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

by

WAD Biblical Research Committee

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

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

Gen 1-3 and Male Leadership in Old Testament

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

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

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

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

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

Man’s creation anticipated—no man yet to till the ground (vv. 5-6)

Man is created from the ground (v. 7)

Man needs a home—garden, food, and water made for man (vv. 8-14)

Man placed in the garden to tend & keep it; he is given the divine law (vv. 15-17)

Man’s aloneness and need for companion (vv. 18-20)

Woman is created—for man, from man, and brought to man (vv. 21-22)

Man’s need fulfilled—man cherishes woman as a part of himself (vv. 23-24).

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

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

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

Contra Davidson, 6. 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.”
the man is given the regulation on “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (vv. 16-17). Gen 3:17 confirms that the command in 2:15 was particularly given to the man probably as head of the family. By entrusting the command to the man (2:15), the Lord seems to be placing a responsibility on him to communicate and to ensure obedience to the command within the family (cf. 3:11,17).

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

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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. ISP 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, rouch (e.g., 2 Kin 14:26; Job 29:12; 30:13; Ps 30:11; 54:6).

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

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

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

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

After Adam and Eve sinned, the Lord began the interrogation with Adam. The questions and answers in 3:9-12 imply that Adam was to be held primarily responsible for the rebellion. As the Lord had personally given Adam the command (2:15), so would He now...
hold him accountable for the disobedience of the command (3:9-11). This is further
corroborated in v. 17, where he is specifically blamed for having listened to the voice of Eve:
“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife” (v. 17). The implication is that Adam
had parted with his headship responsibility in the process.

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

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\(^{20}\) In view of the similar context of strife in 4:7, the particle ‘el is best rendered “against.” \(BDB\ \text{s.v.}
‘el’ suggests that “where the motion or direction implied appears from the context to be of a hostile character,”
‘el 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. ‘al) not “against” (‘el) 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” (\(m\text{āšal} \)) is a reversal of woman’s “desire” (\(\text{t} \text{šûqâ} \)), 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 \(m\text{āšal} \) 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 \(\text{rāādāh} \) “rule, govern” instead of \(m\text{āšal} \).
the family, not in the covenant community. Yet it is not possible to draw distinctions between family and society in the context of Gen 1-3. Although v. 16 is directed specifically at Adam and Eve, the same desire by woman to control man is seen more generally in the way some women relate to male-based authority (cf. 1 Cor 14:33-35; 1 Tim 2:11-15).

Moreover, Gen 3:14-19 itself allows for universal application. Finally, the territorial coverage of the divine pronouncements upon the woman and the man indirectly reveal that the man had greater responsibility. The pronouncements highlight the respective spheres of duty of woman (v. 16) man (vv. 17-19). What is implicit in chap. 2 is explicit in chap. 3: the home is the primary sphere of the woman (3:16,20; cf. 1:26-28), while the entire productive land is the man’s (3:17-19,23; cf. 2:16-17). For his sake the entire ground is cursed, making breadwinning a difficult task.

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

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

**Priests, Prophets, and Ordination**

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

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

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priesthood</th>
<th>Prophetic Ministry</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basis of entry</td>
<td>heredity (&amp; gender closed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiation: anointing, consecration, filling in the hands (i.e., ordination)</td>
<td>commissioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recognition &amp; authorization (to mediate)</td>
<td>authority (to speak)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key function</td>
<td>mediators (i.e., consecrated hands)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(typifying the Messiah)</td>
<td>(representing the divine court)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key characteristics</td>
<td>organized &amp; successive (inherited)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all-male ministry</td>
<td>mostly-male; few female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purity (holiness)-based ministry</td>
<td>charismatic and dynamic (sometimes ecstatic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sphere</td>
<td>cult (&amp; public health)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>full-time (supported by tithes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other functions</td>
<td>1. administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. teaching</td>
<td>(indictment; judgment; instruction; aftermath oracles)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. officiating (sacrifices)</td>
<td>2. socio-political commentators (i.e., sentries):</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. judging (settling difficult matters)</td>
<td>(a) monitoring social justice &amp; monarchical deviations from covenant (i.e., covenantal faithfulness)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. ritual purification (agents of holiness &amp; purification; i.e., covenantal holiness)</td>
<td>(b) monitoring Israel’s foreign relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. divination (i.e., determining God’s will)</td>
<td>3. prediction (i.e., proclamation of divine agenda)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. pronouncement of blessings</td>
<td>4. divination (i.e., inquiring of God)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. participation in warfare</td>
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</tbody>
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Following a detailed study, Daniel Bediako has concluded that pastoral ministry shares similarities as well as marked differences with both priesthood and prophetic ministry in the Old Testament and that pastoral ministry does not constitute an exact replica of either of these ministry patterns. If, as he argues, neither priesthood nor prophetic ministry is sufficient model for pastoral ministry, then a theology and practice of ordination cannot be based on one of the Old Testament ministries or the other. Stated differently, neither the Levitical priesthood nor the prophetic ministry provides enough basis for the inclusion or exclusion of women from ordained pastoral ministry.

