

IN THE BEGINNING

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Traditional Marriage: Still Valid?	3
2. Biblical Evidence for Male Headship	17
3. Because of the Angels	37
4. God's Leadership Pattern In Scripture	47
5. Reflections on the Hermeneutics of Women's Ordination	67
6. Issues Relating to the Ordination of Women with Special Emphasis on 1 Peter 2:9, 10, and Galatians 3:28	81
7. Reply to Some Women's Ordination Arguments	183

IN THE BEGINNING

#1 – TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE: STILL VALID?

God established two great institutions in Eden: Marriage and the Sabbath. The sanctity of the first of these institutions is safeguarded by the seventh commandment and the sanctity of the other by the fourth. God's definition of both is crystal clear:

- Marriage is a heterosexual union between a man and a woman.
- The Sabbath is the seventh day of the week.

Marriage

In Genesis 1:26-2:1: there is an interesting interplay between singular and plural nouns and pronouns. There is a plurality in unity in God that is reflected in a plurality in unity in man.

The Father reveals the plan to His Son:

Then "God [a single person: God the Father] said [another person: Jesus His Son], "Let Us [Father and Son] make man [generic use of 'man'] in Our [Father's and Son's] image, according to Our [Father's and Son's] likeness; let them [Adam and Eve] have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

The Father will now carry out the plan through the Son:

²⁷ So God [the Father; Revelation 4:11; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 1:3] created [the] man [singular referring to Adam] in His [the Father's] own image; in the image of God He [the Father] created him [singular referring to Adam]; male and female He created them [plural referring to both Adam and Eve]. ²⁸ Then God [the Father] blessed them [plural referring to both Adam and Eve], and God said to them [plural referring to both Adam and Eve], "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." ³¹ Then God [one person, the Father] saw everything that He [singular, the

Father] had made, and indeed it was **very good**. So the evening and the morning were the **sixth day**. Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were **finished**.”

Albert Barnes remarked:

*“In the image of God created he him.” This is the **primary act**, in which his relation to his Maker is made prominent. In this his original state he is **actually one**, as **God in whose image he is made is one**. “Male and female created he them.” This is the **second act** or step in his formation. He is now no longer one, but two, - the male and the female. His adaptation to be the head of a race is hereby completed. This **second stage** in the existence of man is more circumstantially described hereafter (*Gen 2:21-25*.) Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc*

The Creation Plan in Genesis One

#1: The creation of man was a cooperative work by **two individual persons**. The Father **devised** the plan and the Son **carried** it out. That is to say, the Father was the **Architect** and the Son was the **Master Builder**:

*“The Son of God had wrought the **Father's will** in the creation of all the hosts of heaven [**this was long before sin entered the universe**]; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself contrary to **God's plan**, but would exalt the **Father's glory** and **execute His purposes** of beneficence and love.” *PP*, p. 36*

#2: God established a clear **sexual differentiation** between **male and female**.

#3: Although **Genesis 1:26-28** clearly explains that God created male and female, there is **no explanation** as to **how** or in **what order** (other than the fact that the male is mentioned first) God created them.

#4: Génesis 1:26-28 does not define the **intimate relationship** between male and female nor the **unique roles** or functions that each must fulfill in the creation order. We are simply told that God created male and female.

#5: In order to ascertain **the order** and the **manner** in which God created male and female and their **distinctive functions** we must go to the complementary narrative in **Génesis 2:18-24**.

#6: Even though male and female were created differently, the Biblical narrative makes it clear that they were **ontologically equal** in **dignity, status** and **value**:

- Both were created in the **image of God**
- Both were **blessed** by God
- Both were commanded to be **fruitful and multiply**

- Both were given the **generic name ‘man’** (Genesis 1:26; 5:2)

It is important to realize that in Genesis chapters one and two (with the exception of 1:26) the word ‘man’ is used in a **limited and restricted sense**—it refers only to the male. But the word ‘man’ is used in Genesis 1:26 and 5:2 in a **broader sense** to refer to male and female because the female is a portion of the male.

This limited and broader sense of a word is **not uncommon** in Genesis. The word ‘day’ in Genesis 1 is used in a limited, restricted sense to refer to the **illuminated portion** of the 24 hour period and also to refer to **the entire** 24 hour period (Genesis 1:5). The reason is that the illuminated portion is a part of the whole.

The same can be said about the word ‘earth’. In a **broad sense** it refers to the entire planet (Genesis 1:1) but in a more **restricted sense** it refers to the dry portion of the planet (Genesis 1:10) because the dry portion is a part of the whole.

The same is true of the word ‘heaven’. In a **broad sense** it refers to the entire starry heavens but in a **restricted sense** it refers to the atmospheric heaven (Genesis 1:8).

Likewise, both the male and the female are called ‘man’ because the woman is a portion of the man and together they make up the whole.

- Both of them were given **dominion**.
- Man and woman are composed of the same material substance, she is **bone of man’s bone** and **flesh of his flesh** (Genesis 2:23).

