seen in the lack of an article (thus reading literally “the pastors and teachers”) where  
27 each of the other ministry functions in the list are distinguished from each other by its  
28 presence.<sup>11</sup> *Didaskalos* is the normal word used in the NT for teacher, regularly employed, for  
29 example, with reference to Jesus (Matt. 8:19) and to Paul (2 Tim. 1:11). Timothy is instructed  
30 both to teach (*didaskō*) and to empower others to teach (1 Tim. 4:11, 13; 2 Tim. 2:2), and all the

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<sup>6</sup> Apostles are mentioned first in two of the lists. Paul’s reference to himself as an apostle “untimely born” (1 Cor. 15:8) suggests that he saw himself as the last of the apostles in this original sense. He never spoke of himself as having appointed apostles, and the use of the term faded away in the early church, possibly because of its special association with those directly appointed by Jesus Himself.

<sup>7</sup> Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1981), 768-9. *Apostolos* is also used of other types of appointed representatives, such as individuals sent out by individual churches (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25); cf. Heb. 3:1.

<sup>8</sup> In 2 Tim. 4:5, Timothy, in a series of imperatives, is instructed both to do the work of a *euangelistēs* and also to fulfill his *diakonia* (ministry, or service).

<sup>9</sup> Similarly the English word “pastor” is derived from the Latin *pastorem* meaning “shepherd.”

<sup>10</sup> Paul also uses the example of shepherding to argue for his, and others, right to be supported financially in their work of ministry (1Cor. 9:7).

<sup>11</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 209-210.

1 Colossian believers are told to teach one another (Col 3:16). The authority of the teacher is under  
2 authority of the apostles, and the Scriptures, whose teachings they explain (Isa. 8:20).<sup>12</sup>

3 Again, neither these more leadership-oriented gifts, nor any of the other gifts, are ever  
4 spoken of with restrictions as to gender.<sup>13</sup> Rather, the NT indicates that it is God who, according  
5 to His own sovereign choice, gives to every believer a divinely-defined and unique contribution  
6 to make and holds them and the church accountable for its wise use.

### 7 8 *Formally Appointed Ministry Roles in the NT* 9

10 In addition to each believer's exercise of the gifts of the Spirit under the leading and  
11 authorization of God, the NT testifies that, to help the church remain true to God and carry out its  
12 mission effectively, some organization is necessary (Acts 6:1; 1 Cor. 14:40).<sup>14</sup> This organization  
13 includes the formal appointment of individuals entrusted by the church to carry out particular  
14 ministry functions (Titus 1:5).<sup>15</sup> The examples and instructions in the NT testify that such  
15 appointments were generally done on the basis of evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence  
16 (providing the power and appropriate gifts for ministry) and of the spiritual maturity to use these  
17 gifts to represent God and the church appropriately. Such recognition by the church functions to  
18 "test the spirits" (1 John 4:1) and adds to one already authorized by God a more tangible,  
19 humanly-delegated authority, indicating the church's trust and affirmation.

### 20 21 The Twelve Apostles

22 The appointment of twelve apostles early in Jesus ministry was for the stated purpose of  
23 being with Him and being sent out to preach (Mark 3:14). The authority given them is directly  
24 stated to be authority (*exousia*) to cast out demons and to heal diseases—in other words, it was  
25 an authority over "nonhuman enemies of God's reign" (Matt. 10:1; Luke 9:1).<sup>16</sup> This same  
26 purpose and authority was soon given also to seventy others (Luke 10:1, 9, 17), in a prefiguring  
27 of the shared authority that Jesus would call upon His church to practice. As the criteria for  
28 selecting the new twelfth apostle further evidences, the special authority the twelve apostles did  
29 carry in relation to people was related to the trust and training Jesus had invested in them for the  
30 proclamation of their experience as eyewitnesses of the Lord and His teachings (1:21-22; cf.  
31 Luke 24:46-4; Acts 1:2, 8; 2:42). As time passed, the authoritative witness of these original  
32 apostles was recorded in writings which came to be accepted as NT Scripture, and which have  
33 inherited their previous authority. Thus today it would be inappropriate for a pastor or anyone

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<sup>12</sup>Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1981), 770.

<sup>13</sup>As Ellen White notes, "It is not always men who are best adapted to the successful management of a church" (*Pastoral Ministry*, 36).

<sup>14</sup>This is Ellen White's heartfelt concern in calling for "Gospel Order" as can be seen for example in the chapter entitled "Gospel Order" in *Early Writings*, 97-104.

<sup>15</sup>These functional roles are today often spoken of as *offices*. However the use of this term should not be confused with the status- and power-conscious implications that became associated with this term over the course of history.

<sup>16</sup>Aída Besançon Spencer. "Jesus' Treatment of Women in the Gospels," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2005), 135.. In a larger view, it might be recognized that the reason Jesus' disciples had to exercise authority over demons was that the demons, led by Satan, had themselves sought to usurp undue authority and therefore it was necessary that all authority be taken from them.

1 else to attempt to take upon themselves the kind of authority held by the original apostles of  
2 Jesus, for it is the Scriptures alone that now hold this eyewitness kind of authority.

### 3 4 Deacons

5 Other than the appointment of the apostles, Jesus did not give specific instructions  
6 regarding formal roles of ministry in the church. However in the NT church, following His return  
7 to heaven, two roles are explicitly identified as formally recognized by the church: the deacon  
8 and the elder.<sup>17</sup> Very early, the apostles requested the selection of seven individuals to take over  
9 the “daily ministry (*diakonia*)” (Acts 6:1), of “serving (*diakoneō*) tables” (6:2).<sup>18</sup> Thereby they  
10 planned to concentrate more fully on the purpose Jesus had set out for them, described here, in  
11 terms similar to their original commission, as “prayer and the ministry (*diakonia*) of the word”  
12 (6:4; cf. 2:42). The basic concept behind the term *diakonia* and its cognates is the idea of service,  
13 or ministry, rendered to another.<sup>19</sup> For example, Paul uses *diakonos* to refer to various  
14 individuals in the church, including its leaders such as himself and even Jesus. Interestingly,  
15 where the NT speaks of leaders, English translators have often made the decision to use the word  
16 “minister” [Rom. 15:8; 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 6:4; Eph. 3:7; 6:21], whereas with individuals they do  
17 not consider to be leadership positions they have chosen the term “servant.” Jesus used the term  
18 in such sayings as, “whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant  
19 (*diakonos*)” [Matt. 20:26].)

20 Little else is said of the ministry of the seven, who eventually became known as deacons,  
21 other than this initial assignment in Acts 6. This passage suggests that they were given authority  
22 to resolve the issues involved in the daily distribution of food and other resources to those in  
23 need, and to be in charge of the continued organization and implementation of this task.<sup>20</sup> While  
24 the initial task given the Seven dealt with the distribution of food, they were not barred from  
25 authority to preach and teach, for it is reported that Stephen and Philip were active in these areas  
26 immediately afterward (6:9-53; 8:5-13; cf. 21:8).<sup>21</sup>

27 Two criteria were listed at that time for the selection of the seven: 1) they were to be of  
28 “good reputation” (Acts 6:3), a primary concern later fleshed out in the qualifications for deacon  
29 listed by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:8-13; and 2) they were to exhibit evidence of the Holy Spirit’s  
30 presence in their lives, explicitly including the gift of wisdom (6:7; cf. 1 Cor. 12:8).<sup>22</sup> The term

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<sup>17</sup> The term “NT church” is used here to refer to the church portrayed in the NT. This is the best term I have found for this specific focus, since the broader term “early church” is regularly used to refer to both NT times and the several subsequent centuries.

<sup>18</sup> cf. Luke 10:40 and also 1 Cor. 12:5 which is probably the earliest use of *diakonia* in the NT.

<sup>19</sup> This is in contrast to *doulos*, the other main word group used of a servant in the NT. *doulos* speaks not simply of one who performs a service (whether servant or slave or other individual), but refers specifically to “a relationship of dependence and subordination.” See Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, “Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament,” (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990)..

<sup>20</sup> Although these seven were not in Acts called “deacons (*diakonos*)”—a title which appears only in the Pauline epistles (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13),—this title was at some point assigned to them. This is the designation given them by Ellen White (e.g., *Acts of the Apostles*, 89).

<sup>21</sup> The report of Stephen’s speech in Acts 7 evidences the authority with which he spoke.

<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Ellen White spoke of this process in Acts 6 as “the model for the organization of the church in every other place.” What she is seeking to emphasize in this reference is that the apostles in their “general oversight of the church” were not to lord it over God’s heritage” and that the deacons, chosen on the basis of reputation and Spirit-gifting, would “have a uniting influence upon the entire flock” (*Acts of the Apostles*, 91).

1 *diakonos* is used for the first time in the more formal sense by Paul who extended greetings to  
2 “the overseers and deacons” in Philippi (Phil. 1:1), and described certain qualities one should  
3 exhibit before being appointed to the role of deacon (1 Tim. 3:8-13). Paul’s inclusion, in this list,  
4 of qualities especially addressed to women suggests the presence, even at this early date, of  
5 female deacons (3:11). The biblical mandate for female deacons is recognized by the Adventist  
6 church, which has been ordaining deacons of both genders since the early days.<sup>23</sup>

### 7 8 Elders

9 The other formally identified ministry role to which individuals were said to be appointed  
10 in the NT is that of *elder* (*presbyteros*), also known as *overseer* (*episkopos*, sometimes translated  
11 in English as *bishop*; Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Phi 1:1). The role of elder finds its precedent in the  
12 elders of the OT and early Judaism (e.g. Gen. 50:7; Exod. 3:16). These were older individuals  
13 among the tribe and village who were respected for their experience, moral character and  
14 wisdom, and to whom the community looked for leadership.<sup>24</sup> In the instances we know of they  
15 were generally male, although the work of Deborah, as judge, would incorporated the duties of  
16 an elder.<sup>25</sup> Old Testament elders worked together as a group to give counsel and provide  
17 judgments regarding the day-to-day business of village or town in regard to both religious and  
18 civil matters.<sup>26</sup> The process for selecting elders is not clearly known, in fact the role was likely  
19 held at times on the basis of a tacit recognition of stature and leadership in the community rather  
20 than being a formally elected office.<sup>27</sup>

21 The implementation of a role for elders in the NT church contrasts sharply with the  
22 church’s avoidance of implementing other OT positions such as ruler, with its encroachment  
23 upon the singular authority of God (1 Sam. 8:4-19), and priests, whose work was fulfilled in  
24 Christ (Heb. 7:11-19; 10:8-9). As in the OT, the NT role of elder was without exception a  
25 function held by a group of individuals within a local community of believers, never by a single  
26 individual.

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<sup>23</sup> *Daughters of God*, (Hagerstown: Review, 2005), 249.

<sup>24</sup> James Tunstead Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church: Public Services and Offices in the Earliest Christian Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 228-233.; Benjamin L. Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church* (ed. Gossai; New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 23-39.; cf. R. Alastair Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* (ed. Riches; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 21-23..

<sup>25</sup> Richard M. Davidson, "Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations," (Theology of Ordination Study Committee, 2013), 60. It is feasible that other unnamed women also held this role at times. The Adventist church today officially recognizes that the office of elder is open to both men and women based on an understanding that the masculine gendered language of “one woman man” identifies a moral qualification that is also fulfilled by “a one-man woman.” Thus the current General Conference policy on ordination of women in the *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook* states: “By action of the Annual Council of 1975, reaffirmed at the 1984 Annual Council, both men and women are eligible to serve as elders and receive ordination to this position of service in the church.”

<sup>26</sup> James Tunstead Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church: Public Services and Offices in the Earliest Christian Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 228-233.; Benjamin L. Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church* (ed. Gossai; New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 23-39.; cf. R. Alastair Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* (ed. Riches; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 21-23..

<sup>27</sup> Philo *Mig.* 201; *Sob.* 7; *Abr.* 270, 274; R. Alastair Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* (ed. Riches; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 20-66.

1           There is no clear description of the ordination of elders in the NT, however Acts 14:23  
2 describes elders being appointed, and the qualifications given by Paul to Timothy and Titus for  
3 the choosing of elders further evidence that this had become a formally selected role.<sup>28</sup> In  
4 addition to qualifications similar to that of the deacon, Paul adds that the elder should be able to  
5 teach (1 Tim 3:2; cf. 5:17), a gift that would be important to the elders' task of shepherding and  
6 protecting the flock (Acts 20:2-31; 1 Pet. 5:1-4 and James 5:14).<sup>29</sup> Other work associated with  
7 NT elders includes dealing with contributions for those in need (Acts 11:28-30) and leading,  
8 with others, in the process of decision-making (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 21:18-25).<sup>30</sup> As we have  
9 seen in our exploration of the spiritual gifts, each of these tasks are related to gifts that God has  
10 given to both men and women according to His sovereign choice. As noted above, even as early  
11 as the writing of 1 Peter, elders had to be reminded, as Jesus had so often counseled, that they  
12 were not to try to lord it over (*katakuriuō*) the community (1 Pet. 5:1-3). (In fact, within two or  
13 three decades powerful overseer-bishops, such as Ignatius of Antioch, set themselves over the  
14 other elders and began to rule the church like monarchs, insisting that all should obey their  
15 will.<sup>31</sup>)

16           Some have suggested that Paul's counsel regarding widows in 1 Peter 5:1-16 points to a  
17 developing formal role played by older widows in the church who no longer had the heavy  
18 burden of household management for husband and family (5:5, 10). This possibility is at least  
19 worth considering, since verse 2 uses the term *presbyteros* (with the appropriate feminine  
20 ending) which is often used to refer to formally appointed elders.<sup>32</sup> Further, verse 9 speaks of  
21 women being "selected" (*katalegō*; often translated as "enrolled"). Unfortunately Paul doesn't  
22 describe what they are being selected, or enrolled for, leaving translators and commentators alike  
23 to educated guesswork. Many commentators believe that this was a sort of early church "welfare  
24 list," but it seems odd that these widows should be expected to measure up to a list of

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<sup>28</sup> It is possible that χειροτονέω in Acts 14:23 ("when they had appointed [χειροτονέω] elders in every church") may refer to a laying on of hands, but the current usage rather indicated choosing or electing by the raising of hands. Timothy Friberg, et al., "χειροτονέω," in *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids Baker, 2000).