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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

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

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

38 Ellen White, Daughters of God, 37.
while the biblical text accords to Deborah the offices of a prophetess and a judge, the former office overshadows the latter. In fact, she herself insists that military leadership—the primary function of the judge—was man’s rather than woman’s duty: “. . . . . .will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman” (4:8-9). The authority of Deborah to settle disputes would seem to result from her position as prophetess instead of judge-deliverer. Her example does not violate the headship principle established in Gen 2-3. As Ellen White states, Deborah “was known as a prophetess, and in the absence of the usual magistrates, the people had sought to her for counsel and justice.” In any case, neither the office of the prophetess nor that of the judge was cultic to require an ordination ritual, at least by humans. As it appears, Deborah’s example is does not give us enough basis to conclude that women should be ordained into pastoral ministry.

Apostles, Overseers/Elders, and Ordination

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

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

1 Cor 11, 14; 1 Tim 2-3 and Male Leadership in the Church

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

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

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

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

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\(^{43}\)See, 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.
For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered (vv. 5-7 NKJV).

Some supporters of women’s ordination believe that the husband is the head of the wife in the home, but that male headship is a post-Fall institution and is limited only to marriage (Gen 3:16). It is interesting to observe, however, that when Paul discusses headship and submission in Eph 5 he patterns husband’s headship after that of Christ over the church and then supports his argument with statements from Gen 2. If, as it appears, Paul finds the male headship principle as a reflection of Christ’s relation to the church, then the same principle will naturally find expression in the church. And Paul seems consistent: he does not limit the headship principle to the family but extends it to the covenant community. In other words, he applies the headship principle in relation to church order and leadership and cites Gen 2 as theological grounds for his teaching (1 Cor 11; 1 Tim 2).

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

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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
Corinthian church. Among other things, Paul states that the man is *kephale* “head” of the woman as Christ is *kephale* “head” of the man (v. 3) and that this order should be respected in the church. For Paul, then, the man exercises headship responsibility not only in the home (Eph 5) but also in the church (1 Cor 11). There is no need to insist that in 1 Cor 11:2-16 “man” and “woman” should be translated “husband” and “wife” respectively. The second pair automatically includes in the first. And to say that the husband is head *only* of his wife would mean also to read Paul as suggesting that Christ is head *only* of husbands, rather than men in general (cf. “every man,” v. 3). It is also not necessary to prolong the debate on whether *kephale* denotes authority or source in 1 Cor 11.\(^{46}\) When he states that God is “head” of Christ, Paul does not intend for us to understand that God is the *source* of Christ. What he ultimately implies is that Christ is the “Son” while God is the “Father”—and the Father exercises authority over the Son.\(^{47}\) In the man-woman relationship, however, the man is the source of the woman (i.e., woman is created *from* and *for* the man, vv. 8-9) and exercises authority over her (i.e., “the head of woman is man,” v. 3). The man is head of the woman, but his exercise of headship responsibility must be done with the overall headship of Christ in view (Eph 5). The covering of the woman is meant to signal her submission to her head—the man (1 Cor 11:10).\(^{48}\) The reference to the angels may also imply that heaven sanctions the headship of the man in the church and so the woman should recognize it and behave accordingly. Whatever cultural limitations the head covering practice may have, the main

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\(^{46}\) 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.
point of Paul cannot be missed, namely respect for male headship.\textsuperscript{49} The juxtaposition of
divine (God-Christ), divine-human (Christ-man), and human (man-woman) relationships in
the context of headship makes amply clear that Paul finds the principle of male headship
applicable in the church.\textsuperscript{50} And he further intimates that his instruction to the Corinthians is
not an isolated instruction: “But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom,
nor do the churches of God” (v. 16).

