

1 **Ordination of Women as Pastors: An Overview of**
2 **the Major Biblical Arguments**

3
4 **by**
5 **WAD Biblical Research Committee**
6

7
8 The Seventh-day Adventist Church has long discussed the role of women in the
9 church, including the current thorny issue of women’s ordination into pastoral ministry.¹ In
10 recent decades, however, the subject has received enlivened discussions, culminating in a
11 world-wide study process in response to a request made at the 2010 General Conference
12 session.² While culture, policy, and theology have played out in some of the previous
13 discussions, the present study is based primarily on hermeneutics.³ We may summarize the
14 key questions in the discussion as follows: Was there male headship before the Fall (Gen 2)?
15 Whether we answer in the affirmative or negative, what implications has this for leadership in
16 the covenant community? Can a headship principle explain the all-male priesthood in the Old
17 Testament and the mostly-male church leadership in the New Testament (e.g., apostles and
18 bishops/elders)? How should we interpret Paul’s references to Gen 2 with regards to church
19 order and leadership (1 Cor 11; 14; 1 Tim 2) as well as his “husband of one wife”
20 qualification for overseers/elders (1 Tim 3)? And how do we explain the instances in
21 Scripture where women seem to exercise headship responsibility in the covenant community
22 both in the Old Testament (e.g., Deborah and other prophetesses) and in the New Testament
23 (e.g., Phoebe and Junia)? What is the implication of the priesthood of all believers for the

¹See David Trim, “Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History” (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Laurel, MD., January 16, 2013), 14.

²See e.g., General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Symposium on the Role of Women in the Church* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1984); Nancy Vyhmeister, *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998); Mercedes H. Dyer, ed., *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Affirm, 2000); Camp Mohaven documents (<http://adventistarchives.org/1973-5-mohaven>); Jan Barna, *Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Theology: A Study in Biblical Interpretation* (Nova Pazova, Serbia: Euro Dream, 2012).

³See papers presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee online (<https://portal.adventist.org/committee/TOSC/SitePages/Home.aspx>).

1 church's official appointments into leadership positions (Exod 19:5-6; 1 Pet 2:9)? Who is a
2 pastor: priest, prophet, apostle, or bishop/elder? Is pastoral ministry a spiritual gift? If so, is
3 this gift gender-specific? What is Ellen White's counsel regarding women's ordination? A
4 number of papers have been written in the course of the current world-wide study dealing
5 with these questions, and in most cases there is a polarization of scholarly opinions. It is not
6 possible to discuss these issues in any detail here. What this study does is to summarize the
7 WAD Biblical Research Committee's consensus understanding of the issues.

8 9 **Gen 1-3 and Male Leadership in Old Testament**

10
11 Gen 1-3 is foundational to the women's ordination debate, not only because it relates
12 to questions of headship, equality, and submission in the male-female relationship,⁴ but also
13 because it seems to serve, for Paul, the theological grounds for spiritual headship in the
14 church. Gen 1 clearly teaches the equality of man and woman as both are created in the image
15 of God (v. 26). The male and the female are called *'ādām* (human) (vv. 26-27; 5:1-2). Both
16 are equally given dominion over the earth and the animal creation:

17
18 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and
19 subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every
20 living thing that moves on the earth" (1:28, NKJV).

21
22 Among God's creation in Gen 1, only human beings bear the image of God. The *imago Dei*
23 qualifies humans to be entrusted with dominion over the earth (v. 28). On the one hand, while
24 *imago Dei* relates to ontology, the dominion granted humans results directly from their
25 constitution as *imago Dei*. In this regard, function and ontology are closely related. On the
26 other hand, though the dominion given to the male and the female humans is indication of an

⁴Richard M. Davidson, "Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture," in *Women in Ministry*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 259.

1 equality of the genders in the exercise of dominion over the earth, such equality does not
2 seem by default to preclude the possibility of leadership within the human family.

3 The interpretation of Gen 2 is much more critical to the women’s ordination debate as
4 both complementarians and egalitarians interpret the passage in polarized ways.⁵ An outline
5 structure of the chapter has been presented as follows:

- 6 Man’s creation anticipated—no man yet to till the ground (vv. 5-6)
- 7 Man is created from the ground (v. 7)
- 8 Man needs a home—garden, food, and water made for man (vv. 8-14)
- 9 Man placed in the garden to tend & keep it; he is given the divine law (vv. 15-17)
- 10 Man’s aloneness and need for companion (vv. 18-20)
- 11 Woman is created—for man, from man, and brought to man (vv. 21-22)
- 12 Man’s need fulfilled—man cherishes woman as a part of himself (vv. 23-24).⁶

13
14 In Gen 2, we find that man and woman are created equal in essence. Among God’s creation,
15 the woman is the only comparable partner to the man (2:18-20). Both share the same nature
16 and so can be joined in holy matrimony (vv. 22-24). But we also find a marked focus on the
17 man in the chapter. For example, while the term *’ādām* includes both man and woman in Gen
18 1, in Gen 2 it consistently refers only to the man. The creation of the woman is specifically
19 conjoined to the prior creation of the man: the woman is created *for* the man because he is
20 *alone* (vv. 18-22). The reference to the woman as the man’s “help,” the use of his “rib”
21 (rather than only dust) in ‘building’ her, and the subsequent wedding ceremony where the
22 Lord leads the bride to the groom, all seem to suggest that the creation of the man *before* the

⁵The chapter has seen a polarity of interpretation among Adventists in the recent debate. See Daniel Bediako and Paul Ratsara, “Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3: Ontological Equality and Role Differentiation” (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Maritime Institute, MD, July 23, 2013); Richard Davidson, Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Maritime Institute, MD, July 24, 2013). For the same debate among evangelicals, see Stanley N. Gundry and James R. Beck, eds., *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005); John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006).

⁶ Ratsara and Bediako, 24.

1 woman is a designed sequence. It follows that the creation sequence is not to be explained
2 away as a merely literary or artistic feature.⁷

3 It is commonly argued that the creation of the man *first* (2:7-20) is an indication of his
4 primary leadership role within the human family. Leadership responsibility does not accrue to
5 the man simply because he is created *first*, otherwise we might as well conclude, for example,
6 that the animals have leadership role over humans since these were created before humans
7 (1:20-25). Yet what makes the man-woman sequence significant in Gen 2 is that the space
8 between the creation of the man and the woman is not a vacuum as that between the animals
9 and humans in Gen 1—it is filled with logically sequential divine actions that seem to convey
10 some responsibility to the man that the woman will not directly bear.⁸ Upon closer reading of
11 Gen 2, it appears that divine actions, both before and after the creation of the woman, set the
12 platform for male leadership in the garden. The man takes priority of place not only in terms
13 of creation sequence but also in terms of responsibility within the human family. This
14 primary leadership function of the man does not disrupt the dominion mandate given to the
15 man and the woman in the human-animal relationship.

16 The leadership function of man in Gen 2 is deducible from several factors. First, the
17 man is the one directly charged with oversight responsibility in the garden (2:15). In the
18 context of Gen 1-5, the verb *‘ābad* “tend” is used in the sense of farming (2:15; 3:23; 4:2)
19 while *šāmar* is used in the sense of guarding or protecting (3:34). The man would have
20 primary responsibility not only for the physical work in the garden, but also for the spiritual
21 task of protecting the garden from intrusion by Satan. As part of his spiritual responsibility,

⁷ *Contra* Davidson, 6.

⁸ Ratsara and Bediako, 17, may be right when they argue that “the creation of man and the creation of woman are not isolated and unrelated acts; important consequences follow from the prior creation of the man that define the relationship between him and the woman.” In other words, the woman is created “for him” and “built” “out of him” as his “helper.”

1 the man is given the regulation on “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (vv. 16-17).⁹
2 Gen 3:17 confirms that the command in 2:15 was particularly given to the man probably as
3 head of the family. By entrusting the command to the man (2:15), the Lord seems to be
4 placing a responsibility on him to communicate and to ensure obedience to the command
5 within the family (cf. 3:11,17).

6 Second, the woman is said to be created *for* the man as his “help” (2:18). The English
7 “helper comparable to him” (NKJV) translates the Hebrew *’ēzer k^eneḡdô* (lit., “a help like
8 opposite him”). This phrase seems to convey several notions at the same time: ontological
9 equality, gender differentiation, and difference in responsibility. With regards to ontology,
10 the particle *k^e* “like/as” suggests that the “helper” would share equally in essence/nature with
11 the man. The phrase *neḡdô* “opposite him” marks gender difference, suggesting that the
12 “helper” would be created with a gender opposite of the man’s. Only a female human would
13 make comparable pair with the male human among God’s creation. The Hebrew *’ēzer* “help”
14 does not convey any notion of superiority or subordination in itself.¹⁰ The one who gives help
15 may be superior or subordinate depending on the context. As has been noted, “Whether the
16 helper is a superior or not will depend entirely on other factors, extrinsic to the relationship
17 constituted by the act of helping.”¹¹ No doubt, *’ēzer k^eneḡdô* bespeaks equality of male and
18 female humans as the image of God. But ontological equality does not mean that one party of
19 the human family could not be given more responsibility than the other. Craig L. Blomberg
20 observes rightly that “what makes an *’ēzer* a ‘helper’ in each context is that he or she comes

⁹ Ellen White affirms that the command in Gen 2:1-17 was directly given to the man (RH 2/24/74 par. 10; cf. RH 6/4/01 par. 4; ST 10/29/85 par. 13; ST 12/15/87 par. 2). While the command was initially given to Adam, angels subsequently reminded both Adam and Eve of God’s instructions (cf. 1SP 33; PP 53; 10MR 327 par. 1).

¹⁰ The word *’ēzer* basically means “help,” divine or human (Exod 18:4; Deut 33:26, 29; Ps 20:3; 33:20; 89:20; 115:9-11; 121:1-2; 124:8; 146:5; Isa 30:5; Dan 11:34; Hos 13:9) and, by extension, “helper” (Deut 33:7; Ps 70:6; Ezek 12:14). The idea of “helper” proper is conveyed by the participle of the cognate verb, *’ōzēr* (e.g., 2 Kin 14:26; Job 29:12; 30:13; Ps 30:11; 54:6).