Genesis 2

Genesis 2:18-24 Describes **how** and in **what order** God created male and female and provides **clues** as to how they were to relate to one another in **terms of authority**.

God could have created both Adam and Eve **from the dust** of the ground or could have **spoken them** into existence at the same time, but he did not. There is a **theological reason** why God chose to create Adam and Eve **differently** and according to the apostle Paul the reason has something to do with the **angels** (1 Corinthians 11:8-10).

Genesis 2:18-24

*“And the Lord God said, “It is **not good** [at the end of the sixth day God will say: ‘very good’] that man should be alone; I [the Father, singular] will make him a **helper** comparable to him.”¹⁹ Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature that was its name.²⁰ So Adam **gave names** to all*

cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But **for** Adam there was not found a **helper** comparable to him. ²¹ And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He [**the Father, singular**] took one of **his ribs**, and closed up the flesh in its place. ²² Then the rib that the Lord God had taken **from man** He [**the Father, singular**] made into a woman, and **He** [**the Father, singular**] **brought her** to the man. ²³ And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she **shall be called** Woman, because she was **taken out of Man**." ²⁴ **Therefore** a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

Matthew 19:4-6: God officiated the first wedding.

"And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that **He** [**the Father, singular**] **who made them** at the beginning 'made them male and female' ⁵ **and said**, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? ⁶ So then, they are **no longer two** but one flesh. Therefore what **God has joined together**, let not man separate."

Conclusions from the Two Creation Stories

- God created **two individual** persons but in their **substance** they were one (Génesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6). In this sense they were a **small scale earthly reflection** of the relationship that exists between the Father and the Son in the Godhead. The Father and the Son are two **distinct personalities** but they are one because they are **co-substantial** (John 10:30).
- The woman was created **after man** (1 Timothy 2:12, 13).
- The woman was formed **from man**, that is, she derives her existence from man. Thus she derives the image of God through the **mediation of the man** (1 Corinthians 11:8).
- The woman was made to be the **man's helper**, not the man hers (1 Corinthians 11:9).
- Adam named the **animals** and then he **named** Eve (Génesis 2:23: "she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man")
- According to Ellen White Eve was slightly **shorter** in **height** than Adam. She reached a little **above his shoulders** (SR, p. 21).
- The woman was **God's gift** to man because **He brought her** to man.
- God did not take a **bone** out of Adam's **head** because Eve was not to be his head, nor did He take a bone out of his **foot** because Eve was not to be trampled upon by Adam; He took a bone from his **bosom** very **close to his heart** because He was to love and cherish her. For Adam to give up Eve it would be like tearing a part from His bosom. He loved Eve more than He loved God. In contrast, God the Father tore Jesus from His bosom and did not spare Him (Romans 8:32).
- **God the Father** officiated the first wedding and preached the **first wedding sermon** (see Matthew 19:4-6).

- The man is to take the **initiative** in leaving father and mother (Genesis 2:24).
- Marriage is clearly defined by God as between a **male and a female**.
- Marriage is **indissoluble**.

*“What God **has joined together** let not man cast asunder”*

- Marriage is **normative for all time**. This is indicated by what God said after marrying Adam and Eve:

*“**Therefore a man** shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his **wife**”*

The Second Institution

Genesis 2:2-3 God instituted **the Sabbath immediately after** instituting marriage:

*“And on the **seventh day** God ended **His [the Father, singular]** work which **He [the Father, singular]** had done, and **He [the Father, singular]** rested [**ceased**] on the **seventh day** from all **His [the Father, singular]** work which **He [the Father, singular]** had done. ³ **Then [after resting]** God [**the Father**] blessed the **seventh day** and **sanctified** it, because in it **He [the Father, singular]** rested [**ceased**] from all **His [the Father, singular]** work which **God [the Father]** had created and made.”*

Conservative evangelicals presently fight tooth and nail to uphold the sanctify of **heterosexual marriage** between a man and a woman because God instituted it at **creation**. But they do not show the same zeal for the other institution that God created at the **same time**, the Sabbath. Yet both were instituted and blessed by God at the same time.

Two Institutions under Attack

One thing is clear: **Satan hates both** of these institutions. The first institution is **horizontal** because it protects the well being of the **home, society and the world**. When marriage falls apart and the home is destroyed, society and the world fall apart as well.

The second institution protect the **vertical** relationship of man with God because it reminds us every week that He is our Creator and for this reason we owe Him our **respect and worship**.

Heterosexual marriage is being attacked by liberal theologians who do not believe that the creation story literally took place. On the other hand, **the Sabbath** is being attacked by conservative theologians who profess to believe in a literal creation story.

Attack #1: Marriage

In spite of the fact that the Bible explicitly affirms that:

[1] God created sexual differentiation of **male and female**.

[2] Joined male and female together in **marriage**.

[3] So that they could be **fruitful and multiply**.