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

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

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

\textsuperscript{49}Gerhard 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.”

\textsuperscript{50}See Reynolds, 21-25.

\textsuperscript{51}Interestingly, Paul also rules that the speaker in “tongues”—whether man or woman—should keep
quiet (sīgō) if there is no one who can interpret (v. 28).
sets forth in 1 Cor 11. Otherwise it is difficult to explain why only women are addressed by
the injunction. It is probably to the headship principle—based on Gen 2-3—that Paul refers
as “law” in 1 Cor 14:34. In sum, while the command to keep silent in 1 Cor 14 does not
mean women cannot exercise their spiritual gifts in the church, the same needs to be
understood within the male headship context of 1 Cor 11. As Reynolds suggests,

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

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

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

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

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52 The statement “let all things be done decently and in order” (v. 40) seems to recall this principle.
53 The 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.
54 Reynolds, 37.
55 It 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.
prayer and worship. The general context of the passage suggests that the Ephesian church faced tensions and possible divisions with regards to public worship and lifestyle, including improper adornment and insubordination on the part of the women. After stating that prayer should be offered for all people (vv. 1-7), Paul then “desires” that “the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (v. 8). For the women, Paul desires that they “adorn themselves in modest apparel” (v. 9) and requires that they “learn in silence with all submission” (v. 11). He would “not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man” (v. 12).

Scholars have debated whether 1 Tim 2:11-12 is (1) descriptive, limiting Paul’s instructions to the Ephesian church or (2) prescriptive, demanding a universal application. For Seventh-day Adventists, this question is particularly significant. If we take the injunction against women’s teaching or exercising authority (vv. 11-12) to apply only to the church at Ephesus, must we not then also take the instruction on adornment (vv. 9-10) to apply only to the Ephesian church? The unity of thought in 1 Tim 2:8-15 does not seem to allow for the application of different hermeneutical principles; the one and the same hermeneutical principle must guide the interpretation of the entire passage. Several factors seem to require that the instructions of Paul in 1 Tim 8-15 be interpreted in a universal way. First, both 1 and 2 Timothy show that not only women embraced false teachings nor were they the only ones susceptible to deceit; men actually propagated these false teachings (cf. 1 Tim 1:7, 18-20; 6:20,21; 2 Tim 3:6,7; 4:10-15). Consequently, it may be concluded that Paul did not address 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.
for the injunction, as he himself gives, is biblical (Gen 2-3). Second, the words “I do not permit” (epitrepo)\(^{57}\) are too strong to merit only a temporary, local application.\(^{58}\) In 1 Cor 14, the same verb (epitrepo) appears in a similar context requiring women to submit to order and decorum in the church at Corinth. Third, Paul’s express desire that men pray “everywhere” lifting up holy hands (1 Tim 2:8) argues against limiting his instructions in 1 Tim 2 to the local church at Ephesus. Fourth, the biblical grounds for Paul’s instruction—male headship as creation order (Gen 2-3)—requires a universal application of 1 Tim 2:11-12. Finally, 1 Tim 3:13-14 clearly shows that the instructions to men and women in chap. 2 are meant for believers everywhere to know how to “conduct oneself in the house of God.”

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

\(^{57}\) Some 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.

\(^{58}\) While 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.

\(^{59}\) Cosaert, 32.

\(^{60}\) In the Greek, didaskein “to teach” and authentein “to have authority” are too far apart from each other to warrant a grammatical hendiadys.
that anyone who has the gift of teaching should become an overseer/elder. As we shall see in
1 Tim 3, Paul seems to limit the office of the overseer/elder to qualified men, in spite of his
awareness that it is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit to endow believers with gifts or that any
believer—male or female—may be gifted with teaching ability. But Paul seems to require
that an overseer/elder be a teacher because teaching is a form of expressing leadership
authority, at least in the faith community. This perhaps could explain why he consistently
on scriptural grounds requires women not to teach but to assume a learner’s role in the
church; to assume the role of a teacher is to exercise authority or give spiritual direction. In
view of the similarity in context and language of 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2, we may safely
assume that “teaching” in 1 Tim 2 is equivalent to “speaking” in 1 Cor 14. In both instances,
Paul may not be excluding women from exercising their spiritual gifts but may be requiring
them to do so being fully conscious of the headship principle, whereby men bear the primary
leadership function of the church—guarding against heterodoxy and upholding sound
discipline, among others.