<sup>29</sup> Ellen White comments on this challenge: "I saw that in the apostles' day the church was in danger of being deceived and imposed upon by false teachers. Therefore the brethren chose men who had given good evidence that they were capable of ruling well their own house and preserving order in their own families, and who could enlighten those who were in darkness. Inquiry was made of God concerning these, and then, according to the mind of the church and the Holy Ghost, they were set apart by the laying on of hands. Having received their commission from God and having the approbation of the church, they went forth baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and administering the ordinances of the Lord's house, often waiting upon the saints by presenting them the emblems of the broken body and spilt blood of the crucified Saviour, to keep fresh in the memory of God's beloved children His sufferings and death" (*Early Writings*, 100).

<sup>30</sup> The role of the elder was never mixed with that of the apostle in the NT. (See for example Acts 15:2).

<sup>31</sup> (See the paper, *Trajectories of Women's Ordination in History*, written by John Reeve for this conference.)

<sup>32</sup> In fact, the early church did not dismiss this possibility, but rather went through a significant struggle on the topic. There is historical evidence that there were actually women elders for centuries after the writing of Paul's letters. It was not until the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 364) that the order of women elders was officially abolished. See John W. Reeve, "Trajectories of Women's Ordination in History," (Theology of Ordination Study Committee, 2013).



1 qualifications similar to the qualifications earlier given for the deacon and elder.<sup>33</sup> There is  
2 certainly a concern for monetary aid that is not present in the part of the letter addressing elders  
3 in general, although that may be a special consideration because of the dependent nature of  
4 women’s lives in ancient times which often left widowed women without resources for survival.  
5 That the section on the service of widows ends by returning to the topic of elders (*presbuteros*)  
6 in general, with further discussion of monetary compensation, suggests the possibility that Paul  
7 is the reference to female *presbuteros* in 5:2 is not just a generic reference to older women.<sup>34</sup>  
8 Unfortunately the available evidence is too uncertain to be certain on this issue.

### 9 10 Qualifications for Formal Appointment by the Church

11 The qualification lists of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:1-11, noted above, describe several  
12 aspects of character, behavior, and reputation which all believers are expected to develop, but  
13 which are prerequisite to the office of deacon and elder. These qualifications may be understood  
14 as gender neutral for several reasons. First, the opening words of Paul’s list of qualifications in  
15 the Greek of 1 Tim. 3:1 actually begins with the statement, “if *anyone* (*tis*, which can be  
16 masculine or feminine) aspires (*to be an*) overseer (*episkopos*),” not “If a *man* (*anēr*) aspires. . .”  
17 as some translations supply. The same is the case in Titus 1:6, which begins, in Greek, “If  
18 anyone (*tis*, not *anēr*) is above reproach . . .”

19 Second, it must be remembered that in Hebrew and Greek—as in many languages and  
20 societies today—gendered (usually male) word forms are used anytime one wishes to refer to  
21 both men and women together.<sup>35</sup> Although an issue has often arisen with regard to the criterion  
22 that the elder or deacon be “the husband of one wife,” such qualifications framed in the  
23 masculine gender do not need to exclude women from serving in these ministries and offices any  
24 more than does the use of the masculine gender in the Ten Commandments and other OT laws.  
25 For example, in Exodus 20:17 the Israelites are told “Thou shalt not covet your neighbor’s wife”  
26 with no mention of the coveting of a husband. Yet no one would argue that this commandment  
27 allows a woman to covet her neighbor’s husband. Since ancient Greek had no word for “spouse,”  
28 the use of “husband” in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 may simply represent both genders by using  
29 the word most expected in that cultural context.

30 Third, the qualification in literal Greek is “a one-woman man,” placing the idea of marital  
31 faithfulness to one’s wife first, which is the emphatic position in Greek thinking. In a list where  
32 all of the remaining qualifications focus on character and reputation it would seem much more  
33 logical to believe that Paul’s concern was with sexual purity rather than gender, especially within  
34 a prevalent pagan cultural context of male sexual freedom and temple prostitution.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> These qualifications are: 1) advanced age (a logical qualification for an “elder,” although the age of sixty is older than one might expect); 2) having been literally “a one-man woman”; 3) being of good reputation; and having in the past demonstrated hospitality, washed the saints feet (given humble service?), assisted those in distress, and devoted herself to every good work.

<sup>34</sup> Ellen White applies this biblical principle (expressed in masculine language) to both male and female ministers. She writes: “Make no mistake in neglecting to correct the error of giving ministers less than they should receive. . . . The tithe should go to those [ministers] who labor in word and doctrine [5:17], be they men or women” (*Manuscript Releases*, 1:263).

<sup>35</sup> Vern. S. Poythress, “Male Meaning in Generic Masculines in Koine Greek,” *Westminster Theological Journal*, 66 no 2 (Fall 2004), 325-336.

<sup>36</sup>

1 Fourth, both the elder and the deacon are called to be literally, “a one-woman man” (1  
2 Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:5-6). Yet Adventists have recognized from the early years that women may  
3 serve in the role of deacon, as suggested in 1 Tim. 1:11.

4 Fifth, the counsel in 1 Tim 5:9 regarding qualifications for widows to be “enrolled”  
5 requires that she must correspondingly be “a one-man woman.” It would seem rather  
6 unnecessary to insist that a widow needs to be a female, which suggests that for the widows, as  
7 for the elders, the point is marital purity. In brief, Paul uses gendered (male and female) language  
8 here, as in a number of other specific situations we have considered, in order to communicate  
9 principles that are relevant for men and women in leadership ministries.<sup>37</sup>

#### 10 Male-ness, Female-ness and Formal Roles

11 As has often been noted, Jesus chose twelve males as apostles, and in the selection of  
12 both the Seven and of the new twelfth apostle appointed in Acts 1, the Greek word *anēr* is used  
13 to identify the possible candidates (Acts 1:21-22; 6:3).<sup>38</sup> Unlike *anthrōpos*, which is often used  
14 in the plural to speak of human beings of either gender, *anēr* basically refers to males. The use of  
15 *anēr* in referring to apostles and deacons, together with the fact that Jesus’ original twelve  
16 apostles were all males, has been thought by some to be based in an OT precedent of male-only  
17 priesthood and spiritual leadership which they consider universally valid. The theory of the  
18 ongoing validity of the male-only priesthood will be discussed below. It is however appropriate  
19 to point out here several factors that should give pause to the assumption that women should on  
20 this basis be universally barred from leadership positions in the church.

21 The most elementary principles of interpretation recognize that one must treat stories  
22 differently than direct instruction. The initial appointments of the apostles, as well as the  
23 deacons, are in story form describing specific situations at the very beginning of the church’s  
24 organization, and cannot be assumed, without further evidence, to be prescriptive in all their  
25 details for the whole church for all time.<sup>39</sup> Indeed Jesus and the church in Jerusalem appointed  
26 only Jews, yet no one argues that certain roles of leadership in the church should be given only to  
27 Jews.

28 Rather than a universal mandate legislating male-only leadership, the NT suggests that  
29 the main point in Jesus’ choice of twelve males to be apostles, and in the insistence on a  
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<sup>37</sup> Even much later, in Ellen White’s time, she used male-gendered language to speak of functions that in other writings she more carefully assigns to both sexes. For example, she remarks, “Those who profess to be the ministers of Jesus should be *men* of experience and deep piety, and then at all times and in all places they can shed a holy influence” (*Early Writings*, 102); but also, “The tithes should go to those [ministers] who labor in word and doctrine, be they men or women” (*Manuscript Releases*, 1:263); “The experience thus gained [in the canvassing work] will be of the greatest value to those who are fitting themselves for the ministry. It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God.” (*Testimonies for the Church*, 6:322). These, along with the context of the 1905 quote about Acts 6, suggest that White often made a point about the character of ministers using language appropriate to her day and age although she recognized the place of both men and women in ministry.

<sup>38</sup> In seeking a twelfth, Peter states, “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us” (Acts 1:21, NKJV). Seeking the seven, the apostles ask, “Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3, NKJV).

<sup>39</sup> If the exclusion of women from leadership was in fact an essential cornerstone of Gospel order and the organization of God’s government, it is odd that we have no record of Jesus instructing His apostles directly on this point.

1 replacement for the twelfth after Jesus' return to heaven, was to represent symbolically the  
2 twelve tribes headed by twelve (male) patriarchs, to whom Jesus had now come in fulfillment of  
3 God's promises that He would send a redeemer-messiah (e.g. Matt. 19:28; Acts 26:6-7; cf. James  
4 1:1; Rev 7:4-8).<sup>40</sup> The representation of the patriarchs/tribes by the twelve male apostles is also  
5 evidenced in the book of Revelation, which portrays the names of the twelve patriarchs on the  
6 gates of the New Jerusalem and the twelve apostles on its foundations (Rev. 21:12-14.)<sup>41</sup> This  
7 symbolism is an important part of the NT message that God's OT promises to Israel did not fail  
8 but were fulfilled for a remnant of the Jews, together with the in-gathering of believing Gentiles,  
9 to become God's NT people of God. (Acts 3:22-26; Rom. 9-11).

10 In fact *anēr*, the term used in 1:21-22 and 6:3 for *man*, is not as exclusively male as is  
11 sometimes suggested. For example, it is used in Scripture in a representative way to make a  
12 lesson or point about both genders, as is evidenced in Matthew 7:24 where Jesus says, "Everyone  
13 then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise *anēr* who built his house  
14 on the rock."<sup>42</sup> The reality is that male leadership in public places remained the overriding  
15 expectation as it had for millennia, even though at this time the rare woman was able to  
16 independently hold or gain wealth and even take a position of influence. To prominently appoint  
17 women to places of leadership for which a man was prepared would at that time have brought  
18 discredit to the Gospel and turned souls away from God's invitation. Even as God was patient  
19 with Israel for many years in their divorce practices (Matt. 19:8), and with the church in the  
20 practice of slavery, time was needed for development in their understanding of women's roles.

### 21 The Pastor

22 The NT does not speak of *pastor* as a role or office formally appointed by the church.  
23 The only use of the term *pastor* in the English translations of the NT is the usage we have  
24 already investigated in Ephesians 4:11 which refers not to a church appointed role but to a gift,  
25 distributed by Christ through the Holy Spirit, endowing selected individuals to act in the ministry  
26 role of a shepherd (*poimēn*) (4:7, 11). Even in the early church following the NT, pastoring was  
27 not a separate office of its own, but a ministry carried out by the elder or bishop. As far as we  
28 know it was not until the Reformation, in correcting the abuses of doctrine and power brought in  
29 by the system of bishops and priests, that the term "pastor" became the title of a role formally  
30 identified and appointed by the church.

31 Some have pointed to Acts 13:1-3 as the first pastoral ordination and thus evidence of a  
32 formally-appointed NT role of pastor.<sup>43</sup> It is certainly appropriate to see the work Paul and  
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<sup>40</sup> Scot McKnight, "Jesus and the Twelve," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 11, (2001): 229-231.. Ellen White states, "As in the Old Testament the twelve patriarchs stand as representatives of Israel, so the twelve apostles were to stand as representatives of the gospel church" (*Desire of Ages*, 291).

<sup>41</sup> Aída Besançon Spencer. "Jesus' Treatment of Women in the Gospels," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2005), 136.

<sup>42</sup> Note also instances such as Acts 2:14 where Peter addresses the crowd as "*anēr*" despite the reality that there would no doubt also have been women on the streets of Jerusalem that day. Martin Hanna has researched this and other examples in a forthcoming paper, currently titled, "Men and Women in Church Order: A Study of Paul's Use of Representative Statements."

<sup>43</sup> Acts of the Apostles identifies this experience as an ordination to ministry, stating, "God had abundantly blessed the labors of Paul and Barnabas during the year they remained with the believers in Antioch. But neither of them had as yet been formally ordained to the gospel ministry. They had now reached a point in their Christian experience when God was about to entrust them with the carrying forward of a difficult missionary enterprise, in the

1 Barnabas were being sent out to do as a being a ministry that overlapped with what we would see  
2 today as “pastoral” activities, and to find in their work inspiration and example for pastors and  
3 other gospel workers. Valid lessons from the story which may be applied to the work of the  
4 pastor today include the importance of the church following God’s leading, in publicly setting  
5 apart spiritually mature and gifted individuals for the carrying out of certain tasks and leadership  
6 roles. The pastoral role in the Adventist church today also brings together, in varying ways, roles  
7 of evangelism, nurture, and leadership held also by Paul and Barnabas.

8 The selection and ministry of Paul and Barnabas, however, differs in several respects  
9 from that of today’s pastor. Their selection, like Paul’s call, was directed audibly by God (in the  
10 Spirit), giving to their ministry an unusually strong divine imperative. In addition, the title given  
11 them in Acts, following this laying on of hands, was *apostle*, not *pastor* (14:14). For Barnabas,  
12 this seems to have been an apostleship similar to that of other later NT apostles. However Paul,  
13 to whom Christ Himself had appeared and given his call (9:1-20), understood his apostleship as  
14 equivalent to that of the twelve, speaking of himself as the “last-born” of the apostles (1 Cor.  
15 15:7) and explaining that his gospel, too, had been given him directly by Christ (Acts 13:1; Gal.  
16 1:11-12). Further, Paul and Barnabas carried out an itinerant ministry more akin to the  
17 specialized role of missionary or evangelist today than that of the average pastor, never settling  
18 long in one place but always moving on to new unreached areas to continue the work of  
19 preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, as God had directed (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17), but also of  
20 “last-born” apostle and prophet

21 That we cannot locate within the NT the movement from pastoral ministry as a spiritual  
22 gift to pastoral ministry as an officially appointed role is not a weakness or problem, for God’s  
23 Spirit-leading of the church did not end with the book of Revelation or the 28<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts.  
24 Rather the NT testifies that God both provided the principles and seeds of structure for the  
25 growth of the church, and at the same time left room for the growth and change that the church  
26 would face in the future with the Spirit as her guide. Thus Jesus gave, in place of a blueprint for  
27 church structure, an intensive mentorship of twelve who would initially lead in the sharing of the  
28 gospel and pointers toward the participation of the whole church in ministry (Matt. 18:15-20;  
29 Luke 10:1-3) guided by the central principles of meek and humble service. Following Pentecost,  
30 the church began the work of further organization when it responded to the burgeoning  
31 challenges involved in serving the physical needs of the church by appointing the Seven, who  
32 came to be called deacons. The unremarked emergence of the office of elder in the NT can be  
33 seen as a further development of this principle of organic growth under the guidance of the Spirit  
34 and Scripture that God built into His design for the church. To formally recognize, at various  
35 times and places under His leading and within Scripture’s guidelines, additional roles and  
36 ministries needed to enhance gospel order through efficient organization and effective ministry,  
37 is fully within the NT pattern.<sup>44</sup>

38 The office of pastor today carries within its title the reminder of the nurturing gift of  
39 shepherding, of caring for and protecting, the people of God. At the same time, it also makes use  
40 of many other abilities and gifts of the Spirit—as anyone knows who has recently seen or

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prosecution of which they would need every advantage that could be obtained through the agency of the church” (p. 160).