¹¹ David J. A. Clines, *What Does Eve Do To Help? And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament*, JSOT Sup. Series, vol. 94 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 14.

1 to the aid of someone else who bears the primary responsibility for the activity in question. It
2 may be significant that the man is never said to be an *'ezer* of his wife."¹² In any given
3 situation, the helper and the helpee do not bear equal amount of responsibility.¹³ The woman
4 is appropriately referred to as “help(er)” not necessarily because her creation is immediately
5 premised upon the man’s aloneness, but because the man bears primary responsibility in the
6 community of Eden.

7 Third, before the creation of the woman the man is given the responsibility to name
8 the animals (vv. 18-20). Such naming signifies human authority over the lower creation as a
9 fulfillment of the dominion mandate (1:26, 28).¹⁴ Further, that the Lord asks the man to
10 perform this exercise before the creation of the woman may signify his position as the
11 primary leader in the garden and also to impress upon him the need for a comparable
12 companion. Fourth, the woman is not only created “out of man” but also “brought” to the
13 man (2:22-23). The rib imagery suggests the woman is neither a superior “helper” nor an
14 inferior “helper,” but one who is created to stand by the side of the man to be loved and
15 protected.¹⁵ By leading the woman to the man after her creation (v. 22), the Lord seems to be
16 placing her in his care as husband-leader—to be received, loved, and protected as part of
17 himself. And the man’s response of appreciation does just that: “This is now bone of my
18 bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of

¹² Craig L. Blomberg, “Women in Ministry: A Complementarian Perspective,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, rev. ed., ed. Stanley N. Gundry and James R. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 129-130. See also C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P. & R., 2005), 107.

¹³ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 88, remarks, “The word *help* suggests that the man has governmental priority, but both sexes are mutually dependent on each other. The man is created first, with woman to help the man, not vice versa (see also 1 Tim 2:13); however, this does not mean ontological superiority or inferiority.”

¹⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, “Women in Ministry: Another Complementarian Perspective,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, rev. ed., ed. Stanley N. Gundry and James R. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 295, notes that in naming the animals, “the narrator signals that Adam was beginning to fulfill God’s mandate to exercise dominion over the world and God’s garden.”

¹⁵ Ellen White alludes to the man’s leadership in the sense of his protection of the woman (PP 46, 48, 53-59; 6T 236; CT 33). For example, she states that “Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him” (PP 46).

1 Man” (Gen 2:23 NAU). Finally, in this verse the man appreciates the woman as invaluable
2 gift from God and names her.¹⁶ His responsibility to lead is seen here both in naming the
3 woman (v. 23)¹⁷ and in taking the initiative for their staying together (v. 24). Perhaps in
4 consonance with the responsibility that is placed upon the man, Gen 2 consistently uses the
5 term *’ādām* to refer only to him—as he bears the name *’ādām*, so does he bear primary
6 responsibility for the human family.

7 Gen 1 highlights the equality of man and woman; God creates them equal in nature
8 (i.e., image of God) and places stewardship responsibility on the two over the earth. Gen 2
9 speaks of equality of man and woman as comparable partners but entrusts the man with
10 leadership responsibility within the human family. In Gen 3 the woman seems to take that
11 responsibility from the man (vv. 1-5, 12)¹⁸—eating the fruit first and then having him eat next
12 (vv. 6, 17)—and drags the family into sin (vv. 7-8), but then God categorically reestablishes
13 the headship of the man over the woman (vv. 9-11, 16-19).

14 After Adam and Eve sinned, the Lord began the interrogation with Adam. The
15 questions and answers in 3:9-12 imply that Adam was to be held primarily responsible for the
16 rebellion.¹⁹ As the Lord had personally given Adam the command (2:15), so would He now

¹⁶ Some have argued that because the Hebrew word *šēm* “name” is not used and the noun “woman” is generic rather than personal name, the man does not actually name the woman. It has also been suggested that in v. 23, the designation “woman” comes from the Lord, not the man. See the rebuttal of these arguments in Ratsara and Bediako, 27-30; George W. Ramsey, “Is Name-Giving an Act of Domination in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere?” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50 (1988): 24-35.

¹⁷ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 70, remarks, “Though they are equal in nature, that man names woman (cf. 3:20) indicates that she is expected to be subordinate to him, an important presupposition of the ensuing narrative (3:17).”

¹⁸ On the reversal of roles in Gen 3:1-5, see Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 220, who notes that the participant structure in Gen 2-3 depicts an original “role relationship of leader and follower” (i.e., God, man, woman, serpent) but that this structure is reversed in the Fall (i.e., serpent, woman, man, God). See also Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 107; Wenham, 75.

¹⁹ As Craig L. Blomberg, “Women in Ministry: A Complementarian Perspective,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, rev. ed., ed. Stanley N. Gundry and James R. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 131, observes, “It is interesting that the serpent approaches only the woman to deceive her (vv. 1-5), and yet God confronts the man first to call him to account for his rebellion (vv. 9-12).” See also John Piper, “A Vision

1 hold him accountable for the disobedience of the command (3:9-11). This is further
2 corroborated in v. 17, where he is specifically blamed for having listened to the voice of Eve:
3 “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife” (v. 17). The implication is that Adam
4 had parted with his headship responsibility in the process.

5 In a more explicit manner the man is made ruler over the woman: “Against your man
6 [is] your *desire*, but he must *rule* over you” (v. 16).²⁰ The Hebrew words *ʿšûqâ* “desire” and
7 *māšal* “rule” are important for understanding v. 16. A careful analysis of the structure of vv.
8 14-19 as well as comparison with Gen 4:7 has shown that the word *ʿšûqâ* more probably
9 refers to the woman’s “desire” for mastery or control over the man—just as she had done by
10 having the man eat of the fruit—rather than an erotic desire.²¹ Gen 3:16b finds its counterpart
11 in 3:15:²² as sin resulted in enmity between (wo)man and serpent, so did it result in discord
12 between man and woman. The divine plan, however, was for man’s headship responsibility to
13 continue. The word *māšal*, “rule,” in v. 16 conveys man’s headship and implies woman’s
14 subordination.²³ In Gen 3 *māšal* does not in itself convey the negative associations of the
15 English “dominate.”²⁴ So the man is not to rule over the woman in the same way as the two
16 of them would rule over the other creatures. Some have interpreted v. 16 to apply only within

of Biblical Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 37.

²⁰ In view of the similar context of strife in 4:7, the particle *ʿel* is best rendered “against.” *BDB* s.v. “*ʿel*” suggests that “where the motion or direction implied appears from the context to be of a hostile character,” *ʿel* conveys the sense “against.” Although many scholars interpret Gen 3:16 based on Song 7:10, we notice that in Song 7:10 the context of strife in relationship is absent. Further, in Song 7 the man’s positive “desire” is “for/upon” (Heb. *ʿal*) not “against” (*ʿel*) the woman.

²¹ See the structure and interpretation of Gen 3:16 in Ratsara and Bediako, 40-43.

²² In 3:16 the man’s “rule” (*māšal*) is a reversal of woman’s “desire” (*ʿšûqâ*), just as in v. 15 the struggle between the serpent and the woman’s “seed” brings about a situational reversal.

²³ See also Frank B. Holbrook, “A Brief Analysis and Interpretation of the Biblical Data Regarding the Role of Women,” *Symposium on the Role of Women in the Church* (The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1984), 89.

²⁴ The word *māšal* has several nuances within the semantic range of “rule”—for example, to “rule” over siblings (Gen 37:8), slaves (Exod 21:8), nations (Deut 15:6), to “take charge” over someone’s possessions (Gen 24:2; Ps 105:21), to control (Gen 4:7; Ps 19:14), or to exercise self-control (Prov 16:32). Its noun form is used twice in Gen 1:16 to denote the “ruling” of the Sun and the Moon over day and night respectively. Human “rule” over the earth and the animal creation is conveyed by *rādāh* “rule, govern” instead of *māšal*.

1 the family, not in the covenant community.²⁵ Yet it is not possible to draw distinctions
2 between family and society in the context of Gen 1-3. Although v. 16 is directed specifically
3 at Adam and Eve, the same desire by woman to control man is seen more generally in the
4 way some women relate to male-based authority (cf. 1 Cor 14:33-35; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
5 Moreover, Gen 3:14-19 itself allows for universal application.²⁶

6 Finally, the territorial coverage of the divine pronouncements upon the woman and
7 the man indirectly reveal that the man had greater responsibility.²⁷ The pronouncements
8 highlight the respective spheres of duty of woman (v. 16) man (vv. 17-19). What is implicit
9 in chap. 2 is explicit in chap. 3: the home is the primary sphere of the woman (3:16,20; cf.
10 1:26-28), while the entire productive land is the man's (3:17-19,23; cf. 2:16-17). For his sake
11 the entire ground is cursed, making breadwinning a difficult task.

12 We conclude this section by stating that despite the scholarly disagreements, a
13 balanced reading of Gen 2 allows for the conclusion that at creation the man was given
14 certain leadership responsibilities within the human family. What we find in Gen 3:16 is not
15 an institution of male headship, but a firm re-establishment of the headship responsibility of
16 the man in the context of sin. This male headship principle in Gen 2-3 seems to serve as the
17 platform for male leadership attested in Scripture. Although both in Scripture and in society
18 male headship has been abused to the disadvantage of women, the headship principle has its
19 foundation in Scripture rather than paganism. The headship principle explains why Abraham,
20 not Sarah, is called and named the principal instructor in the family regarding the way of the
21 Lord (Gen 18:19). It explains why it is the patriarch who is the family priest (e.g., Gen 8:20;
22 12:7; 22:9). It also explains why it is men who serve in the army to protect wives and

²⁵ Davidson, "Should Women be Ordained," 26-27; Linda A. Belleville, "Women in Ministry: An Egalitarian Perspective," in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, rev. ed., ed. Stanley N. Gundry and James R. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 33.