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

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61 It 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 prohibit ed some
men from teaching in 1 Tim 2.

62 Teaching 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).

63 Liefeld, 98.

64 See, for example, Linda L. Belleville, “Teaching and Usurping Authority,” in Discovering Biblical
Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy, ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merill Groothuis, and Gordon D.
Fee, 2 ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 209-17; Carl P. Cosaert, 28-33.
though teaching is a form of expressing authority. Interestingly in 1 Tim 2:12, the alternative to teaching and exercising authority is “to be in silence” in accordance with Paul’s usual command (cf. 14:33-35). On this basis, authentein does not need to be assigned a negative connotation. If “teaching” is not a negative term in 1 Tim 2, “having authority” does not have to be construed otherwise. Had Paul intended to silence those who domineered or abused authority, his injunction in v. 12 would certainly have included some men rather than only women. We would then also have expected Paul to address only those women who were thus domineering rather than generalize the injunction. All told, Paul seems in this verse to rule that women are not to take positions of headship or spiritual leadership in the church.

The specific issues in 1 Cor 11, 14, and 1 Tim 2 such as head covering, silence, and teaching and authority are still debatable and cannot be fully treated in this study. Nonetheless, one fundamental principle seems to underlie Paul’s instructions to women in each of these texts: male headship as a creation order (Gen 2). The table below highlights Paul’s use of Gen 2 in 1 Cor 11, 14, and 1 Tim 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gen 2-3</th>
<th>1 Cor 11</th>
<th>1 Tim 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him” (2:18; cf. vv. 7,22)</td>
<td>“For Adam was formed first, then Eve” (2:13)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I will make him a helper comparable to him … And He brought her to the man” (2:18, 22)</td>
<td>“Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man” (v. 9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man” (2:23; cf. vv. 21-22)</td>
<td>“For man is not from woman, but woman from man” (v. 8).</td>
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65 See Reynolds, 26-32; Cosaert, 25-34; Hasel, 10.
66 Paul 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 deceived me, and I ate" (3:13)

"And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (v. 14)

"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children ... Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living” (3:16, 20)

"Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control" (v. 15)

Among other things, some have argued that Paul appeals to creation—“for Adam was formed first, then Eve”—in 1 Tim 2 not to present a male headship principle but simply to correct a prevailing female superiority ideology associated with the cult of Artemis. In other to maintain such understanding, they suggest that the Greek conjunction gar “for” in v. 13 has explanatory (i.e., for, you see) rather than causative (i.e., for, because) function. This argument does not seem to hold, given that Paul refers not only to the priority of Adam in creation sequence (Gen 2) but also to the Fall of the human race through the deception of Eve (Gen 3). If Paul was concerned only with correcting an ideology about creation sequence, he would not need to insist that a woman “will be saved through childbearing” (v. 15), whatever that means! The reference to “childbearing” as a woman’s primary responsibility, coupled with the injunction that women should not “teach” or “have authority over men” but “learn in silence,” implies that Paul is concerned with something more than just a pagan ideology. He seems to be concerned with the headship principle, which he finds in Gen 2-3.
As demonstrated in 1 Cor 11, 14, and 1 Tim 2, we find that the New Testament affirms the male headship principle as a creation order. And since Paul consistently uses Gen 2 to demonstrate this principle, we can safely conclude that headship did not result from the Fall. Further, the Pauline passages seem to indicate that the headship principle applies not only in the human family but also in the family of God, the church. This creation headship principle does not make men superior to women (Gal 3:28), yet it does place upon men servant leadership responsibility in the home and in the church.