<sup>44</sup> Ellen White states, “Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers had been formed into churches, the organization of the church was further perfected, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained.” (*Acts of the Apostles*, 91). John Reeve has shown, in his paper for this committee, the results when church organization is not in harmony with the witness of His will in Scripture.

1 experienced the work of a pastor. These gifts vary to some degree from pastor to pastor but the  
2 church generally expects gifting in areas such as evangelist, leadership, and administration.  
3 Roles of leadership are essential for the health and progress of the church.

4 Several general principles of ministry found in the NT must guide the church in thinking  
5 about the role of the pastor today, principles which, tragically, have been too often forgotten by  
6 the church in history. Fundamental is the principle that the selection of an individual for a  
7 formally-appointed pastoral role is to be based on evidence of a godly character and of selection  
8 by the Spirit, through appropriate gifting for the work of ministry. In the NT special respect and  
9 consideration is appropriately given to those who labor and lead, yet underlying all pastoral  
10 effort is Christ's teaching that all ministry is to be about humble service to others, rather than  
11 about taking power over another to rule and control.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the pastoral role, with its church-  
12 defined expectations of nurture and leadership, is one among a number of valuable ministry roles  
13 God has gifted individuals for the purpose of serving the church and reaching the world for  
14 Christ.

15 There is nothing in the description of the role of the pastor above that women are unable  
16 to carry out with distinction. In fact it might be argued that many women are ideally suited for  
17 the nurturing task of shepherding, and that their more collaborative manner of expressing their  
18 giftedness in the other areas of pastorally related ministry effectively complements the more  
19 masculine styles of leadership. As we have seen, gifts of leadership, administration, pastoring  
20 and so on are given to all as the Spirit wills. The Spirit-led ministry of women today has  
21 demonstrated clearly that past questioning of a woman's ability to carry out these roles to the  
22 glory of God is based in disastrously false assumptions. The next section of this paper will turn  
23 to the concern that the role of pastor entails some kind of authority that is inappropriate for a  
24 woman to exercise. First, though, it will be of value to remind ourselves of the relation of  
25 ordination to pastoral ministry in the church.

### 26 27 28 *Ordination* 29

30 This committee has recently been engaged in the task of exploring what we mean when  
31 we talk about "ordaining" someone to ministry in the church. While there inevitably remains  
32 some disagreement on the dividing lines between biblical mandate and current practice, as well  
33 as on finer points of wording, we have come to agreement regarding a central core of what we as  
34 Adventists understand ordination to mean. In our study we have recognized that the word  
35 "ordination" is found in no standard English translation of the NT, and that there is no single  
36 Greek basis for the English term, "ordain." Rather, in English versions, the term "ordain" has  
37 been used to express a variety of ideas related to choosing and selecting things, actions, or  
38 people. In keeping with the idea of ordination as a choosing, and with the NT precedent of  
39 formally appointing people for selected ministries, we have defined ordination "as the action of  
40 the church in publicly recognizing those whom the Lord has called and equipped for local and  
41 global church ministry." In addition we have noted that, "In the act of ordination the church

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<sup>45</sup> As part of this respect and consideration those who devote their lives to full time to ministry are to be supported economically by the community of believers (Matt. 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 9:3-14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18).

1 confers representative authority upon individuals for the specific work of ministry to which they  
2 are appointed (Acts 6:1-3; 13:1-3; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 2:15).”<sup>46</sup>

3 When we look at the NT we find that just as Jesus specifically named and appointed  
4 twelve apostles for the work of preaching the good news He had shared with them, so also the  
5 Holy Spirit led the church to publicly and formally endorse qualified individuals to accomplish  
6 the tasks involved in certain appointed roles of ministry, entrusting them to act on behalf of God  
7 and of the church. To this public enactment we have given the title ordination. We understand  
8 that in reality the church’s ordination is a recognition of a prior selection and gifting by God.

9 While in the act of ordination the NT church engaged in prayer on behalf of the  
10 individual and of the ministry in which they will engage, the NT makes no suggestion that in the  
11 act of ordination itself any special quality is bestowed. Neither does the NT suggest that  
12 ordination grants an individual the right to act as a ruler over other human beings. Ordination  
13 simply indicates to the individuals themselves, and to the people whom they serve, that these  
14 individuals will go about their work having the full confidence and support of the church.<sup>47</sup> Their  
15 authority is a representative authority, that is, the authority to represent the Lord and the church  
16 in the tasks of communicating the gospel and doing the work assigned by the Lord through the  
17 church body.

18 How does this understanding of ordination impact our question of whether or not to  
19 ordain women to pastoral ministry? Since ordination is simply a formal recognition of God’s  
20 gifting of a person for a particular ministry and of their trustworthiness as a church  
21 representative, the implications of ordination itself should present no impediment to ordaining  
22 women as pastors. Yet some question whether the authority implied in the church’s endorsement  
23 of the individual being ordained would make it inappropriate to ordain a woman as a pastor. This  
24 is the issue we turn to next, first by investigating the meaning of authority and its use as the NT  
25 presents it, and later by examining the passages that some hold to bar women from any exercise  
26 of authority over men.

### 27 28 29 *Ministry and Authority*

30  
31 In Jesus’ apocalyptic discourse, although He spoke much of the future, His deepest  
32 concern was that His followers watch and be ready for His coming. Near the end of this  
33 discourse, Mark records a parable about a master who went on a journey “giving to His servants  
34 authority (*exousia*), to each their work” and commanding the doorkeeper to watch (Mark 13:34).  
35 The main point in this parable is that all are called to “be watchful therefore, for you do not know  
36 when the Master of the house will come” (v. 35). As they awaited the master’s coming, the  
37 servants held authority to do the work he had left for them. The phrase, “to each their work,”  
38 appears to be exegetical, that is, it explains the nature of the authority given to the servants as  
39 being for the purpose of doing their individual work. In their watchfulness, the master’s servants  
40 were given not only specific tasks to do but also authority to carry them out. The authority given

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<sup>46</sup> “Consensus Statement on a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Ordination,” voted July 23, 2013 by the  
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Theology of Ordination Study Committee.

<sup>47</sup> See also *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 161-164.

1 believers here and in the NT as a whole is not about *authority over others* to control or rule them,  
2 but *authority to accomplish a task*.<sup>48</sup>

3 The related parables in Matthew and Luke speak also of a servant who is said specifically  
4 to have been “put in charge of” (*kathistēmi epi*) the master’s servants. Even for the one in charge,  
5 the authority given is specifically described, not as authority to control or take power over, but  
6 rather authority to give the other servants their food at the proper time, that is, to accomplish the  
7 given task of serving and caring for their needs. Jesus repeatedly insisted that any authority  
8 exercised within the community of believers in the pursuit of the church’s mission was not to  
9 involve “ruling” or “lording it over” others (*kurieuō*) but rather serving them (e.g. Mark 9:33-36;  
10 Luke 22:25-27). Indeed, Christ’s followers are instructed to eschew any sort of role or title, such  
11 as rabbi, leader, or father, which would draw one into assuming such autonomous authority  
12 (Matt. 23:8-12). This reflects a theology of ministry and authority that is based on service, self-  
13 sacrifice and humility, not on higher rank and power over others.

14 Such a ministry was modeled by Christ Himself, who “took the form (*schema*, function  
15 and not just the outward appearance) of a bond-servant (*doulos*)” (Phil. 2:7). This understanding  
16 of authority is evident in the frequent use of *diakonos* and its word-family to describe the  
17 ministry of Paul and others as that of servants (*diakonos*) and slaves (*doulos*) of the gospel and of  
18 Christ (Colossians 1:7, 4:7, 12; Ephesians 6:21). The NT writers envisioned ministry as service  
19 (*diakonia*) and applied the term to the service of all believers, both those who exercise leadership  
20 roles as well as those who fulfill other ministerial roles in the church (Acts 6:1, 4; Romans 16:1;  
21 Philippians 2: 5–7; Colossians 1:7; 1 Peter 4:10). In this way, the character of authority  
22 exercised by Christian believers is fundamentally different from that seen in the world at large (1  
23 Peter 5:1–4).

24 It would be of value here to pause for a moment and consider what *exousia*, the main NT  
25 word for authority, means in a general sense before delving further into the way the NT  
26 understands the concept. A common and mistakenly narrow understanding of authority defines it  
27 simply as *the right to rule others and to expect obedience*. Yet we also speak of priests having  
28 the authority, for example, to enter a restricted area such as the Holy Place of the temple; or  
29 individuals speaking with authority regarding their particular field of expertise. These examples  
30 do not have to do with ruling others but with the acknowledged right to act or speak in a  
31 particular way. The NT evidences just such a broad understanding of its key authority term,  
32 *exousia*, in the use of this word in John 1:12 where it is promised that, “as many as received  
33 Him, to them He gave the *exousia* to become children of God.” Here we do not find an authority  
34 to rule over others, but a right given by God to become what He created us to be.

35 A more complete definition of authority (*exousia*), that makes room for the various ways  
36 it is used in the NT, is *the ascribed or acknowledged right to act and/or to influence the behavior*  
37 *of others*. It involves the right to make choices, to carry out actions, to influence in various ways  
38 what other people think or do.<sup>49</sup> It does not exist unless it is recognized or granted by another,

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<sup>48</sup> Ellen White warned against “kingly power” and authority and opposed even groups taking this kind of power. (*General Conference Bulletin*, April 3, 1901, par. 34; Selections from the Testimonies for the Church For the Study of Those Attending the General Conference in Oakland, Ca., March 27, 1903, 54.3; 55.2; *Bible Training School*, May 1, 1903, par. 5; *Testimonies for the Church Containing Letters to Physicians and Ministers Instruction to Seventh-Day Adventists* [SpTB02] 45.1 [1904]).

<sup>49</sup> Authority is often distinguished from *power*, which is the ability to actually carry out the intended action. In the NT the concepts of *exousia* and *dunamis* (power) often overlap, especially where it is the God of all power who is the One granting authority (*exousia*).

1 whether by other human beings or by God Himself. In reality, every ministry or gift granted by  
2 God and recognized by people entails some degree of authority. For example, one with the gift of  
3 administering (1 Cor. 12:28) exercises authority in the management of the church's affairs. This  
4 authority is subject to the policies agreed upon by the body as a whole. At the same time, an  
5 individual with the gift of giving (Rom. 12:8) exercises authority over the distribution and use of  
6 the resources placed in their hands. The authority of the giver is expected to be bounded by the  
7 principles in Scripture and the wisdom of fellow believers. Again, one with the gift of  
8 exhortation (*paraklēsis*) exercises authority to build others up, as they are willing to accept it  
9 (Rom. 12:8; cf. 2 Cor. 10:8-9; 13:10-11).

10 Thus whether one is acting in a traditional leadership role or not, every exercise of the  
11 gifts of the Spirit involves a use of authority constrained by the needs and the input of the  
12 community of believers under the guidance of Scripture and the Holy Spirit. Some authority may  
13 be the authority of expertise related to knowledge or skill in a particular area, some may be the  
14 authority of influence based in a wise and godly character, and others may carry a formally  
15 granted authority to represent the church. Never, however, does the NT grant believers a *carte*  
16 *blanche* authority over people to enforce their own will. Although the prophetic gift carries  
17 particular authority when speaking the messages of God, there is no indication that this gift was  
18 to be separated out as alone bearing God's authority (and thus uniquely allowing women to  
19 speak with authority). Rather, as we have indicated, all gifts carry authority from God. Peter  
20 states,

21 “As each one has received a gift, minister to (*diakoneō*) one another as good stewards of  
22 the manifold grace of God: whoever speaks, *do it* as speaking the utterances of God; whoever  
23 serves (*diakoneō*) *do it* as from the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be  
24 glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever.  
25 Amen” (1Pe 4:10-11).

26 Christ alone is identified in the NT as head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:14-16; 5:23;  
27 Col 1:18; 2:19).<sup>50</sup> Under Christ, authority in the Christian church is always subject to the body  
28 of believers as a whole. Jesus, the head, explicitly gave to the church as a whole, not simply to  
29 any individual leader or office, the authority to arbitrate and to discipline, to bind and to loose  
30 (Matt. 18:15-20; cf. 16:19).

31 Neither in the Gospels and Acts nor in the Epistles is any individual human given  
32 ultimate authority over another, for a fundamental principle of God's government and of  
33 Christian behavior is respect for free will (e.g. Josh. 24:15; Philem. 8, 9, 17). When Paul wrote to  
34 churches, he never addressed his letters to a single individual or leadership group within the  
35 church. His exhortations, and even the difficult issues that needed to be cared for, were always  
36 addressed to the whole church, with individuals made mention of only in brief greetings at the  
37 end of the letter. Even in Phil. 1:1, the only verse where leadership groups are mentioned as  
38 addressees, these overseers/elders and deacons (addressed only in the plural) are added as an  
39 inclusion in a letter addressed to the church as a whole.<sup>51</sup> Peter, though he was the one first  
40 identified as receiving authority to bind and to loose (compare Matt. 16:19; 18:18), worked in  
41 concert with the Twelve and brought his ideas to the body of believers for consideration (Acts  
42 1:21-26; 6:2, 5; 15:6-13, 19). Likewise James, a key leader in the Jerusalem church after Peter's

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<sup>50</sup> In a later section of the paper we will discuss 1 Cor 11:3-4 and Eph 5:23-24 and the headship principles regarding man and woman found there.

<sup>51</sup> See, James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 593-596..



1 departure (12:17), did not make a significant decision without participation from others (Acts  
2 15:4, 13, 19, 22; 21:18, 23).

3 Paul certainly provides the biggest challenge to the idea that no individual in the church  
4 has ultimate authority over others. There are passages in his epistles where he does not hold back  
5 from using the language of authority in an undeniably bold way. For example, in Philemon, verse  
6 21, Paul states, "Having confidence in your obedience (*hupakoē*), I write to you," and in 2  
7 Thessalonians 3:4, "we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do  
8 the things we command (*parangellō*)."<sup>52</sup> Several factors may be considered in seeking to  
9 understand such statements in light of the teachings of Jesus and the rest of the NT.