²⁶ See Ratsara and Bediako, 46.

²⁷ Wenham, 82, notes that "the sentence on the man is the longest and fullest, since he bore the greater responsibility in following his wife's advice instead of heeding God's instructions personally given to him."

1 children (Deut 20). Finally, it remains the best explanation for the selection of only males for
2 the Israelite priesthood, though this institution was further limited to a particular family
3 (Exod 13; Num 3).

4 **Priests, Prophets, and Ordination**

5
6 The Old Testament ministries of the priests and prophets have indirectly influenced
7 the discussion of women's ordination.²⁸ On the one hand, some tend to think that because
8 women were not included in the Levitical priesthood, they should be excluded from pastoral
9 ministry. On the other hand, some think that since there were prophetesses in Israel, women
10 should not be denied ordination into pastoral ministry. A clarification of the relationship
11 between these Old Testament ministries and pastoral ministry seems necessary.

12 In ancient Israel, one needed to satisfy two basic criteria in order to become a priest:
13 lineage and ordination. Priesthood was inherited and limited only to the male descendants of
14 Aaron—other male descendants of Levi supported the priests in their ministry. Female
15 descendants of Aaron could not become priestesses. They could not even partake of the 'holy
16 meat' except perhaps in some limited cases (e.g., the elevated thigh and breast of the well-
17 being offering; Lev 10:14; cf. 6:18,29).²⁹ Priesthood was also an ordained ministry. Aaron
18 and his sons received elaborate ordination (i.e., anointing [*mashakh*], consecration [*qadash*],
19 and filling in the hands [*male'*]) (Exod 28; Lev 8-9; cf. Num 8:5-26). It was only the ordained
20 priest who was authorized to minister before the Lord on behalf of Israel (Exod 40:15; Lev
21 6:22; 16:32).

²⁸Cf. 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, MI; Andrews University Press, 1998), 29; Raoul Dederen, "The Priesthood of All Believers," in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI; Andrews University Press, 1998), 23.

²⁹A priest's daughter could eat of the holy offerings, but if she were married to a layman she could no longer eat it (Lev 22:12). Lev 22:4-6 adds that even among the men, some could not participate in the holy offerings at least for some time.

1 Several conclusions have been reached as to why women were excluded from the
2 priesthood. Polemically, it is argued that the Lord did not permit women priestesses in Israel
3 because in the surrounding nations women priestesses were largely cultic prostitutes.³⁰ Such
4 argument is difficult to sustain when, for example, we read that some of the portions of the
5 sacrificial meat could not even be eaten by priestly wives. Some think that women could
6 practically not serve as priests in Israel because of the purity laws relating to the sanctuary,
7 which would not permit a woman to officiate during her monthly period or one month or two
8 after giving birth (Lev 12:1-8; 15:19-24).³¹ While such argument makes sense, it does not
9 explain why Levite women could not be treated like their male counterparts, who during any
10 bodily discharge would simply have to stay away from the holy things (Lev 22:4-6). The
11 biblical text itself seems to allow for a theological reason for the exclusion of women
12 priestesses. In the Pentateuch, we find a clear connection between the levitical priesthood and
13 the concept of the firstborn. Because Pharaoh refused to allow the Lord's firstborn leave
14 Egypt (Exod 4:22,23), He struck the Egyptian firstborn (12:29; cf. 4:23) and then consecrated
15 the Israelite firstborn to Himself (13:2,13-15; 22:29; 34:20; Lev 27:26). The Israelite
16 firstborns would probably have engaged in a consecrated service or priesthood, but at Sinai
17 the Lord substituted these firstborns with the male descendants of the tribe of Levi (Num
18 3:12-13,16). Thus, the killing of the Egyptian firstborn and the consecration of the Israelite
19 firstborn to the Lord provide the basis for the consecration of male priests representing the
20 male firstborns in Israel (Num 8:16-18). With this background, it may be concluded that the

³⁰ See P. Bird, "'To Play the Harlot': An Inquiry into an Old Testament Metaphor," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. P. Day (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 76.

³¹ Cf. G. I. Emmerson, "Women in Ancient Israel," in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological, and Political Perspectives*, ed. R. E. Clements (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 379.

1 selection of only males to constitute the priesthood was theologically motivated—at least in
2 the case of the Levites—rather than merely culturally biased.³²

3 Unlike the priesthood, the prophetic ministry was not restricted to any tribe or to one
4 gender. We find prophetesses in the Old Testament, including Miriam (Exod 15:20), Deborah
5 (Judg 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14; 2 Chron 34:22), and Isaiah’s wife (Isa 8:3).³³ First, the basic
6 characteristic of the prophetic ministry is that it was a *called* ministry. A person could be
7 called into the prophetic office through a vision/theophany (Exod 3; Isa 6) or sudden
8 enablement by the Holy Spirit (2 Chron 20).³⁴ Second, prophetic ministry was not an
9 ordained ministry; at least there was no public ritual of ordination by human agents as we
10 find in priesthood. Rather than being ceremonially ordained, prophets were commissioned—
11 expressed by various commands (e.g., Isa 6:9; Amos 7:15; Jer 1:5-10). Finally, the ministry
12 of the prophets seemed to have “clustered around times of crisis,” be it religious, political, or
13 identity crisis.³⁵ This may explain why the prophetic ministry was sporadic and unorganized
14 as opposed to the priesthood.

³² It should be noted that the priestly appointment of Aaron and his sons is not explicitly related to the firstborn concept. What is clear is that Aaron’s priesthood was implied before Moses went to receive the law (cf. 18:12; 24:1-12) and that while Moses was on the mountain, the Lord named Aaron and his sons priests (27:21; 28:1,41). But when the Lord commands that Israelite firstborns be substituted with male descendants of Levi, this automatically includes Aaron and his family. Even if the selection of Aaron and sons is not specifically linked to the firstborn theology—notice that within the nuclear family Aaron was the male firstborn (Exod 6:20; 7:7). It may be noted that the reference to the levitical service regarding the tabernacle in Exod 28:21 seems to assume that the Levites had already been selected to work in the tabernacle, perhaps together with Aaron. If so, the “priests” in Exod 19:22,24 may proleptically refer to Aaron and the Levites (cf. 3:16,18; 18:12). It is possible the Levites’ obedience to the Lord in Exod 32:26-29 comes as a confirmation of their priesthood rather than the basis of their election into service, after all the command to Moses to switch the Israelite firstborns with Levite males (Num 3 and 8) is not specifically dated.

³³ The New Testament also refers to Anna (Luke 2:36) and the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9).

³⁴ While the prophetic ministry was primarily a called ministry, the references to the “sons of the prophets” or the ‘school of the prophets’ would suggest that it could take the form of a learned/tutored ministry (e.g., 1 Sam 10:5,10; 19:20; 1 Kgs 20:35; 5:22; 6:1; 9:1; 2 Kgs 2:3,5,7,15; 4:1). The call into the prophetic office, however, was the prerogative of the Lord; individuals did not merit the office simply because they had been servants to the prophets or had belonged to the school of the prophets (e.g., Amos 7:14).

³⁵ Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 403.

1 A tabular comparison of priesthood and prophetic ministry in the Old Testament as
 2 follows:³⁶

	Priesthood	Prophetic Ministry
Basis of entry	heredity (& gender closed)	call (& gender open)
Initiation: & Conferral:	anointing, consecration, filling in the hands (i.e., ordination)	commissioning
Key function	mediators (i.e., consecrated hands) (<i>typifying the Messiah</i>)	messenger-lawyers (i.e., consecrated mouth-piece) (<i>representing the divine court</i>)
Key characteristics	organized & successive (<i>inherited</i>) all-male ministry purity (holiness)-based ministry	unorganized & sporadic mostly-male; few female charismatic and dynamic (sometimes ecstatic)
Sphere	<i>cult</i> (& public health)	society (& politics)
Employment	full-time (supported by tithes)	part-time (not supported by tithes)
Other functions	1. administration 2. teaching 3. <i>officiating (sacrifices)</i> 3. judging (settling difficult matters) 4. ritual purification (agents of holiness & purification; i.e., covenantal holiness) 5. divination (i.e., determining God's will) 6. pronouncement of blessings 7. participation in warfare	1. preaching (<i>reprobative</i>) (indictment; judgment; instruction; aftermath oracles) 2. socio-political commentators (i.e., sentries): (a) monitoring social justice & monarchical deviations from covenant (i.e., covenantal faithfulness) (b) monitoring Israel's foreign relations 3. prediction (i.e., proclamation of divine agenda) 4. divination (i.e., inquiring of God)

3
 4 Following a detailed study, Daniel Bediako has concluded that pastoral ministry shares
 5 similarities as well as marked differences with both priesthood and prophetic ministry in the
 6 Old Testament and that pastoral ministry does not constitute an exact replica of either of
 7 these ministry patterns.³⁷ If, as he argues, neither priesthood nor prophetic ministry is
 8 sufficient model for pastoral ministry, then a theology and practice of ordination cannot be
 9 based on one of the Old Testament ministries or the other. Stated differently, neither the
 10 Levitical priesthood nor the prophetic ministry provides enough basis for the inclusion or
 11 exclusion of women from ordained pastoral ministry.

³⁶ This table is modified from Daniel Bediako, "A Study of Old Testament Priesthood and Prophetic Ministry and Its Implications for Pastoral Ministry" (presented at the Biblical Research Committee of the West-Central Africa Division, November 29-30, 2012, Valley View University, Ghana), 16-17.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

Deborah: A Female Judge

1
2
3 According to Judg 4-5, Deborah was a prophetess and a judge. The example of
4 Deborah is often cited as support for women ordination, for if she could exercise leadership
5 authority over the covenant community other women should not be denied such leadership
6 authority in the church. In the previous section it was noted that the presence of prophetesses
7 in Israel is not to dictate the ordination of women into pastoral ministry. The major issue of
8 concern in the case of Deborah is her seeming occupation of the office of judge. While the
9 judges appear to have served as proto-kings in Israel, judgeship was not an appointed,
10 organized, or ordained spiritual headship position in Israel. The specific responsibility of the
11 judges was to deliver God's people from foreign oppression and hegemony (e.g., 3:9,15;
12 6:14; 11:29). Without foreign oppression, there was no need for a deliverer-judge.