1 Tim 2 leads directly into 1 Tim 3, where Paul stipulates qualifications of overseers and deacons. Although the pronoun τὸς “anyone” in the clause “if anyone desires the position of an overseer” is generic, there are several indicators in the passage to suggest that Paul primarily has men in mind when he enumerates these qualifications. For example, he states that the overseer or deacon must be one who rules his household well (vv. 4, 12), a duty which was essentially man’s during the time of Paul. Moreover, an overseer/elder must also be able to teach with authority (v. 2; Tit 1:9). If Paul elsewhere limits authoritative teaching to men, then the implication is that the office of overseer/elder is not open to women. The locus of scholarly discussion in 1 Tim 3 seems to be the injunction that the overseer must be “husband of one wife” (v. 2). The immediate context—a list of qualities rather than statuses—as well as variations of the phrase in v. 12 (“husbands of one wife,” also Tit 1:6) and in 1 Tim 5:9 (“woman of one husband”) implies that by his use of these

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


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

Women, Ministry, Spiritual Gifts, and Ordination

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

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74 Bediako, “Bible and Culture,” 30.
75 It is still debatable whether “women” here are wives of deacons, women in general, or female deacons.
76 Reeve, 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?
Mary Magdalene (Luke 24:9-11), Dorcas, Lydia (Acts 9:36-43), daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9), Priscilla (Acts 18:1, 18, 26; Rom 16:3), Phoebe (Rom 16:1), Mary (16:6), Junia (v. 7), Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (v. 12). These women played a variety of supportive roles in the ministries of Jesus and the apostles. Without doubt, they received the gifts of the Holy Spirit and put their gifts to use for the benefit of the church in various ways. However, there is no evidence that any of these women exercised headship function in the church as we find 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 that (1) it is not mandatory that the church ordains everyone who exhibits the gift of teaching as an elder/overseer and that (2) while Paul teaches that “some” have been given the gift of pastor-teacher, he seems to limit the office of the elder/overseer to men. Moreover, ordination is not required before one can exercise his or her spiritual gift, otherwise we might ordain everybody in the church. In 1 Tim 3 and Tit 5 where Paul lists the qualifications of overseer/elder, for example, the list does not explicitly include a spiritual gift, though this may be assumed. The implication is that possession of a spiritual gift—say pastor-teacher (Eph 4:11)—does not automatically satisfy the criteria Paul outlines for the position of overseer/elder. It does not follow, therefore, that since women can be given any spiritual gift including that of the pastor-teacher (Eph 4:11)—should we want to equate this gift with the office of overseer/elder—they must equally be ordained into pastoral ministry. The principle of headship, which Paul consistently upholds and applies, means that men are eligible for ordination into spiritual headship positions. Thus, while Paul indicates that the Spirit endows believers with gifts according to His will, he teaches also that some positions in the church are reserved for men.

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

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

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

Priesthood of All Believers

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

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83 Cf. Reeve, 24-25.
intended to make all Israelites—men and women—as priests but then because of their
disobedience (Exod 32), He selected only the family of Levi to serve as priests. Such
argument, despite its widespread acceptance, is not to be pressed too hard. If the Levites were
chosen because they stood on the Lord’s side, why was Aaron maintained as priest when he
was directly responsible for the making of the golden calf (Exod 32:1-5; Deut 9:20)? Even if
we assume that God intended for all Israelites to serve as priests, the question as to why
women in the tribe of Levi were still left out is not answered. In the Hebrew, the phrase
“holy nation” stands in apposition to “kingdom of priests.” This means that since “holy
nation” is corporate, “kingdom of priests” should equally be understood in a corporate sense.
We are not to interpret the passage to mean that every Israelite was to become a priest. In a
corporate sense, “kingdom” of priests may mean that Israel as a “holy nation” would be the
means of blessings to the Gentiles (cf. Gen 12:1-3). It does not mean that the Lord would no
longer choose spiritual leaders in Israel. We find clues to this in Exod 19-31. First, in the
same chapter where God promises to make Israel a kingdom of priests, He makes references
to “the priests and the people” (Exod 19:22, 24). Second, the Lord named Aaron and his sons
as priests before the rebellion (28:1,41; 29:1, 44; 30:30; 31:10). These references to “priests”
as well as “elders” (e.g., 17:5; 19:7; 24:1) suggest the Lord may have intended to have some
individuals serve as spiritual heads in Israel, notwithstanding its position as a “kingdom of
priests.” Moreso, as we noted earlier, the selection of the Levite males for service in the
tabernacle is connected with the concept of the male firstborn (Exod 12:29; 13:1-15; Num
3:12-13; 8:16-18). Since the Lord replaced the male firstborns with the Levite males in the