10 First, even the strong-minded Paul recognized the superior authority, not only of Jesus  
11 Christ but also of his family in Christ, the church as a whole. He submitted his understanding of  
12 the gospel to those of repute in Jerusalem (Gal 2:2). He accepted the authority of the church in  
13 Antioch, and later of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem together with the church regarding the  
14 issue of circumcision (Acts 15:2, 4, 22, 23).<sup>53</sup> He also followed the instructions of James and the  
15 elders to sacrifice in the temple upon his return to Jerusalem (Acts 21:18-26). He made no  
16 attempt to exercise control over everyone who preached the word of God, but accepted and  
17 applauded the work of Apollos and others (1 Cor. 3:5; 1:10-13; 3:4-7; 16:12; Phil. 1:15-18).<sup>54</sup>

18 Second, Paul's authority was grounded, not in his own status or position humanly  
19 speaking, but in his identity as an apostle who, like the twelve, had been personally and audibly  
20 called by Jesus Himself to proclaim the gospel they had experienced (1 Cor. 15:7-9).<sup>55</sup> For the  
21 twelve this authority of expertise involved their experience as eyewitnesses, but Paul made clear  
22 that he too had received his message as a prophet from Jesus himself (1 Cor. 7:10; 2 Cor. 12:7;  
23 Gal. 1:11-12; cf. Acts 13:1; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 3:15-16). Paul's calls to obedience are then not based  
24 in his own authority but are calls to obedience of Christ's own instruction, given to him as a  
25 prophet of God. For this reason, together with his constant use of Old Testament Scripture, he  
26 could accurately say, "we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor.  
27 10:5; cf. 1 Thess. 2:13). Paul's instruction, together with that of the apostolic eyewitnesses, has  
28 since been recorded in Scripture, which is where this authority now resides. (Where new  
29 prophetic claims are made today, they are to be tested by the body of believers on the basis of  
30 Scripture. Isa. 8:20; 1 Cor. 2:15; 1 John 4:1; cf. 1 Cor. 14:29-32).

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<sup>52</sup> See, *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> The chronology of these events, and Paul's long-term handling of the Jerusalem council's decision, is beyond the purview of this paper. I would suggest, however, that the events took place in the order given above and that Paul's teachings in Rom. 14:1-15:13 and 1 Cor. 8 were not actually in opposition to the decision of the council.

<sup>54</sup> Indeed, like Jesus (Luke 9:49-50), Paul rejoiced that even in the preaching of those with less than pure motives "in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed" (Phil. 1:12-18).

<sup>55</sup> Paul began almost every letter by identifying himself as one called to be an apostle (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1), or as an apostle by the will of God (e.g. 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1). This claim is defended at various times by pointing out that, like the twelve (2 Cor. 11:5), he: 1) saw Jesus and was thus a witness to his resurrection (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7-9); 2) received his call and his gospel directly from Him (Gal.1:11-2:9); 3) performed signs and wonders through Him (1 Cor. 2:4-5; 12:11-12); and 4) won others to His name (1 Cor. 9:2). George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 566-567.. Paul, for example, rebukes Peter (Gal. 2:11) and takes the liberty to interpret the Acts 15 decision (Rom. 14:13-23; 1 Cor. 8). Even in the letter to the Roman church, whom he had not established nor even visited, Paul speaks with authority. Ellen White states that, "Paul regarded the occasion of his formal ordination as marking the beginning of a new and important epoch in his lifework. It was from this time that he afterward dated the beginning of his apostleship in the Christian church" (*Acts of the Apostles*, 164).

1 Third, Paul was usually gentle in this authority preferring to suggest and urge as he did  
2 with Philemon, stating: “Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what  
3 is fitting, yet for love’s sake I rather appeal to you” (Philem. 1:8, 9), and to the Corinthians: “I am  
4 not speaking *this* as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of  
5 your love also.” (2 Cor. 8:8).<sup>56</sup> In 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 8, he portrayed himself as a gentle  
6 mother.

7 Fourth, a closer investigation of the use and meaning of the various authority words used  
8 by Paul reveal a more nuanced view than is apparent from just a cursory reading.<sup>57</sup> For example,  
9 an examination of Paul’s use of the words *obedience* (*hupakouō*) and *obedient* (*hupakoē*), reveals  
10 that Paul is in reality calling people to an obedience not to himself personally, but to the  
11 principles of the gospel and of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Romans 6:17 he states, “But thanks be to  
12 God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient (*hupakouō*) from the heart to that  
13 form of teaching (*didachē*) to which you were committed,” and in 2 Corinthians 10:5 “We are  
14 destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are  
15 taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (see also Rom. 1:5; 2 Thess. 1:7, 8; cf. 1  
16 Pet. 1:22).<sup>58</sup>

17 Much of the language used by Paul that is understood as “authority language,” is also  
18 used in the NT to refer to actions to be carried out by all believers. For example, he tells Titus,  
19 “These things speak and exhort and reprove (*elenkō*) with all authority” (2:15) and counsels that  
20 overseers are to “give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke (*elenkō*) those who  
21 contradict it.” Yet he also tells the Ephesian believers, “Take no part in the unfruitful works of  
22 darkness, but instead expose them (*elenkō*)” (5:11), just as Jesus told his disciples “If your  
23 brother sins [against you], go and show him his fault (*elenkō*) in private” (Matt. 18:15). Likewise  
24 while Paul says of himself in Colossians 1:28 “Him we proclaim, warning (*noutheteō*) everyone  
25 and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ,” he also  
26 tells the believers in 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and  
27 admonishing (*noutheteō*) one another.”

28 Perhaps the most challenging authority terminology used by Paul is the word *parangellō*  
29 along with its cognate noun *parangelia*. The lexical meaning of *parangellō* is “to make an  
30 announcement about someth. that must be done, give orders, command, instruct, direct.”<sup>59</sup> This  
31 is a broad range of meaning that necessitates thinking carefully about the author’s intention in  
32 each usage, based on the context of the passage and the NT as a whole. The word group is used  
33 in the NT of the instructions of God and Christ, and of official leaders in the world outside the  
34 church. Paul also occasionally uses it in instruction given to his addressees.

35 Paul’s strongly worded instructions to Timothy and Titus to speak with authority (e.g. 1  
36 Timothy 4:11 “These things direct [*parangellō*] and teach”) may be understood as related to  
37 these same factors. The moderation with which Timothy’s authority is to be used can be seen in

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<sup>56</sup> This is noted by Walter L. Liefeld. “The Nature of Authority in the New Testament,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2005), 258..

<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, it is beyond the limitations of this paper to deal with all the words Paul uses in relation to authority.

<sup>58</sup> The words “and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete” which follow immediately after 2 Cor. 10:5 should also be noted. Note the plural “we” that is used here, which connects to a larger group than Paul alone and is in keeping with Christ’s instructions in Matt. 18:12-20.

<sup>59</sup> BDAG, [what page?]

1 1 Timothy 5:1-2, “Do not sharply rebuke (*epiplēssō*) an older man, but *rather* appeal to *him* as a  
2 father, *to* the younger men as brothers, <sup>2</sup> the older women as mothers, *and* the younger women as  
3 sisters, in all purity” (NASB). It should also be considered that whatever other role these two  
4 played in the church, the NT makes clear that they acted as assistants of Paul (Acts 16:1-3; 2  
5 Cor. 8:16, 17; 2 Thess. 1:1) and thus were his representatives communicating his apostolic and  
6 prophetic message to the churches he had founded.<sup>60</sup> This is illustrated by Paul’s use of the 1<sup>st</sup>  
7 person singular pronoun in telling Timothy, “*I* do not allow . . .” (1 Tim. 2:12). Timothy’s  
8 speaking on behalf of Paul might best be compared today with leaders who speak the instructions  
9 of Scripture.<sup>61</sup>

10 In 1 Corinthians 16:15-16, Paul calls on believers to submit (*hypotassō*) to those who  
11 have devoted themselves to work and toil (double emphasis) among them. This is the single NT  
12 instruction calling for believers to submit (*hypotassō*) to leaders in the church. The basis on  
13 which Paul called for such submission is not the standard worldly qualifications for receiving  
14 authority, such as power or impressive resumes, but rather devotion to serving God and His  
15 people (*diakonia*). Certainly this would not apply to those who work hard sowing seeds of  
16 dissension or untruth, but rather to those who come as servants and who have been recognized  
17 and accepted as fellow-workers in the same cause. Another passage, Hebrews 13:17 states,  
18 “Obey (*peithō*) your leaders (*hēgeomai*) and submit (*hupēikō*) to them, for they are keeping  
19 watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account” (NASB). Again studying the  
20 verse closely is necessary, for this is not a reference to a single ultimate “leader” but to a  
21 plurality. In this verse *peithō* is not the normal word for obedience (*hupakouō*), rather its  
22 meaning in this present passive is more specifically “to be won over as the result of  
23 persuasion.”<sup>62</sup>

24 At the same time, it must be recognized that Paul and the rest of the NT here and  
25 elsewhere evidence a place for NT-defined authority and leadership in the church. This authority,  
26 rather than being about a unilateral hierarchical “authority over people,” is a shared and reasoned  
27 authority; it is about “authority to serve” in the areas of God’s gifting and leading.

28 In light of the *tota scriptura* principle of comparing scripture with scripture, it is  
29 appropriate to understand that the stronger uses of authority language were governed by the  
30 factors outlined above within the particular situations in which they were applied.<sup>63</sup> In an overall  
31 reading, the authority of NT leaders, rather than being about a *carte blanche* authority over

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<sup>60</sup> Ellen White spoke of Timothy as a beloved son of Paul, whom he carefully trained as a gospel minister and teacher. Citing Paul’s counsel to him “Preach the word, be ready in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2, NKJV), she shows how Paul points Timothy to Scripture for the source of his authority: “Fearing that Timothy’s mild, yielding disposition might lead him to shun an essential part of his work, Paul exhorted him to be faithful in reproving sin and even to rebuke with sharpness those who were guilty of gross evils. Yet he was to do this “with all long-suffering and doctrine.” He was to reveal the patience and love of Christ, explaining and enforcing his reproofs by the truths of the word” (*Acts of the Apostles*, 503).

<sup>61</sup> Walter L. Liefeld. "The Nature of Authority in the New Testament," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2005), 262..

<sup>62</sup> BDAG [which page?]; Note that the Greek word for submit is also a different word than the regular *hypotassō*, and suggests the idea to yield, or give way to.

<sup>63</sup> Is it possible that the NT leaves room for some space in leadership style

1 people, focuses on authority to accomplish a task together under the overall authority of the  
2 church as a whole, based in Scripture and governed by the head who is Christ.<sup>64</sup>

3 In the first century strongly authoritarian behavior was the norm and was in fact socially  
4 insisted upon in many situations. The guidelines of shared servant leadership described by Christ  
5 and evidenced in the NT turn this traditional understanding of authority upside-down and  
6 reinstitute God's picture of authority and of how it is appropriately practiced. This NT  
7 understanding does not negate authority but provides directions for a biblically appropriate  
8 understanding of authority and authoritative action. It is unfortunate that while the church still  
9 struggles at times to recognize and implement this biblical view of leadership, wiser minds in the  
10 world are now seeing its value and attempting to put it into practice.

11 In NT times as today, there were cultural differences in the exercise of authority that are  
12 biblically acceptable and many that are not. Biblical principles for exercising authority present a  
13 challenge to every human culture in one way or another. Some common perversions of biblically  
14 defined authority that have crept into today's church in various places around the world include:  
15 dictatorial leadership styles; the creation of status and power hierarchies; failure to exercise  
16 legitimate authority due to political pressure; competition for position and honor; refusal to  
17 acknowledge and support legitimate biblical authority; and granting or withholding authority on  
18 the basis of ethnicity, disability, and social class. Is it possible that the practice of barring women  
19 from ordination to pastoral ministry, on the basis of Scripture, is also a cultural distinction that  
20 distorts Scriptural teaching on authority? While every culture contains elements that are both  
21 good and evil, all too often cultural views and perspectives, rather than biblical principles, have  
22 been allowed to define who can be ordained and how ordained persons should exercise their  
23 authority.

24 To summarize, ultimate authority within the church was never delegated to human  
25 beings. Any authority exercised within the church is exercised under the authority of the body of  
26 believers for the purpose of accomplishing the tasks given them by God. In the Adventist church,  
27 although important servant authority is vested in the pastor, he or she is not the highest authority  
28 for he or she is supervised by the authority of the conference committee, and so on, with the  
29 General Conference in session holding the highest authority under Christ.

### 32 **The Place of Women in the Life and Teaching of the 1st Century Church**

34 In the opening days of the NT church an event occurred that was indicative of the  
35 increasing place women were to take in the ministry of the first century church and in the end of  
36 days. After Jesus' return to heaven, his apostles, "with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus"  
37 were "continually devoting themselves to prayer" (1:13-14). Upon the arrival of the Spirit,  
38 tongues of fire "rested upon each one of them," men and women alike (2:1-3). Peter's speech  
39 explaining the event to the skeptical crowd makes clear that this was not a spontaneous event,  
40 nor was the inclusion of women a happenstance. Rather this had been part of the plan of God  
41 from long ago.<sup>65</sup> Peter's speech began with a quote from the prophet Joel:

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<sup>64</sup> Walter L. Liefeld. "The Nature of Authority in the New Testament," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2005), 258-261..

<sup>65</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (2vols.; vol. 1; London: T & T Clark, 1994), 135..

1 “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit  
2 on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see  
3 visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. <sup>18</sup> And on My menservants and on My  
4 maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. <sup>19</sup> I will  
5 show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of  
6 smoke. <sup>20</sup> The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, Before the  
7 coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.” (Acts 2:17-20 NKJV, quoted from  
8 Joel 2:28-29).<sup>66</sup>  
9

10 In Acts 2:17 it is stated that the Spirit would be poured out on “all flesh,” and in verse 18  
11 this is further clarified as referring to all of God’s servants, both male and female. Davidson has  
12 pointed out the close connections between this prophecy of Joel and the earlier coming of the  
13 Spirit upon the seventy elders of Israel at the time they were chosen for leadership roles.<sup>67</sup> These  
14 elders, as a result of the coming of the Spirit, had all prophesied (Num. 11), just as in Acts 2 a  
15 similarly miraculous sign came when all spoke in tongues. Only this time the sign came to both  
16 men and women.