13 It appears that the Lord did not raise Deborah primarily as a deliverer-judge in Israel
14 on the same level as Othniel, Ehud, and Jephthah, for example. We find her judgeship to be
15 different in nature and scope from that of the other judges. Unlike these other judges who led
16 the Israelite army to battle, Deborah only encouraged Barak to take up the task of a deliverer-
17 judge. It follows that Barak was the judge in the true sense: he was "designated by the Lord
18 Himself as the one chosen to deliver Israel, and had received the assurance that God would
19 go with him and subdue their enemies."³⁸ Further, among the judges Deborah is the only one
20 who is reported settling disputes between parties. Her judgeship, therefore, was more judicial
21 than military as compared to her male counterparts. In Judg 4-5, Deborah plays the role of a
22 prophetess rather than a judge. As the "mouth" of God, she commands Barak to engage
23 Sisera in battle (4:6-7,14). She specifically calls herself a "mother in Israel" (5:7)—a brave
24 one! But Barak does not request the presence of Deborah at the military camp because of her
25 military prowess but rather because she is the one through whom the Lord speaks (4:8). Thus

³⁸ Ellen White, *Daughters of God*, 37.

1 while the biblical text accords to Deborah the offices of a prophetess and a judge, the former
2 office overshadows the latter. In fact, she herself insists that military leadership—the primary
3 function of the judge—was man’s rather than woman’s duty: “. . . .will not lead to your
4 glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman” (4:8-9). The authority of
5 Deborah to settle disputes would seem to result from her position as prophetess instead of
6 judge-deliverer. Her example does not violate the headship principle established in Gen 2-3.
7 As Ellen White states, Deborah “was known as a prophetess, and in the absence of the usual
8 magistrates, the people had sought to her for counsel and justice.”³⁹ In any case, neither the
9 office of the prophetess nor that of the judge was cultic to require an ordination ritual, at least
10 by humans. As it appears, Deborah’s example is does not give us enough basis to conclude
11 that women should be ordained into pastoral ministry.

Apostles, Overseers/Elders, and Ordination

12
13
14
15 In the New Testament, we find ordination in relation to the appointments of the
16 disciples (Mark 3:13-15; Luke 6:12-13),⁴⁰ Mathias (Acts 1:21-26), the Seven (Acts 6:1-7),
17 Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:1-3), Timothy (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; cf. Acts 16:1-3), and
18 elders/overseers (Acts 14:21-23; 20:17,28; 1 Tim 5:17-22; Tit 1:5-9).⁴¹ While we do not find
19 ordination of a “pastor” (Greek *poimen*) in these passages, the position and responsibility of
20 persons like Timothy and Titus would seem to be equivalent to that of today’s ordained
21 minister.⁴² We may infer from these New Testament instances that ordination is necessary for
22 the church, as there is the need to set apart certain persons to take up special leadership

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ According to Ellen White, Jesus laid His hands upon the disciples and ordained them (*Desire of Ages*, 296).

⁴¹ For a detailed discussion of ordination in the New Testament, see “Toward a Theology of Ordination” (draft document by the Theology of Ordination Study Committee), 18-33.

⁴² In fact, the “pastor/shepherd” occurs only once to refer to a church leader (Eph 4:11), though the related verb is often used in the sense of shepherding the church (e.g., John 21:16; Acts 20:28). The same term is used of Christ being the Shepherd of our souls (1 Pet 2:25). In Eph 4:11, however, “pastor/shepherd” is a spiritual gift to with a teaching function. It would be best to translate “pastor-teachers” instead of “pastors and teachers.”

1 responsibilities. The New Testament shows that women were engaged in several kinds of
2 ministries (e.g., Acts 9:36-43; 18:26; Rom 16:1-3, 6, 7, 12). However, in the instances of the
3 church's official appointment into leadership ministries, we find none where a woman is
4 specifically ordained. How should we understand the absence of women's ordination in
5 Scripture? With this question, we turn to the relevant New Testament passages dealing with
6 male-female relationship in the context of church order and leadership.

7
8 **1 Cor 11, 14; 1 Tim 2-3 and**
9 **Male Leadership in the Church**
10

11 The debate over women's ordination has seen a polarized divergence of scholarly
12 interpretations of texts in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy.⁴³ The key question, it appears, is
13 whether in these texts Paul uses male headship principle to exclude women from the ordained
14 ministry in the church. Before dealing with such texts, a few comments may be made with
15 regards to headship and submission in the man-woman relationship.

16 The New Testament seems incontrovertibly clear that in the home, the husband is the
17 head of the family (e.g., Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:1-7). For example, in Eph 5:22-
18 25, 33, Paul writes,

19 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the
20 wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore,
21 just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let the wives be* to their own husbands in
22 everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave
23 Himself for her. . . . Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife
24 as himself, and let the wife *see* that she respects *her* husband (NKJV).

25

26 Peter also gives similar advice in 1 Pet 3:1-7:

27

⁴³See, for example, the following papers presented at the July 2013 meeting of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee: Carl P. Cosaert, "Paul, Women, and the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy 2:8-15," 1-37; Ingo Sorke, "Adam, Where Are You? On Gender Relations," 1-75; Teresa Reeve, "Shall the Church Ordain Women as Pastors? Thoughts toward an Integrated NT Perspective," 1-38; Edwin Reynolds, "Biblical Hermeneutics and Headship in First Corinthians," 1-46.

1 For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned
2 themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling
3 him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.
4 Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to
5 the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may
6 not be hindered (vv. 5-7 NKJV).
7
8 Some supporters of women’s ordination believe that the husband is the head of the wife in the
9 home, but that male headship is a post-Fall institution and is limited *only* to marriage (Gen
10 3:16). It is interesting to observe, however, that when Paul discusses headship and submission
11 in Eph 5 he patterns husband’s headship after that of Christ over the church and then supports
12 his argument with statements from Gen 2. If, as it appears, Paul finds the male headship
13 principle as a reflection of Christ’s relation to the church, then the same principle will
14 naturally find expression in the church.⁴⁴ And Paul seems consistent: he does not limit the
15 headship principle to the family but extends it to the covenant community. In other words, he
16 applies the headship principle in relation to church order and leadership and cites Gen 2 as
17 theological grounds for his teaching (1 Cor 11; 1 Tim 2).

18 The crucial passages include 1 Cor 11:2-16, 14:33-35, 1 Tim 2:11-15, and 3:1-14.
19 Rather than household codes, these passages discuss issues of headship/leadership and
20 submission in the church setting.⁴⁵ 1 Cor 11:2-16 discusses church order and authority in the

⁴⁴See W. J. Larkin Jr., *Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 109.

⁴⁵In 1 Cor 11, Paul addresses the “brethren” (v. 2) and also makes reference to praying, prophesying, and the presence of angels (vv. 4-5,10,13). Instructions are given as to how men and women should behave in the church (vv. 4-6, 13-15). Verses 16-20 specify that he is giving these instructions to the church at Corinth. In 1 Cor 14, Paul clearly addresses “women” in the church; the word “church” occurs three times in vv. 33-35. When he specifically refers of “husbands” he uses the possessive pronoun (v. 35). Similarly, in 1 Tim 2-3 Paul is concerned with worship life (2:1-8), dressing (2:9-10) and qualities of overseers and deacons (3:1-14). The similarity in context that 1 Tim 2:11-12 shares with 1 Cor 14:33-35, and the reference in both texts to women’s “learning” in “silence” imply that these passages should be understood in the context of church gathering. In such contexts, the use of *anēr* “man” and *gynē* “woman” should not be limited to “husband” and “wife.” While *anēr* and *gynē* often refer to husband and wife (e.g. 1 Tim 3:2), these terms can also refer to “man” and “woman” (3:11; Acts 5:14; 8:3). The meaning of these terms depends on the context in which they are used. In a *household code* (e.g., Eph 5:21-6:9; Col 3:18-4:1), the use of pronouns to indicate “one’s own” (Eph 5:22, 28-29) indicate that the words *anēr* and *gynē* refer to “husband” and “wife” rather than “man” and “woman” in a generic sense. The use of the article may also have a similar function in Col 3:18-4:1 to specify *anēr* and *gynē* as “husband” and “wife” (cf. 1 Pet 2:18-3:7). 1 Tim 2 is not a *household code* that instructs wives on how to relate

1 Corinthian church. Among other things, Paul states that the man is *kephale* “head” of the
2 woman as Christ is *kephale* “head” of the man (v. 3) and that this order should be respected
3 in the church. For Paul, then, the man exercises headship responsibility not only in the home
4 (Eph 5) but also in the church (1 Cor 11). There is no need to insist that in 1 Cor 11:2-16
5 “man” and “woman” should be translated “husband” and “wife” respectively. The second
6 pair automatically includes in the first. And to say that the husband is head *only* of his wife
7 would mean also to read Paul as suggesting that Christ is head *only* of husbands, rather than
8 men in general (cf. “every man,” v. 3). It is also not necessary to prolong the debate on
9 whether *kephale* denotes authority or source in 1 Cor 11.⁴⁶ When he states that God is “head”
10 of Christ, Paul does not intend for us to understand that God is the *source* of Christ. What he
11 ultimately implies is that Christ is the “Son” while God is the “Father”—and the Father
12 exercises authority over the Son.⁴⁷ In the man-woman relationship, however, the man is the
13 source of the woman (i.e., woman is created *from* and *for* the man, vv. 8-9) and exercises
14 authority over her (i.e., “the head of woman *is* man,” v. 3). The man is head of the woman,
15 but his exercise of headship responsibility must be done with the overall headship of Christ in
16 view (Eph 5). The covering of the woman is meant to signal her submission to her head—the
17 man (1 Cor 11:10).⁴⁸ The reference to the angels may also imply that heaven sanctions the
18 headship of the man in the church and so the woman should recognize it and behave
19 accordingly. Whatever cultural limitations the head covering practice may have, the main

to their husbands. In vv. 8-9, for example, Paul addresses men and women generally as members of the church, not as husbands and wives. If we interpret the passage as instructions to husbands and wives, we would have to limit vv. 9-10—which relates to woman’s dress and adornment—to wives only. Similarly, when Paul says in 1 Cor 11:8 that *gynē* was taken from *anēr*, he does not mean “wife” was taken out of “husband” but rather “woman” was taken out of “man.”