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

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

When Peter echoes Exod 19, he does so within a similar context (1 Pet 2). Like Israel
delivered from Egypt (Exod 19:4), believers have been redeemed by Christ (1 Pet 2:1-4, 10).
They “once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy
but now have obtained mercy” (v. 10). In v. 5, he states that Christians are “living stones …
being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to
God through Jesus Christ.” Here, “holy priesthood” is appositive to “spiritual house.” Yet
unlike the Jews to whom Christ became a stumbling block, Christians are “a chosen
generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (v. 10). In this context, the concept of
priesthood is defined in relation to unbelievers, just as Israel was selected from among the
nations in the world. The phrases “holy priesthood,” “spiritual house,” “chosen generation,”
“royal priesthood,” and “holy nation” are synonymous. They all mean that Christians as a
“special people” called out of darkness to proclaim the gospel (v. 10). So Peter does not
really go beyond Exod 19; he applies God’s promise in Exod 19 to Christians. If the Exod 19
promise did not envision every Israeliite becoming a priest, 1 Pet 2 does not either. Some
emphasize the concept of the priesthood of believers to mean that every believer can be
ordained into the office of a pastor. But even within the chosen tribe of Levi in the Old
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.
priests, the others played supportive roles (i.e., Levites). Several factors further suggest that Peter does not intend to teach that both men and women could now assume spiritual headship responsibility because they equally share in a holy or royal priesthood. First, 1 Pet 2 discusses nothing about church leadership, so it is out of context to discuss ordination based on this text. Second, despite his teaching of a priesthood of all believers, Peter recognizes clearly holds that even in the church husbands are heads of their families, including their wives (1 Pet 3:1-7). Like the “holy women” in the past (e.g., Sarah), women are exhorted to be “submissive” to their husbands (vv. 5-6), who, in turn, are to give honor to their wives (v. 7). In other words, the priesthood of all believers does not bring about a change in male headship. And Paul certainly does not disregard such priesthood when he teaches that spiritual headship is a responsibility of men (1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:33-35; 1 Tim 2:2-15; 3:1-15). Third, the priesthood of all believers does not undo the multiplicity of ministries that the Holy Spirit enables believers to undertake. Within this priesthood in which all Christians share, each believer is still endowed with some spiritual gift(s) to engage in a different kind of ministry. The priesthood of believers is nowhere presented to supersede the headship principle which Paul consistently understands to bear directly on spiritual leadership in the church.

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

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

Ellen White, Headship, and Ordination

This section briefly summarizes some statements of Ellen White with regards to headship before the Fall and women’s ordination. White indicates that at creation the man, Adam, was given some responsibility as head of the human family. According to her (1) Adam “was lord in his beautiful domain” (FE 38); (2) he was “the monarch of the world” (RH, February 24, 1874, par. 19), “crowned king in Eden” and made “the rightful sovereign over all the works of His hands” (1BC 1082); (3) he “was to stand at the head of the earthly family, to maintain the principles of the heavenly family” (6T 236); (4) as the “vicegerent of the Creator” (DA 129), God committed His laws to “Adam, the father and representative of the whole human family” (PP 48). These references, among many others, suggest that Adam was given some leadership responsibility in the garden. In his relationship with Eve, Adam also exercised a headship responsibility. White specifically states (1) that the woman was 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

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

What about women’s ordination in Ellen White’s writings? Despite some claims that she herself was ordained, David Trim has conclusively argued that White carried only ministerial license without being ever ordained into the office of the pastor.\(^9\) However, she recommends the ordination of women into different forms of ministry:

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

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

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\(^9\)David 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 \textit{sui generis} and normal rules did not apply.”
evidence from her writings, however, that she approves of the ordination of women into full time pastoral ministry.⁹⁰

Conclusion and Recommendation

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

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

⁹⁰See Trim, 1-18; Moon, 41-42.
means respect for our leadership. Unity must express itself both in doctrine and in practice.

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