17 In Peter’s use of Joel’s prophecy to explain what was happening in Jerusalem on the day  
18 of Pentecost, the puzzling point is that no one is said to be prophesying, rather they were  
19 speaking in tongues—a very different gift.<sup>68</sup> How could Joel’s prophecy about prophesying be  
20 fulfilled by a group of people speaking in tongues? The answer must be that, rather than  
21 prophecy being viewed as the only effect of the coming of the Spirit pointed to in this passage, it  
22 should be seen as a particularly apt example (hearkening back to Num. 11) of how the Holy  
23 Spirit would accomplish His purpose of empowering the church for to share God’s message  
24 (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).<sup>69</sup> The application of this prophecy of Joel to explain speaking in tongues  
25 also evidences that Peter did not see the prophetic gift as the main point of Joel’s prophecy, but  
26 rather used the passage to point out two things: 1) that the odd disturbance that day was taking  
27 place as a result of the coming of the Holy Spirit prophesied by Joel; and 2) that the full (and  
28 shocking) participation of women among those evidencing the sign of tongues was not  
29 inappropriate or scandalous, as observers would certainly have been tempted to think, but simply  
30 the fulfillment of God’s plan.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Luke 24:44-45 suggests that it may have been Jesus Himself who pointed out this passage to Peter and the other disciples before His departure

<sup>67</sup> Richard M. Davidson, "Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations," (Theology of Ordination Study Committee, 2013), 62..

<sup>68</sup> In fact very few prophecies, dreams, and visions are described anywhere in Acts.

<sup>69</sup> David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 142.. For information on the Greco-Roman attitudes of the time, see, John W. Reeve, "Trajectories of Women's Ordination in History," (Theology of Ordination Study Committee, 2013), 7-11. Prophecy is particularly apt as a paradigmatic example, because it is centered on communicating the messages of God, just as the church was to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ.

<sup>70</sup> In depicting the opening of the church’s ministry with a speech, and opening the speech with a quotation from OT prophecy, Luke also creates a parallel between Peter’s speech in Acts 2 and the speech of Jesus in Nazareth that opens the Lukan account of Jesus’ ministry (Luke 4:16-30). Such parallels are an important part of the literary artistry of Luke and Acts, functioning to demonstrate how the community of believers, through the leading and empowering of the Spirit, followed the pattern set out by Jesus. When one looks closely at the OT quotations at the beginning of the opening speeches of Jesus and Peter, further parallels become evident between Peter’s quotation from Joe, and Jesus’ quotation from Isaiah,

1  
2  
3 *Individual Women in the NT*  
4

5 Women in the Gospels

6 The Gospels portray a respect for women and a level of inclusion remarkable from a first  
7 century viewpoint, despite appearing very moderate and limited today. Although it would be  
8 erroneous to assume that all women were kept completely out of sight in the Palestinian Judaism  
9 of the intertestamental period (since we find evidence of some limited participation by women in  
10 the synagogue and of heroes like Judith in Jewish literature of the time) cultural convention was  
11 still strong in believing women, for example, to be weaker in judgment and belonging in the  
12 private sphere of the household.<sup>71</sup> Yet Jesus, for example, uses the female image of a mother hen  
13 in charge of her brood to portray Himself in the way He wished to care for His people, Israel  
14 (Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34). In the narrative of the Gospels, the Samaritan “woman at the well”  
15 was likely the first “evangelist” of the Messiah’s coming (John 4:28-30, 39), as Mary was the  
16 first commissioned to tell the good news of his resurrection (John 20:17; cf. Matt. 28:10).<sup>72</sup>  
17 Luke, sometimes called the gospel of the “underdog,” deliberately uses a series of paired stories,  
18 one featuring a man and the other a woman, to showcase the value given to the faith and ministry  
19 of women in the plan of God. This is first seen in the stories of Zacharias and of Mary which  
20 open the Gospel, and of Simeon and Anna in the temple, but is also repeated in later parts of the  
21 book.<sup>73</sup> Luke also notes that it was not only males disciples who accompanied Jesus and learned

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The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19, quoting Isa. 61:1-2; 58:6).

It is immediately evident that the quotes of both Jesus and Peter refer to the coming of the Holy Spirit to enable the proclamation of God’s message, and that both end with a reference (though differently applied and further developed in Acts) to the day of the Lord. The content of the messages might also yield valuable parables.

<sup>71</sup> Philo, *On the Special Laws* 3.169-170; *Embassy to Gaius* 40.319; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 4.219. See Bernadette J. Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue* (no 36; Chico, Cal.: Scholars Press, 1982); Amy-Jill Levine, “Second Temple Judaism, Jesus and Women : Yeast of Eden,” *Biblical Interpretation 2*, (1994). It is all too easy to judge the freedoms and responsibilities of women in the church at the beginning by modern standards, rather than to take the time to recognize accurately the challenges and accommodations made to advance the gospel in that society. Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles : a Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 335..

<sup>72</sup> Ellen White noted, “It was Mary that first preached a risen Jesus. In fulfillment of the divine plan, the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. If this work was not beneath the dignity of the world’s Redeemer, the Creator of worlds, should it be considered too humiliating for sinful mortals? If Christ taught, and if he wrestled in earnest prayer to his Father in behalf of those he came to save, we should engage in the same work... If there were twenty women where now there is one, who would make this holy mission their cherished work, we should see many more converted to the truth. The refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth” (RH January 2, 1879).

<sup>73</sup> Here both Zacharias and Mary are visited by Gabriel who tells each not to fear and promises each a son. Yet the responses differ markedly for while Zacharias is rebuked for his lack of faith (Luke 1:18), Mary’s question receives no rebuke but instead a strong reassurance (1:34-37). It can also be seen in the two prophets, Simeon and Anna, who greet Jesus in the temple (2:25-39). In addition, the only son of the widow of Nain is raised from the dead (7:11-17), and so is the only daughter of Jairus (8:40-56). The parable of the mustard seed, which features a man planting his garden, is followed by the parable of the yeast, which portrays a woman baking bread (13:18-21).

1 from Him during His ministry, as would have been normal for a rabbi of that time. He was also  
2 accompanied by women disciples, which would have been considered extraordinary and even  
3 shameful (Luke 8:1-3; cf. 24:1, 6, 8).<sup>74</sup> In response to being healed by Jesus, each of these  
4 women had chosen to provide for Jesus (*diakoneō*) out of their own resources, an action that  
5 would have gained them honor in that society as benefactors had they not disgraced themselves  
6 by stepping outside of the expected roles for women by also traveling with Him.<sup>75</sup> The ending of  
7 the Gospels are particularly striking in their portrayal of women, for it is women who are  
8 portrayed as being present with Jesus at the crucifixion (Matt. 27:55-56) when nearly all the male  
9 disciples had fled (Matt. 26:56; Mark 14:50-52; cf. Luke 22:54), and women visited His tomb  
10 (Mark 16:1; cf. John 20:1) while the male apostles were cowering in an upper room with the  
11 door barred (John 20:19).

### 12 13 Priscilla and the Women of Acts

14 In the several mentions of Priscilla (Prisca) in the NT record, she is recorded as  
15 demonstrating traditionally female gifts such as hospitality (Acts 18:2-3) as well as more public  
16 roles such as teacher (Acts 18:26) and co-worker with Paul (Rom. 16:3) that are not generally  
17 expected of a woman in ancient society. Priscilla is never named alone, but always with her  
18 husband Aquila (Acts 18:2). It is worth considering that, while the wife's name is seldom  
19 mentioned in ancient accounts and where it is mentioned is placed second, Priscilla's name is  
20 most often placed first when the two are mentioned. In introducing them, Acts introduces Aquila  
21 first as would be expected, but in the other two mentions Priscilla's name comes first. This is  
22 particularly interesting in the latter case, because the activity they were engaged in was teaching  
23 a man. The man whom Priscilla and Aquila taught was not simply an inexperienced new  
24 believer, but Apollos, the brilliant and eloquent preacher who was already "mighty in the  
25 Scriptures." Apollos is said to have already known much about Christ, but was in need of some  
26 correction and additional learning which Priscilla was took part in providing (Acts 18:24-28).

27 Such an activity of teaching and correction is one considered a typical and important  
28 function of today's pastor. Considering the kind of authority involved here, we can see that it  
29 was the Scriptures which held the ultimate authority, and that Priscilla and Aquila acted in a role  
30 consistent with a humble servant leader not a personal authority to control others. It has been  
31 argued that Priscilla in doing this was subject to and under the supervision of Aquila, but the  
32 deliberate moving of her name to the front of the pair questions this argument.<sup>76</sup> She is referred  
33 to along with Aquila in Romans 16:3 as a *synergos*, or co-worker, the same term Paul used of  
34 himself (1 Cor. 3:9) and others including Luke (Philem. 1:24) and Timothy (1 Thess. 3:2).<sup>77</sup>

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The parable of the lost sheep, which focuses attention on the shepherd (15:3-7), is succeeded by the parable of the woman who lost a coin in her home (15:8-10).

<sup>74</sup> Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 93-105; Ben Witherington III, "On the Road with Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and Other Disciples—Luke 8:1-3," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 70, (1979).

<sup>75</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 317-321..

<sup>76</sup> It would be no less plausible to suggest that Aquila may have provided accompaniment and aid that made Priscilla's work in the public sphere in contact with males less culturally objectionable.

<sup>77</sup> Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles : a Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 335-339, 567.. By inviting Paul to her home, apparently acting on her own authority, Lydia plays would have been seen as Paul's benefactor, or patron, giving her some degree of "moral authority" in the eyes of that society.

1 Note that there is no suggestion here of any necessity to make a justification, or exception, for a  
2 female acting in the role of a teacher. Priscilla’s ministry is only one in a long line of females in  
3 ministry in Acts, including Dorcas’ ministry to the widows (10:36-39), Philip’s daughters who  
4 were prophets (21:8, 9), and Lydia’s acting on her own discretion to offer hospitality to Paul and  
5 his ministry team, and act as their benefactor (16:13-16, 40).

### 6 7 Phoebe

8 In Romans 16:1 Paul says of Phoebe, “I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a  
9 *diakonos* of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of  
10 the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a  
11 *prostatis* of many and of myself also” (Rom. 16:1-2). Unfortunately many English versions of  
12 this passage tend to translate these Greek words based on their assumption that since it is about a  
13 woman she can’t possibly be a leader. However, it is significant that Paul has chosen the  
14 masculine form of *diakonos*, which would indicate that she is not being referred to simply as a  
15 woman who serves, but as filling a formal role with a standardized title. The most likely option in  
16 a Christian context is that she was a deacon. This fits with the statement that she was a *diakonos*  
17 of a particular church, and with inclusion of qualifications for women in the qualification list of 1  
18 Timothy (3:11). Another possibility is that she was acting as an appointed agent of the church in  
19 Cenchrae. Phoebe’s leadership role is even more strongly attested by a further descriptor  
20 identifying her as a *prostatis*. The term *prostatis* is related to the spiritual gift of leading  
21 (*proistēmi*) which is among the spiritual gifts, although the noun form is not found elsewhere in  
22 the NT. In other Greek writings of the time, it is regularly used both in the Jewish and Greco-  
23 Roman world of various kinds of official leaders.<sup>78</sup> The noun’s feminine usage can also be found  
24 in inscriptions praising wealthy women who acted as patrons, providing funding, and thus also  
25 holding some authority over a group. According to the custom of the time the patron provided  
26 financial assistance to a group and its members in return for public honor and the authority to  
27 expect services of the clients she assisted. Phoebe however, as a believer in Christ, acts on an  
28 equal level as a sister.<sup>79</sup>

### 29 30 Junia and Others

31 In addition to Phoebe, eight other women are named in Romans 16, including Priscilla  
32 and a woman named Junia who, like Phoebe and Priscilla, appears to have had a leadership  
33 role.<sup>80</sup> Of this individual, Paul says, “Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my  
34 fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me” (Rom.

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<sup>78</sup> Darius Jankiewicz, “Phoebe: Was She an Early Church Leader?” *Ministry* (April 2013): 10-13. Elizabeth A. McCabe. "A Reevaluation of Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2 as a *Diakonos* and *Prostatis*: Wxposing the Inaccuracies of English Translations," in *Women in the Biblical World* (Lanham, Md.: Univ Press of America, 2009).

<sup>79</sup> Greg Perry, "Phoebe of Cenchrae and "Women" of Ephesus: "Deacons" in the Earliest Churches," 36, no. 1 (2010): 15.

<sup>80</sup> “The overall impression one gets from Romans 16 is that not only were a wide variety of women involved in the work of the church, but also that they were doing a wide variety of things including missionary work, carrying letters, serving in charitable tasks as deaconesses, providing aid or shelter for traveling apostles, etc. ...we see here a picture of a vibrant, multi-faceted Church using the gifts and graces of both men and women to spread the gospel.” Ben Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, SNTSMS 59 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 116. On the topic of Junia particularly helpful are Eldon Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).and Nancy Whymeister, "Junia the apostle," 85, no. 7 (2013): 6-9.



1 16:7, NKJV).<sup>81</sup> The initial challenge that causes many to doubt the accuracy of understanding  
2 this verse as referring to a female apostle is that many modern versions translate the name as  
3 “Junias” (a male name) rather than “Junia” (always female) in Greek. However that is not how  
4 the ancients understood it. Despite arguments to the contrary based on literary texts, Junia was a  
5 common women’s name in the 1<sup>st</sup> century appearing at least 250 times in inscriptions and other  
6 writing in Rome during that period, while the masculine Junias appears nowhere during this  
7 same period.<sup>82</sup> Eldon J. Epp and others have demonstrated that, although the letters in the names  
8 would have been the same in the grammatical form used in this sentence, the distinguishing  
9 accents later added to the text never indicated the masculine form of the name. Further, 37 of 38  
10 Greek editions of the NT printed between 1516 and 1920 used the name Junia, and only between  
11 1927 and 1994 was it understood in Greek editions as the masculine name, Junias. This is even  
12 despite the fact that the tendencies of the culture and church of those times strongly discounted  
13 women in leadership.<sup>83</sup>

14 Some have used another tack, arguing, based on the Greek preposition *en*, that the verse  
15 must be translated “...noted *by* the apostles” rather than “notable *among* the apostles.” However,  
16 the evidence doesn’t corroborate that *en* must be used in this way, in fact Belleville has  
17 discovered an almost exact parallel from the same time period which only makes sense as  
18 “among.”<sup>84</sup>

19 This is not to claim for Junia a similar ministry to that of the Twelve and Paul, but to say  
20 that Junia, like other individuals given this title the NT church such as James (Gal. 1:19) and  
21 Barnabas (Acts 15:2), acted in a position of leadership as a representative of Jesus Christ.

22 Elsewhere in the NT, we find Euodia and Syntyche also praised as “fellow workers”  
23 (*sunergos*) who have contended by Paul’s side in the cause of the gospel (Phil. 4:2, 3), using the  
24 same term, *sunergos*, used of the male leaders who assisted Paul. Women’s leadership in the  
25 Christian Church is possible also in 2 John where the “chosen lady” addressed in verse 1 may  
26 well be the patron and leader of a house church in the province of Asia (now in western Turkey).