⁴⁶ Cf. Reeve, 31-34.

⁴⁷ For the relationship between headship in the divine-divine realm and male headship in the man-woman relationship, see Reynolds, 21-22.

⁴⁸ See Reynolds, 28-29.

1 point of Paul cannot be missed, namely respect for male headship.⁴⁹ The juxtaposition of
2 divine (God-Christ), divine-human (Christ-man), and human (man-woman) relationships in
3 the context of headship makes amply clear that Paul finds the principle of male headship
4 applicable in the church.⁵⁰ And he further intimates that his instruction to the Corinthians is
5 not an isolated instruction: “But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom,
6 nor *do* the churches of God” (v. 16).

7 In 1 Cor 11 Paul affirms that even though the woman may pray or prophesy in the
8 church, she must do so in full knowledge of the fact that the man is still the head. In 1 Cor 14,
9 he seems to speak differently:

10 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but *they*
11 *are* to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them
12 ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church (vv. 34-
13 35 NKJV).

14
15 There is no contradiction between 1 Cor 11 and 14; rather, the two passages should be read
16 together. In 14:34-35, the command that the women should not “speak” in church does not
17 mean they could not offer prayer or prophesy (chap. 11) or that they could not exercise their
18 spiritual gifts (chaps. 12-14).⁵¹ What Paul seems to correct in 14:33-35 is probably disruptive
19 speech by some women in the church. He hyperbolizes his disapproval of women “speaking”
20 in church probably because the behavior of the Corinthian women disregarded leadership and
21 decorum in the church (14:37-40), violating the male headship principle which he already

⁴⁹Gerhard F. Hasel, “Hermeneutical Issues Relating to the Ordination of Women: Methodological Reflections on Key Passages” (May 23, 1994), 10, notes, “While the ‘head covering’ may be related to the cultural custom of its time, the teaching on women praying and prophesying in church is in no way limited to Corinth, as Paul’s theological argument based on Gen 1-2 indicates. The appeal to the creation account as a theological foundation for his argument of the proper role of women in church is cause for recognizing that there is normative, transcultural teaching in 1 Cor 10:2-16 [*sic*] which remains valid for today.” Similarly, Reynolds, 26, remarks: “In any case, whatever form the covering or veiling took, it represented a means of showing honor or respect for the head or authority. The means may change with time and place in different cultures, but the principle of showing that honor and respect should never change. It is a principle honored even in heaven, as v. 3 makes clear and as v. 10 may further suggest.”

⁵⁰See Reynolds, 21-25.

⁵¹Interestingly, Paul also rules that the speaker in “tongues”—whether man or woman—should keep quiet (*sigao*) if there is no one who can interpret (v. 28).

1 sets forth in 1 Cor 11. Otherwise it is difficult to explain why only women are addressed by
2 the injunction. It is probably to the headship principle—based on Gen 2-3—that Paul refers
3 as “law” in 1 Cor 14:34.⁵² In sum, while the command to keep silent in 1 Cor 14 does not
4 mean women cannot exercise their spiritual gifts in the church,⁵³ the same needs to be
5 understood within the male headship context of 1 Cor 11. As Reynolds suggests,

6
7 It does not appear that the issue here [1 Cor 14:33-35] is teaching authority, as in 1 Tim
8 2:11-12, but more likely it is simply disruptive behavior that brings dishonor to the Lord
9 and confusion to the worship service. . . The silence here is a willingness to set aside one’s
10 own interests in the worship setting in favor of the edification of the whole church. The
11 same submissive attitude should characterize all members of the church in their
12 appropriate roles, but the role of the woman is especially appealed to here in harmony with
13 the spirit of the Law, which expects women to manifest a submissive spirit, especially in
14 the presence of men in the context of worship, where, according to chap. 11, men have a
15 spiritual headship. This passage must be read in the light of 1 Cor 11.⁵⁴

16
17 In 1 Tim 2 Paul addresses issues of proper worship and church order in the context of
18 man-woman relationship. His references to “learning,” “submission,” and “silence” of
19 women recalls 1 Cor 14:33-35:⁵⁵

20 Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or
21 to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.
22 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression (1
23 Tim 2:12-14, NKJV)

24
25 Among other issues, 1 Timothy addresses heterodoxy (1 Tim 1:3-7, 18-20; 5:13; cf. 2 Tim
26 3:6,7) and decorum at public worship in the church at Ephesus (1 Tim 2:8-10). Specifically in
27 chap. 2, he gives instructions to both men and women on how to conduct themselves in

⁵²The statement “let all things be done decently and in order” (v. 40) seems to recall this principle.

⁵³The word “silence” as used in 1 Cor 14 seems to imply not absolute and perpetual silence but rather self-control in, and deferral of, utterances in the church. Paul may not be seen as banning women from participation in the church in appropriate manner.

⁵⁴Reynolds, 37.

⁵⁵It is interesting to note that Paul writes 1 Corinthians from Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8). 1 Timothy is addressed to Timothy who was stationed in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3). This could suggest that the principle Paul sets forth in 1 Cor 14—though here in a more negative tone—is applicable to other churches.

1 prayer and worship.⁵⁶ The general context of the passage suggests that the Ephesian church
2 faced tensions and possible divisions with regards to public worship and lifestyle, including
3 improper adornment and insubordination on the part of the women. After stating that prayer
4 should be offered for all people (vv. 1-7), Paul then “desires” that “the men pray everywhere,
5 lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (v. 8). For the women, Paul desires that
6 they “adorn themselves in modest apparel” (v. 9) and requires that they “learn in silence with
7 all submission” (v. 11). He would “not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a
8 man” (v. 12).

9 Scholars have debated whether 1 Tim 2:11-12 is (1) descriptive, limiting Paul’s
10 instructions to the Ephesian church or (2) prescriptive, demanding a universal application.
11 For Seventh-day Adventists, this question is particularly significant. If we take the injunction
12 against women’s teaching or exercising authority (vv. 11-12) to apply only to the church at
13 Ephesus, must we not then also take the instruction on adornment (vv. 9-10) to apply only to
14 the Ephesian church? The unity of thought in 1 Tim 2:8-15 does not seem to allow for the
15 application of different hermeneutical principles; the one and the same hermeneutical
16 principle must guide the interpretation of the entire passage. Several factors seem to require
17 that the instructions of Paul in 1 Tim 8-15 be interpreted in a universal way. First, both 1 and
18 2 Timothy show that not only women embraced false teachings nor were they the only ones
19 susceptible to deceit; men actually propagated these false teachings (cf. 1 Tim 1:7, 18-20;
20 6:20,21; 2 Tim 3:6,7; 4:10-15). Consequently, it may be concluded that Paul did not address
21 only women in 1 Tim 2:11-15 merely because of their susceptibility to heterodoxy. The basis

⁵⁶Some tend to limit the universality of 1 Tim 2:8-15 by suggesting that it is a household code (Cosaert, 21-22) or a partial household code (Gordon P. Hugenberger, “Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis?” *JETS* 35/3 (1992): 357). The transition from men (v. 8) to women (v. 9) is marked by the adverb *hausautos* “likewise,” which Cosaert (22) argues should help us read the passage as a household code. However, as noted in footnote 45, the passage is more of a church code rather than a household code. See also Philip H. Towner, “Household Codes,” *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, 514; David L. Balch, “Household Codes,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 3:318.

1 for the injunction, as he himself gives, is biblical (Gen 2-3). Second, the words “I do not
2 permit” (*epitrepo*)⁵⁷ are too strong to merit only a temporary, local application.⁵⁸ In 1 Cor 14,
3 the same verb (*epitrepo*) appears in a similar context requiring women to submit to order and
4 decorum in the church at Corinth. Third, Paul’s express desire that men pray “everywhere”
5 lifting up holy hands (1 Tim 2:8) argues against limiting his instructions in 1 Tim 2 to the
6 local church at Ephesus. Fourth, the biblical grounds for Paul’s instruction—male headship as
7 creation order (Gen 2-3)—requires a universal application of 1 Tim 2:11-12. Finally, 1 Tim
8 3:13-14 clearly shows that the instructions to men and women in chap. 2 are meant for
9 believers everywhere to know how to “conduct oneself in the house of God.”

10 The meanings of the words “teach” and “authority” in 1 Tim 2:12 have been debated.
11 Some may assume that these words can be construed as a sort of hendiadys (cf. Matt 6:20),⁵⁹
12 but the structure of the Greek construction in v. 12 renders this assumption unlikely.⁶⁰ Paul
13 seems to have two different things in mind. First, women are not to teach. The Greek *didasko*
14 “teach” is the common term used to describe transmission of doctrine in the church (1 Cor
15 4:17; 2 Tim 2:2). Teaching is part of the gospel commission (Matt 28:19-20). Paul also refers
16 to teaching as a spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:11; Rom 12:7). While the gift of teaching is
17 not gender-specific, Paul particularly emphasizes teaching as a requirement of an
18 overseer/elder (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9). Even though not everybody in the church may have the
19 gift of teaching, an overseer/elder must demonstrate a teaching ability. Yet it does not follow

⁵⁷Some argue that the use of the present tense (*epitrepo* “I permit”) instead of the imperative limits the application of the command to the church at Ephesus (W. L. Liefeld, “1 & 2 Timothy/Titus,” *The NIV Application Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999], 98). However, Paul often uses the present tense and in many instances the commands are binding and universal (1 Cor 7:10; 1 Thess 4:1,10; 5:14). See also G.W. Knight III “The Pastoral Epistles, A Commentary on the Greek Text,” *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [year]), 140; J. L. Houlden, *A Commentary on the Epistles to Timothy and Titus*, New Testament Commentaries (Penguin: SCM and TPI, 1989), 69.

⁵⁸While Cosaert, 26-27, does not see the use of the present tense to indicate a temporary nature of the injunction, he seems to go too far to suggest that the use of the first personal pronoun “I” indicates that the command in 1 Tim 2:12 is unique and thus limited to Ephesus.

⁵⁹Cosaert, 32.

⁶⁰In the Greek, *didaskain* “to teach” and *authentain* “to have authority” are too far apart from each other to warrant a grammatical hendiadys.

1 that anyone who has the gift of teaching should become an overseer/elder. As we shall see in
2 1 Tim 3, Paul seems to limit the office of the overseer/elder to qualified men, in spite of his
3 awareness that it is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit to endow believers with gifts or that any
4 believer—male or female—may be gifted with teaching ability.⁶¹ But Paul seems to require
5 that an overseer/elder be a teacher because teaching is a form of expressing leadership
6 authority, at least in the faith community.⁶² This perhaps could explain why he consistently
7 on scriptural grounds requires women not to teach but to assume a learner’s role in the
8 church; to assume the role of a teacher is to exercise authority or give spiritual direction.⁶³ In
9 view of the similarity in context and language of 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2, we may safely
10 assume that “teaching” in 1 Tim 2 is equivalent to “speaking” in 1 Cor 14. In both instances,
11 Paul may not be excluding women from exercising their spiritual gifts but may be requiring
12 them to do so being fully conscious of the headship principle, whereby men bear the primary
13 leadership function of the church—guarding against heterodoxy and upholding sound
14 doctrine, among others.

15 The second part of Paul’s injunction is that women should not “have authority over
16 men” (1 Tim 2:12). The Greek *authentain* “to have authority” occurs only here in the New
17 Testament, leading to multiple scholarly conjectures. Scholars have assigned to the term
18 nuances that may be negative (e.g., domineer)⁶⁴ or positive (e.g., exercise authority). The
19 immediate context is the only guide to understanding the word. It has already been suggested
20 that teaching and authority here do not necessarily refer to the same thing as in a hendiadys,

⁶¹It is not enough to argue that Paul singles out women simply because they may have been influenced by false teachers. Paul greatly concerned with the false teachers, who seem to be men. If the reason for the injunction against women was the influence of the false teachers, then he should have equally prohibited some men from teaching in 1 Tim 2.

⁶²Teaching entails doctrinal transmission and spiritual direction and, by extension, authority (1 Cor 4:17; 1 Tim 1:11; 4:11-16; 6:2 and 2 Tim 1:11).

⁶³Liefeld, 98.

⁶⁴See, for example, Linda L. Belleville, “Teaching and Usurping Authority,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee, 2 ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 209-17; Carl P. Cosaert, 28-33.

1 though teaching is a form of expressing authority. Interestingly in 1 Tim 2:12, the alternative
 2 to teaching and exercising authority is “to be in silence” in accordance with Paul’s usual
 3 command (cf. 14:33-35). On this basis, *authentein* does not need to be assigned a negative
 4 connotation. If “teaching” is not a negative term in 1 Tim 2, “having authority” does not have
 5 to be construed otherwise. Had Paul intended to silence those who domineered or abused
 6 authority, his injunction in v. 12 would certainly have included some men rather than only
 7 women. We would then also have expected Paul to address *only those* women who were thus
 8 domineering rather than generalize the injunction. All told, Paul seems in this verse to rule
 9 that women are not to take positions of headship or spiritual leadership in the church.

10 The specific issues in 1 Cor 11, 14, and 1 Tim 2 such as head covering, silence, and
 11 teaching and authority are still debatable and cannot be fully treated in this study.⁶⁵

12 Nonetheless, one fundamental principle seems to underlie Paul’s instructions to women in
 13 each of these texts: male headship as a creation order (Gen 2). The table below highlights
 14 Paul’s use of Gen 2 in 1 Cor 11, 14, and 1 Tim 2.

Gen 2-3	1 Cor 11	1 Tim 2
" <u>It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him</u> " (2:18; cf. vv. 7,22)		" <u>For Adam was formed first, then Eve</u> " (2:13)
"I will make him a <u>helper comparable to him</u> ... And He brought her to the man" (2:18, 22)	"Nor was man created for the woman, but <u>woman for the man</u> " (v. 9) ⁶⁶	
"This <i>is</i> now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because <u>she was taken out of Man</u> " (2:23; cf. vv. 21-22)	"For man is not from woman, <u>but woman from man</u> " (v. 8).	

⁶⁵See Reynolds, 26-32; Cosaert, 25-34; Hasel, 10.

⁶⁶Paul would argue in vv. 11-12 that man also comes from woman and so there is mutual interdependence. But while woman’s derivation from man relates to creation (vv. 7-9), man’s derivation from woman relates to procreation (vv. 11-12).

"The serpent <u>deceived</u> me, and I ate" (3:13)		"And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being <u>deceived</u> , fell into transgression" (v. 14)
"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall <u>bring forth children</u> ... Adam called his wife's name Eve, because <u>she was the mother of all living</u> " (3:16, 20)		"Nevertheless she will be saved in <u>childbearing</u> if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control" (v. 15)

1
2 Among other things, some have argued that Paul appeals to creation—"for Adam was formed
3 first, then Eve"—in 1 Tim 2 not to present a male headship principle but simply to correct a
4 prevailing female superiority ideology associated with the cult of Artemis.⁶⁷ In order to
5 maintain such understanding, they suggest that the Greek conjunction *gar* "for" in v. 13 has
6 explanatory (i.e., *for, you see*) rather than causative (i.e., *for, because*) function.⁶⁸ This
7 argument does not seem to hold, given that Paul refers not only to the priority of Adam in
8 creation sequence (Gen 2) but also to the Fall of the human race through the deception of Eve
9 (Gen 3).⁶⁹ If Paul was concerned only with correcting an ideology about creation sequence,
10 he would not need to insist that a woman "will be saved through childbearing" (v. 15),
11 whatever that means! The reference to "childbearing" as a woman's primary responsibility,
12 coupled with the injunction that women should not "teach" or "have authority over men" but
13 "learn in silence," implies that Paul is concerned with something more than just a pagan
14 ideology. He seems to be concerned with the headship principle, which he finds in Gen 2-3.

⁶⁷ Cosaert, 7-9. So it is boldly claimed that "Paul is arguing against the syncretistic false teachers who misinterpreted Gen 1-2 to teach the superiority of women over men without establishing the contrary—the superiority or headship of men over women" (ibid., 35).

⁶⁸ Cosaert, 35-36.

⁶⁹ The contentions about the function of the preposition *gar* (for) at the beginning of verse 13 is of little consequence to the meaning of the passage. Whether it is causative or explanatory (Cosaert, 35-36), it is clear that the theological reason for Paul in his command in vv. 11-12 is the priority of creation of Adam, his headship responsibility, and the aberration caused by Eve when she attempted to assume leadership.

1 As demonstrated in 1 Cor 11, 14, and 1 Tim 2, we find that the New Testament
2 affirms the male headship principle as a creation order.⁷⁰ And since Paul consistently uses
3 Gen 2 to demonstrate this principle, we can safely conclude that headship did not result from
4 the Fall. Further, the Pauline passages seem to indicate that the headship principle applies not
5 only in the human family but also in the family of God, the church. This creation headship
6 principle does not make men superior to women (Gal 3:28), yet it does place upon men
7 servant leadership responsibility in the home and in the church.

8 1 Tim 2 leads directly into 1 Tim 3, where Paul stipulates qualifications of overseers
9 and deacons. Although the pronoun *tis* “anyone” in the clause “if anyone desires the position
10 of an overseer” is generic, there are several indicators in the passage to suggest that Paul
11 primarily has men in mind when he enumerates these qualifications. For example, he states
12 that the overseer or deacon must be one who rules his household well (vv. 4, 12), a duty
13 which was essentially man’s during the time of Paul. Moreover, an overseer/elder must also
14 be able to teach with authority (v. 2; Tit 1:9). If Paul elsewhere limits authoritative teaching
15 to men, then the implication is that the office of overseer/elder is not open to women.⁷¹

16 The locus of scholarly discussion in 1 Tim 3 seems to be the injunction that the
17 overseer must be “husband of one wife” (v. 2).⁷² The immediate context—a list of qualities
18 rather than statuses⁷³—as well as variations of the phrase in v. 12 (“husbands of one wife,”
19 also Tit 1:6) and in 1 Tim 5:9 (“woman of one husband”) implies that by his use of these

⁷⁰See also Hasel, 1-53; Blomberg, 153-178; D. A. Carson, “‘Silent in the Churches’: On the Role of Women in 1 Cor 14:33b-36,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 140-153; Douglas Moo, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 179-193.

⁷¹Nonetheless, Paul commends the teaching function of women in restricted manner (Tit 2:3-4).

⁷²See Ekkehardt Mueller, “Husband of One Wife—1 Tim 3:2” (https://adventistbiblical.org/sites/default/files/husband_of_one_wife_-_html).

⁷³Daniel Bediako, “Bible and Culture: Revisiting the Question of Polygamy,” *Journal of African Biblical Studies* 3 (2011): 30; Reeve, 8-9.

1 phrases Paul does not necessarily have polygamy or polyandry in mind.⁷⁴ But can “husband
2 of one wife” refer to a woman? In this phrase, it seems clear that *aner* and *gyne* are gender-
3 specific; when Paul refers to the overseer as “husband of one wife” he definitely has a male
4 in mind, and vice versa with “wife of one husband.” Stated differently, Paul does not include
5 females in the *one-wife-husband* qualification for overseers/deacons (1 Tim 3:2, 12) any
6 more than he includes males in the *one-husband-wife* qualification for widows who should
7 receive support from the church (5:9). Further, if by *gunaika* (women) in v. 11 Paul has in
8 mind women deacons⁷⁵ in contrast with *diakonois* (male deacons), then the lack of a distinct
9 reference to women in vv. 1-10 is an indication that here only male overseers are in view.
10 Among the alternative suggestions, it seems more probable that Paul’s theology of male
11 headship, as demonstrated in 1 Cor 11:2-16, 14:33-35, and 1 Tim 2:11-15, provides the
12 guiding principle for his exclusion of women from officially appointed headship positions of
13 the church which require ordination.⁷⁶ From 1 Tim 3, we conclude that spiritual leadership in
14 the church is a function entrusted to men who have faithfully demonstrated their role as
15 spiritual heads in their families.