27 Although when taken separately some of these instances of women’s leadership are not  
28 fully certain, when considering all of the various examples a definite pattern emerges. One  
29 wonders why terms such as apostle, coworker, deacon and leader are taken as leadership  
30 language when referring to men, but automatically discounted when applied to women.<sup>85</sup>

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### Women in the House Churches

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<sup>81</sup> Some have suggested the Junia and Andronicus, having been in Christ” even before Paul, may be the Joanna and Chuza mentioned in Luke 8:3, but this must remain within the realm of conjecture.

<sup>82</sup> Neither is there any evidence in the literature of the time for suggesting that the name Junias could be a shortened form of Junianos which was used at the time. Eldon Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 26-28..

<sup>83</sup> Even though the spelling of Junia and Junias would look the same in the form used in Rom. 16:7, the accents would be different. A few manuscripts use the female name “Julia” in place of “Junia.” *Ibid.*, 45, 62-63..

<sup>84</sup> In favor of “noted by” is Michael H. Burer and Daniel B. Wallace, “Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re-examination of Rom 16.7,” 47, (2001).. Linda Belleville is among those defending “notable among,” and finds almost an exact parallel Linda L. Belleville, “Iounian . . . 'episēmoi 'en tois ápostolois: A Re-examination of Romans 16.7 in Light of Primary Source Materials,” 51, (2005): 246..

<sup>85</sup> Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Fortress: Minneapolis, 2006), 228..

1           The women mentioned above represent some of the most outstanding and well-known  
2 women in the first century church. NT writers could not write about all the women involved in  
3 the earliest church or give details on their activities, any more than all the male leaders and their  
4 actions in the churches across the Mediterranean world were represented. A valuable avenue for  
5 understanding the experience of women and their place in ministry in the first century house  
6 churches is to explore what can be known of women’s work and authority within the home.<sup>86</sup>  
7 While the absolute power of the *pater familias* (male head of household) was still a Roman ideal,  
8 within her own household, the woman held a considerable amount of authority and autonomy  
9 over such things as provisioning, care and supervision of everyone in the household, the  
10 purchase and working of fields, and the sale of produce while the husband busied himself with  
11 civic and public affairs.<sup>87</sup> Although for married women this was officially under the oversight of  
12 the husband, many men did not concern themselves with household affairs. While widows still  
13 tended to be dependent on families, an increasing number of these, in addition to some never  
14 married women, were able to be financially independent and fully govern their own affairs. A  
15 church meeting in a home such as that of John Mark’s mother (Acts 12:12) and Nympha (Col  
16 4:15) and Priscilla, then, brought a public gathering from the usual male sphere outside the home  
17 into a place where women often exercised *de facto* and sometimes full autonomy and authority.  
18 Such a reality places the clear-cut assumptions about authority in the New Testament in need of  
19 further consideration.

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22           *Galatians 3:28*

23  
24  
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26

          "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male  
and female (arsen kai thēlu); for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*" (Gal. 3:28)

27           Galatians 3:28 has been called everything from a text devoid of social implications to the  
28 “*Magna Carta* of humanity.”<sup>88</sup> This passage does not speak directly to the issue of women in  
29 ministry, yet it does communicate an important message not only about soteriology but also  
30 about ecclesiology and how the church organizes itself.<sup>89</sup> A primary concern of the epistle is the  
31 question of who constitutes the people of God—who are the heirs who will be rescued from this  
32 evil age (1:4). In Galatians 1-2a, Paul demonstrates that it was God Himself who gave him the  
33 gospel to preach to the Gentiles. Paul also vividly describes a rebuke he gave to Peter for timidly  
34 renouncing table fellowship with the Gentiles. Chapters 2b-3 show that, since no one could fully  
35 meet the requirements of the law, both Jews and Gentiles are a part of God’s people by the same

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<sup>86</sup> This has been excellently initiated by Osiek and MacDonald in *A Woman’s Place: House Churches and Earliest Christianity*, especially pp. 144-163, on which this paragraph is based.

<sup>87</sup> For example, Xenophon, a classical Greek writer still important in Roman times, spoke of the husband and wife acting as partners in the household with the husband bringing in resources and the wife having the authority to manage and disperse them (*Oeconomicus* 3.14-16). Her work in the household (as a result of the training of the teenage wife by the older husband) is compared to that of a queen bee, a military commander and a city councilor (7.36-43; 9.15).

<sup>88</sup> Paul King Jewett, *Man as Male and Female : A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

<sup>89</sup> Gordon D. Fee. "Male and Female in the New Creation: Galatians 3:26-29," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2005), 174-176.

1 means—through the death of Christ in whom all who believe become heirs of the promises to  
2 Abraham, dying to the curse of the law in order to live for God.

3 In Gal. 3:26-29, which is set apart from the surrounding material by the use of the first  
4 person “we” in place of the second person plural “you,” Paul spells out several realities that are  
5 true “now that faith has come” (3:25).<sup>90</sup> He begins with a theological assertion, stating that his  
6 audience are all (both male and female) sons (*huios*) of God through faith. This is true on the  
7 basis of their baptism into Christ by which they have clothed themselves with Him. Paul then  
8 adds that in the new union which Christ has formed, distinctions of Jew vs. Gentile, as well as  
9 slave vs. free and male vs. female are no longer of import, because all are one in Him and are  
10 therefore Abraham’s descendants and heirs of the promise. While most of 3:26-29 focuses on the  
11 vertical relationship with God, the words “you are all one” in verse 28 point outwards toward the  
12 horizontal relationship with fellow believers. Relationships between fellow believers are not just  
13 a side point, rather the importance of Paul’s concern for this very issue is underlined in his  
14 choice to report his confrontation with Peter in 2:11-14 at the beginning of the main, theological,  
15 section of the epistle. In 2:11-14 Paul states the reason he had opposed Peter’s avoidance of  
16 equal inclusion of the Gentiles in church life. In doing so, Paul states, Peter had not been  
17 “straightforward about the truth of the gospel” (2:14). Thus Paul makes clear that his concern is  
18 not only about salvation but also about how that gift of salvation should affect relationships and  
19 inclusion in the various aspects of the Christian community.<sup>91</sup> To have the theology of oneness in  
20 Christ is meaningless without accompanying changes in the way we involve others within the  
21 body. Such an error was judged by Paul to be worthy of rebuke.

22 Paul’s inclusion of slave and free and male and female, along with Jew and Greek, in this  
23 list appears rather surprising, since Paul has been speaking thus far only about Jew and Gentile.  
24 Their inclusion here suggests that Paul wishes to bring out a larger principle. The point cannot  
25 have been to abolish all differences between the pairs, for those between Jew and Greek and  
26 between slave and free are a result of human history, those between male and female were  
27 fundamental differences rooted in the physical bodies at creation. One common denominator  
28 among these three pairs, however, is that each pair is the basis of a set of fundamental social  
29 roles by which everything in ancient society was organized and structured. Although the verse  
30 generally does not raise eyebrows today, in the first century it would have been quite shocking,  
31 and could not have been written without deliberate thought. The social organization and day-to-  
32 day life of both Jew and Gentile were dependent on these very distinctions, determining for  
33 example what work you did, where you did and did not belong, who you spoke to, and how  
34 people responded to you.<sup>92</sup> The traditional cultural expectations involved in these distinctions are  
35 the very reason Peter was so reluctant to join with the Gentiles in meals shared by believers.

36 Indeed Paul underlines the basis in creation of “male and female”, in contrast to the other  
37 two pairings that are a result of sin, by using in this one place only, the rare terms *arsēn* (male)  
38 and *thēlus* (female) rather than the normal ἀνὴρ (man) and γυνή (woman), The phrase *arsen kai*

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<sup>90</sup> William G. Johnsson. "Galatians 3:38, 39-It's Significance for the Role of Women in the Church" (paper presented at Role of Women Commission. 1987), 6.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>92</sup> This is evidenced to be true across centuries in both the Greek and Jewish cultures by the similar statements attributed to the philosopher Socrates and the in the Jewish Mishnah expressing gratefulness for not having been born a “brute creature,” a barbarian (Socrates)/Gentile (Mishnah), or a woman. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 1.33 (LCL); Menahot 43b; gf179180.

1 *thēlu* is found elsewhere in the Greek Bible only in, or in reference to, the stories of creation and  
2 the flood (un-creation), based on Gen 1:27, “So God created man in His *own* image; in the image  
3 of God He created him; male and female (*arsen kai thēlu*) He created them” (Gen. 1:27; cf.  
4 5:2).<sup>93</sup> In Paul’s theology, those who believe are now a part of a new creation, begun in Christ  
5 (Col. 1:15), the second Adam (Rom 5:12-17), and experienced by every believer (2 Cor. 5:17).<sup>94</sup>  
6 Paul summarizes his argument with the Galatians by referring to this very concept, stating, “For  
7 neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation” (Gal. 6:14-15).<sup>95</sup>

8 Paul’s point in Galatians 3:26–29 cannot be reduced to only the vertical dimension of  
9 forensic justification by faith in Christ, as joyful as that message is. Such an argument is based in  
10 a dualistic understanding which separates soul from body and sees salvation as pertaining only to  
11 right standing before God in a legal sense rather than to the life of the whole person. Such an  
12 idea would have been foreign to Paul as a Jew, it is foreign to the NT as a whole, and is foreign  
13 to the best of Adventist theology today. As Paul demonstrated in his report of the conflict with  
14 Peter, he expects that the salvation Christ provides will make a profound difference in how we  
15 view and treat each other within the life of the church. Participation, thus, is no longer  
16 conditional on circumcision or ancestry (Romans 9:6-7), but on a personal response to God’s  
17 revelation in Christ and a spiritual circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 30:6; Romans 2:29;  
18 Colossians 2:11, 13).

### 21 *The priesthood of all believers*

22  
23 Another paradigm of the church, which the NT takes very seriously, is the believers’  
24 identity as a royal priesthood. This concept grows out of God’s declaration, given at Sinai before  
25 they begged not to hear any longer the fearsome voice of the Lord, that Israel was to be “a  
26 kingdom of priests and a holy nation,” declaration was (Exod. 19:6; cf. 20:19; Deut. 5:5, 25-31;  
27 cf. Deut. 18:15-16). Many years later, God had promised through Isaiah that in the future His  
28 people would indeed be looked upon as “priests of the Lord” and “ministers of our God” (61:6).  
29 Although due to human free will this prophecy was not fulfilled in just the way Isaiah predicted,  
30 Jesus applied its opening verses to His own ministry, declaring, “Today this Scripture has been  
31 fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:18-21; Isa. 61:1-2). Jesus’ reading of Isaiah 61:1, 2 as fulfilled  
32 in His own ministry suggests that verse 6, “you shall be named the priests of the LORD, They  
33 shall call you the servants of our God” (NKJV), might also be fulfilled in a special way as a  
34 consequence of His ministry. 1 Peter 2 indicates that this is indeed the case, for he declares that

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<sup>93</sup> These terms are used nowhere else in the NT except in a quote of the same passage by Jesus who pairs Gen. 1:27 and 2:24 in speaking against divorce by demonstrating that man and woman were created to be united (Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6). This argument by Jesus for the oneness of male and female provides parameters to our understanding of Paul’s statement that there is no *arsen kai thēlu*. Cf. Gen 5:2, “He created them male and female (*arsen kai thēlu*), and blessed them and called them Mankind (*Adam*) in the day they were created.” Linking them by “and” (*kai*), rather than the “nor” (*oude*) used between the other two pairs, may also underline the close connection between the two.

<sup>94</sup> Jd317-319; ?06ts158?[something is missing]; Vyhmeister et al. near end of Women in Ministry article (?1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.); [something is missing] ?09pp79; [something is missing] Paul’s theology of a new creation is grounded in the new exodus theology of Isaiah whose fulfillment begins in Jesus Christ (e.g. Isa 43:18-21). Gf177-9[something is missing]

<sup>95</sup> Gf176-7[something is missing]

1 believers in Christ “are being built up like living stones as a spiritual house(hold), into a holy  
2 priesthood” (2:5) so that together as a reconstituted “holy nation” they made up “a royal  
3 priesthood” who would at last proclaim God’s praises (2:9).<sup>96</sup> The ministry and gifts given to all  
4 believers attest that, more than was ever the case in the OT, each believer has a role to play in the  
5 priestly ministry of representing God before the world. John in Revelation 1:5-6, after reviewing  
6 Christ’s completed work on our behalf in “washing us from our sins by his blood,” states that  
7 God already “has made us (past tense) a kingdom, priests to His God and Father (Rev. 1:6). This  
8 pairing is so important to John that He returns to it in 5:10, depicting the four living creatures  
9 and the twenty-four elders praising Christ in song with the words, “You are worthy to take the  
10 scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out  
11 of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,<sup>10</sup> and have made us kings and priests to our  
12 God; And we shall reign on the earth” (NKJV). These passages together strongly attest that a  
13 fulfillment of God’s intention that His whole people function as a royal priesthood has taken  
14 place with the completion of Jesus’ earthly work.

15 It has been argued that women cannot hold higher leadership positions in the church  
16 because God, by designating that the Levitical priesthood be wholly made up of males,  
17 demonstrated a universal principle of male headship and spiritual authority in religious contexts.  
18 Such an imperative is never stated in Scripture, in fact Scripture gives strong reasons to believe  
19 that this is not so. Davidson has demonstrated some of the possible factors from the Old  
20 Testament perspective, including: 1) the priestly function of Adam and Eve in the garden; 2) the  
21 idolatrous temple practices of the pagans involving the priestly participation of women to which  
22 God established a male-only priesthood as a witness and boundary; 3) physiological differences  
23 between the man and the woman, including physical strength for performing the priestly  
24 functions as well as concerns of monthly ritual purity; 4) a woman’s family responsibilities as  
25 the mother of children; and 5) the reality that women actually did perform two of the three  
26 functions of priesthood and were absent only from the cultic (likely for one or more of the  
27 reasons above).<sup>97</sup> (See Fig. 1 below for a graphic representation of this change.)

28 The NT gives more definite evidence that the male nature of the Levitical priesthood was  
29 not a model for all spiritual authority for all time. It does so both by demonstrating this  
30 priesthood as ending with Christ and by showing the church entering into a fulfillment of God’s  
31 plan for a royal priesthood. The whole book of Hebrews, and especially chapters 5-10,  
32 demonstrates as part of its central argument that the Levitical priesthood was fulfilled in Jesus  
33 Christ, a priest from the order of Melchizedek, and is no longer valid for Christians (e.g. Heb.  
34 7:11-19; 10:8-9). The NT never speaks of any individual other than Jesus Christ in priestly  
35 language, (other than a reference by Paul in Phil. 2:17 to being poured out as drink offering,  
36 which is doubly odd since only Christ is truly symbolized by the Levitical offerings). Rather it is  
37 the community of believers, the royal priesthood, that are called upon to “offer up spiritual  
38 sacrifices” by praising God, by doing good, and by sharing what they have (1 Pet. 2:5; Phil. 4:18;  
39 Heb. 13:15-16).