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Women, Ministry, Spiritual Gifts, and Ordination

19 Paul teaches clearly that spiritual gifts are given to believers for ministry (Romans
20 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 7:7; 12-14; Eph 4:8-12). Both male and female believers receive gifts, and it is
21 the prerogative of the Spirit to endow the believer with the gift(s). We can cite a number of
22 women in the New Testament who engaged in ministry, for example Anna (Luke 2:36-37),

⁷⁴Bediako, “Bible and Culture,” 30.

⁷⁵It is still debatable whether “women” here are wives of deacons, women in general, or female deacons.

⁷⁶Reeve, 10 note 39, remarks: “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.” Quite the opposite, given the strong OT male headship background, would not it rather be odd for Christ or the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-3) not to have instructed the disciples to appoint women leaders in the church if abrogation of male headship was part of the gospel?

1 Mary Magdalene (Luke 24:9-11), Dorcas, Lydia (Acts 9:36-43), daughters of Philip (Acts
2 21:9), Priscilla (Acts 18:1, 18, 26; Rom 16:3), Phoebe (Rom 16:1), Mary (16:6), Junia (v. 7),
3 Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (v. 12).⁷⁷ These women played a variety of supportive roles
4 in the ministries of Jesus and the apostles. Without doubt, they received the gifts of the Holy
5 Spirit and put their gifts to use for the benefit of the church in various ways. However, there
6 is no evidence that any of these women exercised headship function in the church as we find
7 elders/overseers do (e.g., Acts 20:17,28; 1 Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:2). We noted already
8 that (1) it is not mandatory that the church ordains everyone who exhibits the gift of teaching
9 as an elder/overseer and that (2) while Paul teaches that “some” have been given the gift of
10 *pastor-teacher*, he seems to limit the office of the elder/overseer to men. Moreover,
11 ordination is not required before one can exercise his or her spiritual gift, otherwise we might
12 ordain everybody in the church. In 1 Tim 3 and Tit 5 where Paul lists the qualifications of
13 overseer/elder, for example, the list does not explicitly include a spiritual gift, though this
14 may be assumed. The implication is that possession of a spiritual gift—say *pastor-teacher*
15 (Eph 4:11)—does not automatically satisfy *the* criteria Paul outlines for the position of
16 overseer/elder.⁷⁸ It does not follow, therefore, that since women can be given any spiritual
17 gift including that of the *pastor-teacher* (Eph 4:11)—should we want to equate this gift with
18 the office of overseer/elder—they must equally be ordained into pastoral ministry. The
19 principle of headship, which Paul consistently upholds and applies, means that men are
20 eligible for ordination into spiritual headship positions.⁷⁹ Thus, while Paul indicates that the
21 Spirit endows believers with gifts according to His will, he teaches also that some positions in
22 the church are reserved for men.

⁷⁷ See *ibid*, 21-26.

⁷⁸ This suggests that while God bestows upon every believer some gift(s) for ministry, additional qualifications are expected for ecclesiastical leadership responsibilities.

⁷⁹ See also Moon, 23.

1 It is in this context that we should understand the ministries of Phoebe and Junia, two
2 women who are described as “servant/deacon” and—it seems—“apostle” respectively (Rom
3 16:1, 7). Phoebe was a *diakonos* “servant/deacon” and “patron” of many believers including
4 Paul. She may have been very helpful in the church in Chrenchea and Paul is asking that she
5 be received and given the needed assistance by the church in Rome. The word *diakonos*
6 generally means “servant” (Matt 20:26; 22:13; Rom 13:4), but as a technical term it means
7 “deacon” (e.g., 1 Tim 3:8-13). A “deacon” was an appointed officer in the church, who may
8 have performed their duty under the supervision of the elder/overseer (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-
9 16). It is possible to read *gunaika* “women” in 1 Tim 3:11 as a reference to female deacons
10 rather than “wives” of deacons.⁸⁰ First, *gunaika* are referred to in a context where Paul
11 discusses the qualifications of “deacons” (vv. 8-12). Second, Paul shifts to discuss
12 qualifications of *gunaika* with the adverb *hosautos* “likewise” (cf. v. 8), meaning probably
13 that he uses *diakonoi* and *gunaika* to refer to deacons of opposite genders. Third, Paul seems
14 to use *gunaika* to describe female deacons because there was no feminine form for *diakonos*⁸¹
15 and using *diakonoi* in v. 11 would blur the distinction he makes between male and female
16 deacons. It would thus appear that the New Testament church recognized the role of women
17 in the supportive office of deacon. The office of the deacon, however, is clearly distinguished
18 from that of the overseer/elder in 1 Tim 3. We cannot be certain about the meaning of
19 *diakonos* in Rom 16:1, but we may conclude that even if Phoebe was “deacon,”⁸² and 1 Tim

⁸⁰Some hold that the women referred to here are the wives of the deacons. For example, Sorke, 41, remarks: “It would be odd for Paul to interrupt his systematic establishment of church office and introduce the criteria for female deacons, only to return to the subject of male deacons. The flow of the text rather suggests that Paul is reminding male deacons that their wives need to exhibit a measure of Christian maturity as well – if they are married.” However, 1 Tim 3 is not a household code where the possessive pronoun is commonly used to indicate wives of husbands (cf. Eph 5:22, 28-29, Col 3:18-4:1; 1 Pet 2:18-3:7). Further, there is little reason why would Paul demand of the wives of deacons specific qualifications and not so of the wives of overseers/elders.

⁸¹This is why Paul uses the masculine *diakonos* to refer to Phoebe (Rom 16:1).

⁸²See also Reeve, 24.

1 3:11 could possibly refer to female deacons, her function in the church should not be equated
2 with that of the elder/overseer.

3 Rom 16 contains a long list of greetings from Paul to individuals in the church in
4 Rome. Among these are Andronicus and Junia (v. 7), probably a couple, of whom Paul either
5 says were “outstanding among the apostles” (NASB) or “well known to the apostles” (ESV).
6 Despite the challenge in translation, there is some indication in the context to consider
7 “apostle” here not in the technical sense of the term. The fact that Paul mentions Andronicus
8 and Junia somewhere in the middle of the long list would suggest that the couple were among
9 ordinary church members. We are not to assume that these were resident “apostles” in Rome
10 on an equal status with Paul, otherwise he would treat them differently rather than list them
11 among the string of church members. Subsequently, an ambiguous and non-technical
12 reference to a couple as “apostles” cannot be used as a scriptural basis for the ordination of
13 women into pastoral ministry.⁸³

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Priesthood of All Believers

17 The New Testament contains some references to Christian priesthood. In the first
18 place, the book of Hebrews indicates that the Aaronic priesthood prefigured the sacrificial
19 death and ministry of Jesus Christ. As such, He is the “High Priest of our confession” (Heb
20 3:1). Paul also seems to picture himself as a priest, whose offering is the Gentiles (Rom
21 15:16). Christians are referred to as a “royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:4-10) and “kings and
22 priests” (Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). 1 Pet 2 specifically recalls Exod 19, where Israel was
23 inaugurated at Sinai as a people of God. In Exod 19:4-6, the Lord stresses the fact that He
24 redeemed Israel from Egypt in order to make her His own, and that if Israel obeyed Him they
25 would be a “kingdom of priests” and a “holy nation.” Some have suggested that God

⁸³ Cf. Reeve, 24-25.

1 intended to make all Israelites—men and women—as priests but then because of their
2 disobedience (Exod 32), He selected only the family of Levi to serve as priests. Such
3 argument, despite its widespread acceptance, is not to be pressed too hard. If the Levites were
4 chosen because they stood on the Lord’s side, why was Aaron maintained as priest when he
5 was directly responsible for the making of the golden calf (Exod 32:1-5; Deut 9:20)? Even if
6 we assume that God intended for *all* Israelites to serve as priests, the question as to why
7 women in the tribe of Levi were still left out is not answered.⁸⁴ In the Hebrew, the phrase
8 “holy nation” stands in apposition to “kingdom of priests.” This means that since “holy
9 nation” is corporate, “kingdom of priests” should equally be understood in a corporate sense.
10 We are not to interpret the passage to mean that *every Israelite* was to become a priest. In a
11 corporate sense, “kingdom” of priests may mean that Israel as a “holy nation” would be the
12 means of blessings to the Gentiles (cf. Gen 12:1-3). It does not mean that the Lord would no
13 longer choose spiritual leaders in Israel. We find clues to this in Exod 19-31. First, in the
14 same chapter where God promises to make Israel a kingdom of priests, He makes references
15 to “the priests and the people” (Exod 19:22, 24). Second, the Lord named Aaron and his sons
16 as priests *before* the rebellion (28:1,41; 29:1, 44; 30:30; 31:10). These references to “priests”
17 as well as “elders” (e.g., 17:5; 19:7; 24:1) suggest the Lord may have intended to have some
18 individuals serve as spiritual heads in Israel, notwithstanding its position as a “kingdom of
19 priests.”⁸⁵ Moreso, as we noted earlier, the selection of the Levite males for service in the
20 tabernacle is connected with the concept of the male firstborn (Exod 12:29; 13:1-15; Num
21 3:12-13; 8:16-18). Since the Lord replaced the male firstborns with the Levite males in the

⁸⁴ This question has been discussed already in the section on Old Testament section of this study.

⁸⁵ Arthur Davies, “A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19:6,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 53.1 (2002): 157-159, has argued that although God called the newly formed nation of Israel a royal priesthood, He still organized the Levitical priesthood as a visual model that was intended to facilitate the collective priesthood. Similarly, D. A. Carson, “1 Peter,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 1031, has noted that the collective priesthood in Exod 19 did not preclude the establishment of the Levitical priesthood.