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<sup>96</sup> The Greek word οἶκος (1 Pet. 2:5) can be translated as either “house” or “household” and appears to be a play on words here, providing for both a ‘house’ built from living stones, and a ‘household’ of priests.

<sup>97</sup> Women did perform the teaching/administration and prophetic functions (see Deut. 33:8-10). Richard M. Davidson, "Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations," (Theology of Ordination Study Committee, 2013), 45-47. Note also Jacques B. Doukhan, “Women Priests in Israel: A Case for Their Absence,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (ed. Nancy Vyhmeister; Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1998), 36.

1 Rom. 12:1-8 is of particular interest to our discussion of inclusive ministry. It opens with  
2 the exhortation, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your  
3 bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service*” (Rom. 12:1,  
4 NKJV), calling on believers to act in the role of both priest and sacrifice. Verses 1 and 2 contrast  
5 the call to present your bodies as a holy and acceptable sacrifice, with the alternative: being  
6 “conformed to the world.” Verses 3 through 5 spell out an important aspect of sacrificing  
7 oneself: instead of conforming to the world’s way of approaching things, believers are to show  
8 humble-minded respect for the function of each member in the body of Christ. Verses 6-8 climax  
9 this brief interpretation of the believer’s priestly sacrifice by encouraging each and every  
10 member to use to the utmost the gifts God has given:

11  
12 So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.<sup>6</sup>  
13 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in  
14 proportion to our faith;<sup>7</sup> if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;<sup>8</sup>  
15 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one  
16 who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (Rom. 12:5-8  
17 NKJV)  
18

19 Here is laid out a beautiful picture of the sacrifice, or “priestly work,” God has in mind  
20 for His “royal priesthood:” Through the transformation of one’s mind (12:2), while respecting  
21 the functions of the other members of Christ’s body, believers, both male and female, are to use  
22 faithfully, humbly, and actively the spiritual gifts they have received.

23 Figure 1 is a simple diagram of the priesthood patterns depicted in the OT and NT. The  
24 earthly Levitical priesthood, so important in the Old Testament as a prefiguring of Christ, is  
25 annulled when Jesus takes over the role of high priest and fulfills its symbolism in His sacrifice  
26 and in His work in the heavenly sanctuary. The royal priesthood, planned by God and  
27 remembered in the OT, comes into a new reality in the NT, taking the Levitical priesthood’s  
28 place as God’s representatives before the world.  
29  
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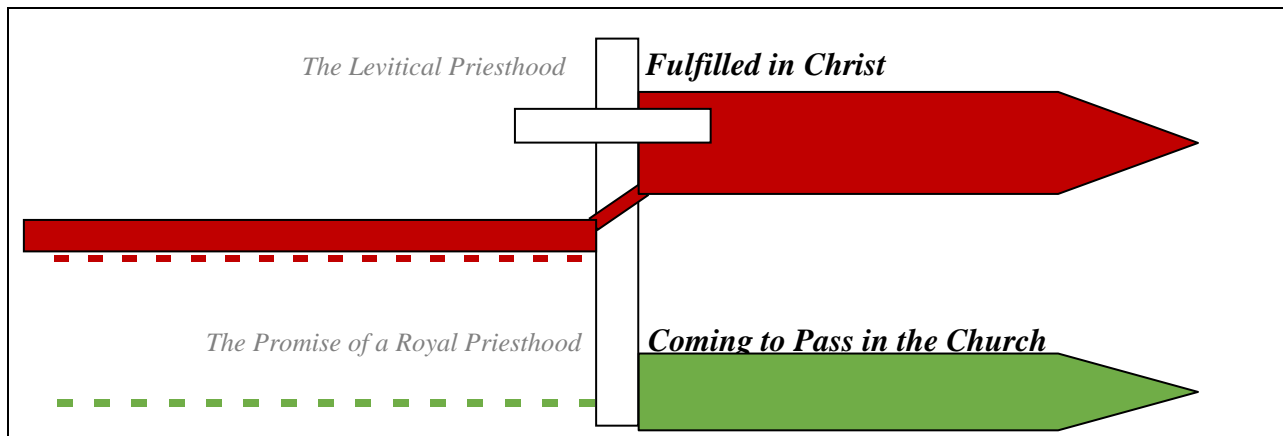


Figure 1

34  
35

1  
2 **Then What Do We Do with Paul’s Statements That Don’t Seem to Fit?**  
3

4 Any informed reader is aware that there are several passages in Paul that have  
5 traditionally been translated and interpreted as directly prohibiting women from leadership in  
6 pastoral ministry. Thus far we have sketched out a big picture of ministry and ordination in the  
7 first century church, finding no reason in the NT portrayal of these topics to insist that women  
8 should be excluded from either. This paper has also suggested that a correct understanding of  
9 authority and leadership, as the NT presents it, turns upside down for the church the whole  
10 traditional cultural idea of these things, replacing the idea of autocratic rule over other humans  
11 with that of shared servant leadership under Christ, with each person carrying the authority  
12 appropriate to their gifting and ministry. The NT model thus pushes toward a shared leadership  
13 model in which the pastoral leadership of women is appropriate and called for.<sup>98</sup>

14 If the above discussion is plausible, it is worthwhile to look again at the Pauline  
15 passages understood to oppose “spiritual authority” for women. This is particularly the case  
16 since, as Davidson has just demonstrated, there is no clear evidence in Genesis 1-2 for female  
17 subordination. For, as Jan Barna has observed, ultimately “the principle of male headship and  
18 female subordination” grounded in creation is the “primary theological foundation” used against  
19 the ordination of women.<sup>99</sup> At the same time, we must also grant the question, how can the above  
20 be true in the face of Paul’s reference to creation order in 1 Timothy and 1 Corinthians? These  
21 passages present challenges for both sides in this discussion that go far beyond the time and  
22 space allotted to this paper. Instead of retreading all the paths that have been traced repeatedly,  
23 let us just consider a few points that are most pertinent to women’s ordination in each passage.  
24  
25

26 *1 Corinthians 11:2-16*  
27

28 *“But I wish you to know that of every man the head is Christ, and the head of a*  
29 *woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3, literal transl.)*  
30

31 In 1 Corinthians, Paul writes to a church that is divided and stumbling because believers  
32 have allowed themselves to become distracted from Jesus and His gospel. They have instead  
33 chased after their own fallen human desires for honor and power and for selfish and immoral  
34 pleasures, justifying their actions by claiming their own great wisdom and freedom in Christ. In  
35 the immediate context (ch. 8-10), Paul has been dealing with the issue of eating food offered to  
36 idols, which believers justified with the claim of superior knowledge, arguing that “all things are

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<sup>98</sup> It might even be argued, in an alternative sort of complementarianism, that the consensus style of leadership common to many women may even be especially suited to participation in this NT model of leadership.

<sup>99</sup> Ján Barna, “Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Theology” (PhD diss., University of Bristol and Trinity College, 2009), 244. Richard M. Davidson, “Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations,” (Theology of Ordination Study Committee, 2013), 1-17.. Davidson’s paper has ably demonstrated the case that Genesis 1-3 does not demonstrably support creation headship of man over women. Rather, Genesis 1 teaches that male and female are created in the image of God, blessed, and given dominion, with no assertion of any hierarchy between the sexes. Genesis 2 reinforces this picture, presenting woman as Adam’s counterpart and *ezer* (who comes to his aid), and the grand finale of the six-day creation sequence. Genesis 3:16 evidences that the leadership of the husband within the marriage relationship is among the curses after the fall and is not God’s ideal.

1 lawful” in Christ (10:23). He points out practices that would be idolatrous against God and ends  
2 his counsel by urging that these believers consider not only their own freedom, but how their  
3 choices will affect others, insisting, “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the  
4 glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God” (10:28, 29).

5 1 Corinthians 11-14 continues to be concerned with how believers represent God in their  
6 interactions, this time in reference to the church’s worship gatherings. Paul’s main purpose in 1  
7 Corinthians 11:2-16 was to bring the spiritually arrogant and liberty-grasping Corinthians to  
8 think about how the choices they were making regarding head coverings in their public  
9 gatherings affected their relationships both with God and others. The exact nature of these head  
10 coverings remains a matter of no small debate, but this is not our concern here, for the type of  
11 head coverings themselves are generally recognized as details specific to the first century  
12 world.<sup>100</sup> For people of the Mediterranean world, in ancient times and even today, gaining honor  
13 and avoiding shame was of pivotal value, entering as a factor into every social interaction and  
14 decision. While Paul does not have the same dedication to personal honor, he ties into the  
15 cultural concern regarding shame and honor to urge these men and women so concerned about  
16 their own liberty, not to bring shame on God and His people by their choice of head coverings.<sup>101</sup>

17 1 Corinthians 11:3, the verse so often quoted with reference to the ordination debate, is  
18 not a distinct theological treatise, but functions as part of Paul’s argument about head coverings.  
19 Together with verses 4-6, it functions to demonstrate that a man (*anēr*) should not be concerned  
20 only about his own liberty when he chooses the head covering to wear to a church gathering, but  
21 also about the honor, or public reputation of Jesus Christ. And a woman (*gynē*) should not  
22 consult only her own preferences, but should think about the honor of the man who was her  
23 husband. Metaphorically, Paul insisted, it was not only their own anatomical heads that were  
24 being shamed.<sup>102</sup>

25 Although headship is often understood as ruling power, this meaning is not normal in the  
26 Greek language.<sup>103</sup> In fact where the Septuagint translators, in earlier translating the Hebrew Old  
27 Testament into Greek, ran across the Hebrew word *rōsh* (head) used of chiefs or rulers, they  
28 almost always chose not to translate it with the Greek word *head* (*kefalē*), but rather substituted

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<sup>100</sup> The issue of head coverings may have related to hair styles or to what is worn on the head. All sides in this discussion make the choice to describe some things as cultural, and this is one place where most agree. Paul’s underlying and evident concern here is focused on the disgrace, or shame, the wrong head-covering brings in the eyes of observers. In a different culture head-covering issues might be of no concern and some other item of clothing or behavior would be considered potentially shaming.

<sup>101</sup> The differentiation between male and female dress, important in both the Biblical (Deut. 22:5) and Greco-Roman culture, seems to be a more universal principle that partially underlies the concern.

<sup>102</sup> Paul generally uses the words *anēr* and *gynē* with their basic meanings *man* and *woman* (e.g. it is not only husbands praying in 11:4; 11:8 would not be arguing that the wife comes out of the husband), but often when the context uses these words more narrowly to indicate *husband* and *wife* (11:3b, possibly 11:11). 11:3 begins by referring broadly to “every man,” then in the second pair narrows specifically to the relationship between a man and woman, for Paul uses this analogy in human terms only of the relation between the husband and wife (Eph. 5:23). There is no more indication that this counsel was to be extended to the male elder or pastor in the church than to any other man in society.

<sup>103</sup> Few Jews living in the diaspora at that time spoke Hebrew, and virtually none of the Gentile Christians would have known Hebrew. For this reason, in order to communicate to a mixed group in writing to Corinth, if Paul had meant to convey ruling headship, it seems unlikely that he would have chosen *kefalē*, but rather a word that conveyed this meaning clearly in the Greek language.



1 words such as *archē* (ruler) and *hēgeomai* (leader) in order to make sense in Greek.<sup>104</sup> Greek,  
2 both biblical and literary, uses *head* (*kefalē*) metaphorically in a number of ways closely related  
3 to the actual anatomical part including the idea of *foremost* or *preeminent* (Dan. 2:32; Ps. 118:22;  
4 Jer. 31:7) and in representing *the whole person* (Exod. 16:16; Num. 1:18; Jdg. 9:57; Ps. 3:3).<sup>105</sup>  
5 Although the idea of head as *source*, is not prominent in the lexicons, outside of reference to the  
6 *head* of a river, Philo and several other Jewish authors around the time of the NT used *kefalē*  
7 metaphorically to refer to a source for feelings and ideas and of a human progenitor.<sup>106</sup> More  
8 importantly, this meaning fits best in the context of the passage, where Paul comes back  
9 repeatedly to the question of whether man came from woman, or woman from man (1 Cor. 11:8-  
10 9, 11-12). In fact, in Eph. 4:15-16 Paul speaks of Christ as the head and source of growth for the  
11 body (the church), and in Colossians 1:18-20 as “head of the body, the church; and He is the  
12 beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in  
13 everything.” The order of the pairings in verse 3 actually supports better the chronological idea  
14 of head in the sense of preeminence or source: Christ created man, man was the stuff of which  
15 woman was made, and lastly God sent Christ to earth as a human in the incarnation (1 Cor. 8:6;  
16 11:8).<sup>107</sup> This reading also relieves us of the logical necessity to push the Son into a subordinate  
17 relationship with the Father.

18 At the same time when Paul uses the metaphor of Christ as “head” there is generally an  
19 aspect of leadership involved, as Greek also indicates in its metaphorical references to the  
20 anatomical head. Nowhere, however, does Paul use the metaphor of “head” to speak of ruling  
21 dominion over the body. Where, in Ephesians 1:20-23, Christ is said to have gained dominion  
22 over the principalities and powers, He is given “as head over all things to [for the benefit of] the  
23 church, which is His body” (NASB). Likewise in Colossians 2:6-19, where He is spoken of as  
24 divine head *over* all rule and authority (v. 9), with reference to those who are “in Him,” He is  
25 “the head, from whom the entire body . . . grows with a growth which is from God” (v. 19,  
26 NASB). This is true also of the use of headship in the husband-wife sense in Ephesians 5:21-33,  
27 where the husband is directed, not to rule the wife, but to nourish and cherish her as his own  
28 body. Submission (v. 22), also described as respect (v. 33) is the prerogative of the wife, and is  
29 to be understood in the context of the instruction in v. 21 that all are to submit to one another.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> In only about 6 places in the Septuagint is *kefalē* used of a ruler or leader, whereas *rōsh* is used many, many more times in this sense. While some have disputed this based on a cursory look at some lexicons, doing a simple word study examining each use of *rōsh* in the OT will make this abundantly clear. (Note also that even where *rōsh* is used in the Hebrew OT of leading or ruling, it is never used to refer to sovereignty over an individual.)

<sup>105</sup> Exod. 16:16 reads literally, “one omer for each head;” Num. 1:18 reads literally “head by head,” often translated as, “individually.” Head may also possibly, but rarely, designate a whole *group* (Job 1:17). Henry George Liddell, et al., “κεφαλή,” *A Greek-English Lexicon*:945. Thiselton (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians : a commentary on the Greek text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 812-822.) gives a good overview of the discussion on the meanings of *kefalē*. for representation of the whole body, person, or grouping,

<sup>106</sup> Philo, *Preliminary Studies* 61; *Rewards* 125. Other Jewish writings of the time also evidence the use of *kefalē*, including the *Apocalypse of Moses* 19.3, and the *Testament of Reuben* 2.2. Although Philip Payne often overstates his case, he gives a good overview of the uses of *kefalē* as source in *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 124-129.

<sup>107</sup> Gordon D. Fee. “Praying and Prophesying in the Assemblies: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2005), 152.

<sup>108</sup> In fact, Eph. 5:22, “wives to your own husbands,” stands without a verb, indicating the close connection to verse 21 from which the verb “submit” (*hupotassō*) is assumed.

1           In verses 7-9, Paul goes on to work with several aspects of Genesis 1-2 as he seeks to  
2 dissuade the offending Corinthians from shameful head covering.<sup>109</sup> In verse 7 while Adam is  
3 said to be the image of God, both Paul and his audience are aware that Eve is also in that image.  
4 To speak of the woman then as also being a glory, places her in a special place of honor (if she  
5 conforms to Paul's concern) which should not be changed into a source of shame. In verses 8-9  
6 the idea that woman comes from man is being used to demonstrate that man is the head of the  
7 woman and therefore it is appropriate to avoid shaming him (even though one may be free in  
8 Christ). The idea of headship as source, or being first, makes perfect sense with these verses,  
9 while head as ruling power has no place in the analogy of verse 8 or elsewhere in this passage.

10           Verse 10, which is widely disputed, makes full sense when we recognize the main point  
11 of the passage and set aside the insistence that headship is primary about ruling authority.  
12 Literally this verse says, "Because of this a woman ought to have authority on/upon/over the  
13 head." Rather than needing to turn the simple meaning of the verse inside-out by adding multiple  
14 words, one can recognize "because of this" as referring to the problems caused by improper head  
15 coverings, and recognize that Paul continues to plead with women to take the initiative or  
16 authority to make good decisions about what to put on her head.<sup>110</sup> When seen this way there is  
17 no longer a need to debate whether verses 11-12 is meant to offset the early verses, for Paul is  
18 simply completing the idea of verse 3-10 focusing on source and respect, by recognizing that in  
19 the end it goes both ways. Thus the passage all works together in a perfect sequence calling on  
20 men and women to cease shaming themselves and the one who came before them and to instead  
21 act to replace shame with honor, ending in verses 13-16 by calling on the offenders to think  
22 logically about the issue and avoid what is naturally and communally recognized as  
23 unacceptable.

24           Clearly the pairings listed in 11:3 are not referring to church organization at all, but to the  
25 three representative relationships that point men and women—who seem to have been pushing  
26 the boundaries of what was sexually appropriate—toward concern for how their choices reflected  
27 upon those to whom they owed respect. Thus with the regard to the question of ordaining women  
28 for ministry, the appropriate lessons would be that such women dress in an appropriate manner  
29 that would reflect well on her relationship with her husband and her God, and that these  
30 relationships in general be engaged with all respect and honor.

31           "In the end," as Payne observes, "it is plain that Paul wants the woman to maintain the  
32 tradition (whatever it is) and to do so primarily for reasons of 'shame' and 'honor in a culture  
33 where this is a primary sociological value.'"<sup>111</sup> Understanding 1 Corinthians 11 in this way would  
34 remove the idea that the passage speaks against women being ordained to act in a pastoral role,  
35 especially when we recognize the nature of authority in the New Testament and the various ways  
36 in which authority is practiced by all who minister. Instead it would encourage women to act as  
37 full human beings with a conscience and a will of their own and at the same time giving honor  
38 and appreciation to her husband.

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<sup>109</sup> For several of the ideas in this paragraph I am indebted to Gordon D. Fee. "Praying and Prophesying in the Assemblies: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2005), 142-160..

<sup>110</sup> The reference to the angels in verse 10 might, in this time when angels were eagerly studied and highly revered, be referring back to the reference in 4:9 to the angels being deeply interested witnesses to the whole great controversy, and how it is played out in the lives of women and men.

<sup>111</sup> Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 148..

1  
2  
3 *1 Corinthians 14:33b-35*  
4

5 *As in all the churches of the saints, let your women keep silent in [your] churches,*  
6 *for it is not permitted for them to speak; but they should be submissive, as the law*  
7 *also says.<sup>35</sup> And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands*  
8 *at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.*  
9

10 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35 is falls near the end of a chapter focusing on public worship. In  
11 this case the point of the passage is specifically about behavior in the worship service. The  
12 concern of the previous passage in verses 26-33a was to bring order to a service that was  
13 disrupted and chaotic, ending with the reasoning, “For God is not a God of confusion but of  
14 peace” (v. 33a).

15 The next words, “As in all the churches of the saints...” (v. 33b), would be a strange  
16 addition to a universal statement about God’s nature. They would, however, make perfect sense  
17 in introducing the brief counsel of vv. 34-35, which is where it is placed in the most current  
18 Greek and English versions. The brief counsel concerning women is thus prefaced by founding it  
19 not in universal principle but in a customary practice among the churches. The words, “for it is  
20 shameful,” in verse 35 affirm that the underlying rationale for this custom is based in cultural  
21 expectations, pointing, as in chapter 11, to the concern for shame and honor so important in the  
22 culture of the contemporary Greco-Roman society. At that time, a woman who spoke in public  
23 could still be considered dishonorable, and speaking to males who were not her husband  
24 suggested that she was flirtatious or worse.<sup>112</sup>

25 Several times in the chapter Paul has spoken to others about silence, giving a rationale,  
26 stating: “If anyone speaks in a tongue, ... if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent (*sigāō*)”  
27 (14:27-28); and, “Let ... prophets speak ... but if anything is revealed to another ... let the first  
28 keep silent (*sigāō*)” (14:29-30).<sup>113</sup> In 34-35 we get suggestions that there are two related reasons  
29 also for the counsel to women, one related to what is shameful in the culture and the other  
30 suggesting that the specific problem with which he was particularly concerned had to do with  
31 speaking out in church to ask questions of those who were teaching. Since Paul has already, in 1  
32 Cor. 11:5, made room for women praying and prophesying in public, his counsel in 14:34-35  
33 seems to be directed specifically at the disruptive and disreputable behavior of questioning  
34 teachers, often male, in the course of a worship service.

35 The two positive commands, “keep silent” and “be submissive” (*hypotassō*) are given  
36 together as a specific prescription in a chaotic situation. If the statement in vv. 36 is also  
37 addressed to these women they were quite combative in their questioning. This would fit the  
38 picture of the self-proclaimed wise ones and the liberty graspers that arises in the earlier part of  
39 his letter. Indeed all believers are instructed, just a little later in 1 Corinthians (16:15-16), to  
40 submit (*hypotassō*) to individuals, including members of the household of Stephanas and others

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<sup>112</sup> Eliezer Gonzalez, “Gender and Shame in Paul’s Churches: The Intersection of Theology and Culture,”  
*Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 22 (2011).

<sup>113</sup> The term *sigāō* does not necessarily refer to absolute silence, but often to “keeping one’s peace” with  
reference to an issue or person (Exod. 14:14; Ps. 31:3; Luke 9:36).

1 (like Priscilla and Phoebe?) who have been working (*synergeō*) and toiling (*kopiaō*) with them,  
2 who devote themselves to service (*diakonia*).<sup>114</sup> That peace and order is a primary concern of the  
3 entire chapter is evidenced by Paul's return to this point at the end of the chapter with the  
4 statement, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (14:40).

5 With reference to the question of ordaining women pastors, the church which is  
6 comfortable today allowing women to speak in church has no reason to be concerned, based on  
7 this passage, that a female pastor's public speech is any more inappropriate than that of a  
8 Sabbath School teacher or superintendent. Each makes use of authority, calling for an  
9 appropriate degree of submission, to make use of their gifting and accomplish the task entailed in  
10 the church office for which they have been chosen.

### 11 12 13 *1 Tim 2:11-15*

14 Carl Cosaert, in his paper for this committee, has ably explained Paul's instruction in 1  
15 Timothy 2:11-15.<sup>115</sup> In summary, Cosaert demonstrates that 1 Timothy shows Paul to be dealing  
16 with a problem of false teaching not only within the church but among some of its leaders, who  
17 were evidencing prideful and arrogant behavior. These teachings were attractive to the women of  
18 the church, who in the context of the emerging opportunities for women in some corners of  
19 Ephesus, were enticed to be disruptive and assert themselves in inappropriate ways and even to  
20 advocate for false teachings they found attractive. Paul combats these problems by calling on  
21 both men and women to worship in a spirit of peacefulness and quietness (not silence) and  
22 instructing these women not to teach or to act in a domineering manner, explaining from Genesis  
23 that women are in no position to domineer men.

24 Again, to practice appropriate authority to carry out a task for which one is gifted or  
25 appointed fits fully within Paul's guiding principles and avoids the kind of controlling authority  
26 over people in manipulative or authoritarian ways with which *authentēō* is concerned.

### 27 28 29 **Conclusions**

30  
31 This paper suggests that the NT witness regarding church leadership and ordination  
32 provides no impediment to the ordination of suitably qualified women to serve in the role of  
33 pastor. The basis for selection of individuals for such roles in the NT, such as those of elder or  
34 deacon, was evidence of spiritual maturity and of the Holy Spirit's presence and appropriate  
35 gifting in the individual. Today's office of pastor, although not fleshed out in detail in the NT,  
36 must be understood to carry the same basic qualifications.

37 All ministries, whether gifted by God or appointed by humans, carry some type of  
38 authority and the pastoral ministry is no different. Yet in each case the authority is authority for a

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<sup>114</sup> Some translations say "be in subjection to such men," but the word men is not present or necessitated in the Greek. These to whom believers are told to submit could thus include the women whom Paul identifies as among those working together with him (*synergetos*), including Priscilla (Rom. 16:3) and Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2-3), and possibly others including Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosis, and Persis (Rom. 16:12) whom Paul says labored (*kopiaō*) much for the Roman church. Timothy, in the same list (Rom. 16:21; cf. 1 Thess. 3:2), and Titus too are spoken of as *synergos* (2 Cor. 8:23).

<sup>115</sup> Carl P. Cosaert, "Paul, Women, and the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy 2:8-15," (Theology of Ordination Study Committee, 2013).

1 task, not authority to domineer or control individuals. This authority is always exercised under  
2 Christ, and under the authority of the Scriptures and the body of believers which He has  
3 instituted. The pastors' primary tasks of preaching the word and nurturing the body of Christ are  
4 enacted under these higher authorities, specifically, in the Adventist church today, including the  
5 administration of the conference committee which is governed by the policies enacted by the  
6 whole body of believers in General Conference session. The ordination of a pastor is thus not  
7 about placing an individual at the top of the power or status hierarchy, giving them ultimate  
8 authority over people, but about affirming the presence of the authority God has already given to  
9 do the tasks for which He has called and equipped that individual. The concerns of Paul,  
10 addressed to specific situations in the New Testament churches, present no impediment to  
11 women exercising such an authority.

12 The priority of seeing God's universe as a place of order and organization is truthful and  
13 important. The question is, "According to what principles does God order His universe?" The  
14 sketch of ministry, authority, and gifting in this paper suggests that rather than ordering the  
15 universe by means of an arbitrary subordination of half of his human creation, the New  
16 Testament portrays an ordering guided by the Spirit through the endowment of spiritual gifts  
17 recognized by the church under His leading through the avenues of Scripture and experience of  
18 His workings.

19 While many cultures see the use of a pastoral-type of authority as problematic, other  
20 cultures have become comfortable and even come to prefer this sort of authority that works by  
21 means of cooperation, nurture, and agreed-upon guidelines. In such cultures women pastors with  
22 their special qualities of nurture and compassion would thrive, and should not be blocked from  
23 ministry. Such qualities, in fact, are central to the core pastoral task of shepherding. Is it not time  
24 to consider that in the role of pastoring there may be a place, in some parts of the world, for  
25 "mothers in Israel" who can use their qualities and gifts in a way that is complementary to the  
26 male pastors in our midst?

27 In Acts 15, the church listened carefully to the voices of those who had experienced the  
28 Holy Spirit's leading. Many evidences were given of the Holy Spirit's working in the lives of the  
29 individuals involved. James then appropriately turned the attention of the gathering to the  
30 Scriptures to ensure that they were understanding the will of God correctly in this matter.  
31 Significantly, Amos 9:11-12, which he quoted is not an explicit "Thus saith the Lord" calling for  
32 an end to circumcision after the coming of Christ, but the statement of a general principle  
33 regarding God's intent for the Gentiles. On the basis of the intent of God expressed in this  
34 Scriptural passage, (no doubt also along with consideration of other similar passages of  
35 Scripture), the church took the huge step of not requiring circumcision, even though they laced  
36 an explicit Scriptural command to do so. Instead of insisting on such a declaration, they looked  
37 to what God was doing in human lives in their day, in the context of the history and teaching  
38 recorded in Scripture. This model is one that we would do well to consider more closely.

39 Near the end of His ministry Jesus spoke at length of His second coming and repeatedly  
40 called on his disciples to be ready when He comes. As He finished telling the parable of the ten  
41 virgins who awaited the bridegroom, a parable much loved by us as Adventists, He warned that  
42 one must "be on the alert, therefore, because you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matt.  
43 25:13). Building on this warning He immediately moved into a second parable, stating, "For it is  
44 just like a man going on a journey who called His bondservants and handed over his belongings  
45 to them. And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, then he went on  
46 his journey" (Matt. 25:14-15). As the well-known story goes the servants who used what the

1 master had given them were rewarded while the one who hid their talent was punished. In the  
2 context today of Jesus' soon coming, do we dare to insist that a God-given talent or gift not be  
3 used to its full potential to complete the work of spreading the gospel to all the world? With  
4 many societies today welcoming the leadership of women and respecting the non-authoritarian  
5 participatory style of leadership taught in the NT, a style of authority often practiced quite  
6 naturally by women, shall we move out of God's way as we "pray the Lord of the harvest to send  
7 out laborers into His harvest" to finish His work (Matt. 9:38)?  
8