1 service of the tabernacle, we can only assume that these firstborns would have performed the
2 priestly duty in Israel. It is not true, therefore, that the Lord abandoned an original all-
3 inclusive priesthood to appoint one family *because* Israel disobeyed God.⁸⁶

4 In any case, some suggest that since the New Testament teaches a ‘priesthood of all
5 believers’, both men and women can be ordained into pastoral ministry. We will briefly study
6 the New Testament passages.

7 When Peter echoes Exod 19, he does so within a similar context (1 Pet 2). Like Israel
8 delivered from Egypt (Exod 19:4), believers have been redeemed by Christ (1 Pet 2:1-4, 10).
9 They “once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy
10 but now have obtained mercy” (v. 10). In v. 5, he states that Christians are “living stones ...
11 being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to
12 God through Jesus Christ.” Here, “holy priesthood” is appositive to “spiritual house.” Yet
13 unlike the Jews to whom Christ became a stumbling block, Christians are “a chosen
14 generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (v. 10). In this context, the concept of
15 priesthood is defined in relation to unbelievers, just as Israel was selected from among the
16 nations in the world. The phrases “holy priesthood,” “spiritual house,” “chosen generation,”
17 “royal priesthood,” and “holy nation” are synonymous. They all mean that Christians as a
18 “special people” called out of darkness to proclaim the gospel (v. 10). So Peter does not
19 *really* go beyond Exod 19; he applies God’s promise in Exod 19 to Christians. If the Exod 19
20 promise did not envision *every* Israelite becoming a priest, 1 Pet 2 does not either. Some
21 emphasize the concept of the priesthood of believers to mean that *every* believer can be
22 ordained into the office of a pastor. But even within the chosen tribe of Levi in the Old
23 Testament, for example, there were differences in function; only the sons of Aaron could be

⁸⁶ Such understanding does not explain why even within the tribe of Levi only the sons of Aaron (who was primarily responsible for the rebellion in Exod 32) could become priests, with the others helping the priests.

1 priests, the others played supportive roles (i.e., Levites). Several factors further suggest that
2 Peter does not intend to teach that both men and women could now assume spiritual headship
3 responsibility because they equally share in a holy or royal priesthood. First, 1 Pet 2 discusses
4 nothing about church leadership, so it is out of context to discuss ordination based on this
5 text. Second, despite his teaching of a priesthood of all believers, Peter recognizes clearly
6 holds that even in the church husbands are heads of their families, including their wives (1
7 Pet 3:1-7). Like the “holy women” in the past (e.g., Sarah), women are exhorted to be
8 “submissive” to their husbands (vv. 5-6), who, in turn, are to give honor to their wives (v. 7).
9 In other words, the priesthood of all believers does not bring about a change in male
10 headship. And Paul certainly does not disregard such priesthood when he teaches that
11 spiritual headship is a responsibility of men (1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:33-35; 1 Tim 2:2-15; 3:1-15).
12 Third, the priesthood of all believers does not undo the multiplicity of ministries that the Holy
13 Spirit enables believers to undertake. Within this priesthood in which all Christians share,
14 each believer is still endowed with some spiritual gift(s) to engage in a different kind of
15 ministry.⁸⁷ The priesthood of believers is nowhere presented to supersede the headship
16 principle which Paul consistently understands to bear directly on spiritual leadership in the
17 church.

18 In the book of Revelation, John states that Christ has washed believers in His blood
19 and has made them “kings and priests” (1:6). The four living creatures and the twenty-four
20 elders also refer to themselves as “kings and priests to our God” who shall “reign on the
21 earth” (5:9). Also those who have part in the first resurrection are referred to as “priests of
22 God and of Christ” who shall rule with Christ “a thousand years” (22:6). The contexts of

⁸⁷ The NT priesthood of all believers commissions every believer to participate in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19). This assignment is enabled by the spiritual gifts which each believer receives. Yet this does not nullify organization and leadership roles in the church which from our study may require gender-specific assignments. Just as the royal priesthood of the OT did not qualify every Israelite into the Levitical priesthood, so NT royal priesthood does not.

1 these references associate kinship and priesthood with rulership, at least in two instances
2 (5:10; 20:6). But as in Exod 19 and 1 Pet 2, the priesthood of believers is defined in relation
3 to the world. Thus, the key emphasis is that Christ has redeemed His people (i.e., believers)
4 and, through that, they have become royals with Him. There is nothing in the priesthood
5 passages to suggest that after the death of Christ both women and men may be appointed to
6 positions of headship or leadership in the church. Whether in 1 Peter or in Revelation,
7 priesthood of believers does not address the issue of leadership in the church. It does not
8 answer whether women now can be chosen as spiritual heads of the church, not even whether
9 the church should appoint leaders at all.

10

11 **Ellen White, Headship, and Ordination**

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14 This section briefly summarizes some statements of Ellen White with regards to
15 headship *before* the Fall and women’s ordination. White indicates that at creation the man,
16 Adam, was given some responsibility as head of the human family. According to her (1)
17 Adam “*was lord in his beautiful domain*” (FE 38);⁸⁸ (2) he was “the monarch of the world”
18 (RH, February 24, 1874, par. 19), “crowned king in Eden” and made “the rightful sovereign
19 over all the works of His hands” (1BC 1082); (3) he “*was to stand at the head of the earthly*
20 *family, to maintain the principles of the heavenly family*” (6T 236); (4) as the “vicegerent of
21 the Creator” (DA 129), God committed His laws to “Adam, the father and representative of
22 the whole human family” (PP 48). These references, among many others, suggest that Adam
23 was given some leadership responsibility in the garden. In his relationship with Eve, Adam
24 also exercised a headship responsibility. White specifically states (1) that the woman was
25 created “to stand by his side as an equal, *to be loved and protected by him*” (PP 46); (2) that
“the angels had cautioned Eve to beware *of separating herself from her husband* while

⁸⁸ *Emphases* in the statements of Ellen White have been supplied.

1 occupied in their daily labor in the garden; *with him* she would be in less danger from
2 temptation than if she were alone. But absorbed in her pleasing task, *she unconsciously*
3 *wandered from his side*” (PP 53); (3) that Adam “*mourned that he had permitted Eve to*
4 *wander from his side*” (PP 56) and “reproached his companion for her folly *in leaving his*
5 *side* and permitting herself to be deceived by the serpent” (PP 57). Interestingly, White
6 remarks further that Satan was able to cause “the overthrow of Adam” only through Eve (PP
7 57). We find these statements as affirmation that the man exercised both physical and
8 spiritual leadership in the garden. Thus understood, Ellen White’s statements confirm the
9 interpretation of Gen 2 in this study.

10 What about women’s ordination in Ellen White’s writings? Despite some claims that
11 she herself was ordained, David Trim has conclusively argued that White carried only
12 ministerial license without being ever ordained into the office of the pastor.⁸⁹ However, she
13 recommends the ordination of women into different forms of ministry:

14 Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should
15 be *appointed* to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the
16 poor. *They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands.* In some
17 cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are
18 devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in
19 the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to
20 branch out more in our methods of labor. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul
21 discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labor, privately or
22 publicly, to help forward this grand work” (RH July 9, 1895, emphasis added).

23
24 This and other passages from Ellen White suggest that women have roles to play in full time
25 ministry and that she approves of the ordination of women into several ministries. There is no

⁸⁹David Trim, “The Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Policy And Practice” (July 2013),
3, “Taking all the evidence together, there is no reason to doubt that, although Ellen White carried an Ordained
minister’s credentials, she was never ordained; or rather, was not ordained by men. The credentials were issued
to her because, as a prophet, she was *sui generis* and normal rules did not apply.”

1 evidence from her writings, however, that she approves of the ordination of women into full
2 time pastoral ministry.⁹⁰

3

4

Conclusion and Recommendation

5

6 Both Scripture and Ellen White seem to be consistent in their teaching of headship
7 based on Gen 2. What appears implicit in Gen 2 (before Fall) becomes explicit in Gen 3 (after
8 Fall), is taught in the New Testament (e.g., 1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:33-35; Eph 5:21-33; 1 Tim
9 2:11-15), and affirmed by Ellen White (e.g., PP 46-57). The headship principle, being a
10 creation order, is applicable both in the husband-wife relationship at home and in the men-
11 women relationship in the church. This principle appears to have informed the selection of
12 priests (OT), apostles, overseers/elders (NT), and serves as the basis for Ellen White's
13 statements with regards to spiritual leadership in the church. Women played several roles in
14 the covenant community both in the Old Testament (e.g., Miriam and Deborah) and in the
15 New Testament (e.g., Phoebe and Junia). Despite their engagement in ministry, however,
16 Scripture seems to be consistent in revealing that spiritual headship in the church is open to
17 men who meet certain other requirements for such function (e.g., 1 Tim 3). If the biblical
18 portrait of male headship is not influenced by pagan ancient Near Eastern culture, which we
19 doubt, then this principle should continue to guide the selection and ordination of individuals
20 to pastoral ministry today.

21 The current Seventh-day Adventist debate over women's ordination has the potential
22 either to advance mission or create division within our ranks. It is our prayer that the Lord
23 will descend mightily in our midst to settle this matter for Himself. Yet it is unfortunate to
24 hear that in some regions women are being ordained into pastoral ministry, while the
25 worldwide church is still studying and praying about the issue. Our unity as a church also

⁹⁰See Trim, 1-18; Moon, 41-42.

1 means respect for our leadership. Unity must express itself both in doctrine and in practice.

2 The West Central Africa Division (WAD) by consensus does not recommend the
3 ordination of women into ordained pastoral ministry. However, if at the General Conference
4 Session the world church votes in favor of women's ordination, WAD will not threaten the
5 unity of the church despite the its disagreement to such a decision. Instead, WAD will
6 consider women's ordination as a matter of conscience, and will continue to study and pray
7 for light on the subject brighter than there is now.