[4] And made it **normative for all time**.

Those who **support gay marriage** have been using the media and the civil powers of the world to **redefine** the marriage institution as the loving union of two persons without regard to gender. Anyone who disagrees is considered unmerciful and bigoted.

Satan **hates marriage** because God created it without consulting him:

*"Satan was once an honored angel in heaven, next to Christ. His countenance, like those of the other angels, was mild and expressive of happiness. His forehead was high and broad, showing great intelligence. His form was perfect; his bearing noble and majestic. But when **God said to His Son**, "Let us make man in our image," Satan was jealous of Jesus. He wished to be consulted concerning the **formation of man**, and because he was not, he was filled with envy, jealousy, and hatred. He desired to receive the highest honors in heaven next to God." EW p, 145*

The Gay Marriage Agenda

The **large liberal Protestant churches** have already **blessed homosexual** marriage and some of them have also **approved the ordination** of openly gay clergy. These churches, invariably, **first ordained women** as pastors. And those who favor gay marriage use the same arguments as those who support women's ordination. They appeal to justice and mercy, equality, feelings and Biblical texts such as Galatians 3:28.

Even **conservative congressmen** and **senators** who once **opposed** gay marriage have given in to the **media pressure** and to save their **political skin** have changed their view and now approve gay marriage. God's institution has not changed but the United States has cast aside the **shield of truth** and **national apostasy** will eventually lead to **national ruin**.

Barak Obama

Recently **Jason Collins**, a professional basketball player with the **Washington Wizards** came **out of the closet** and openly declared that he was gay. The **media hailed** him as a hero and **praised him** for his courage. He was the first player in **major professional** team sports to openly declare his gay sexual orientation.

When Jason Collins came out of the closet he was openly praised in an official public statement by the president of the United States. Barak Obama is the first United States sitting president to publicly go on record as supporting gay marriage.

Time Magazine

Leading up to the Supreme Court decision, on April 8, 2013 an article appeared in Time magazine that bore the title on the front cover: *“Gay Marriage Already Won.”* The subtitle reads: *“The Supreme Court hasn’t made up its mind—but America has.”* On the cover was a picture of two women passionately kissing.

The Supreme Court

The matter of gay marriage was taken up by the Supreme Court in 2013. A little history will help us understand why the Supreme Court decided to consider the subject.

Two defense of marriage laws had been passed in the United States whose constitutionality was questioned by the gay lobby. One was a federal law known as DOMA and the other was a California law called Proposition 8.

DOMA

The first law is known as DOMA (The Defense of Marriage Act of 1996). This federal law defined marriage as between a man and a woman. Of course, the gay lobby immediately took measures to question its constitutionality.

Evidently President Clinton has had a conversion experience. Whereas he once staunchly supported and fought for the Defense of Marriage Act during his presidency, he now is in full support of redefining the meaning of marriage. He actually stated that supporting the Defense of Marriage Act was one of the biggest mistakes of his presidency. Back then he knew that if did not support it he would not be able to win the election—he needed the religious right. At present it is all about politics. How times have changed and now, in order to win an election a candidate must support gay marriage.

Proposition 8

The California law known as Proposition 8 defined marriage as the union between a man and a woman. It was adopted by public referendum in 2008 by a margin of 52-48%. The constitutionality of the law was immediately questioned by the gay lobby and taken to the liberal Ninth Circuit Court of San Francisco and by a vote of 2 to 1 the court declared proposition 8 unconstitutional. Of course the decision of the lower court was appealed and eventually ended up at the Supreme Court.

Supreme Court Decisions

For several months the Supreme Court deliberated on the constitutionality of these two laws and finally on **June 26, 2013** (the final day of the Court's term and the day of my birthday) the Court **measured in** on these two laws. In a **5-4 vote DOMA** was declared **unconstitutional** and the ruling of the **Ninth Circuit Court in San Francisco** on Proposition 8 was allowed to stand. For all **practical purposes** this legalized **gay marriage** in the state of California contrary to the will of the people.

But these decisions set a **dangerous federal precedent**. Basically they opened the way for **all states** in the United States to legalize gay marriage. Thus, the Supreme Court of the United States approved gay marriage **on a federal level**. To date over **30 states** have legalized gay marriage.

As usual, the Court voted along philosophical lines. In favor were **Liberal justices** Kennedy, Kagan, Ginsberg, Sotomayor and Breyer. Against were Roberts, Scalia, Thomas and Alito. It makes one wonder whether there is **too much power** in the hands of a **very few** especially when the vote was 5-4. There is little doubt in my mind that **social pressures** influenced the minds of the majority on the Court.

The crucial question is this: **Does mortal man** have the **right to redefine** what God created and defined at the beginning? Does **the state** really have any jurisdiction when it comes to marriage, which is clearly a **religious institution** established by God?

And another question: If the Supreme Court is willing to declare **God's definition of marriage unconstitutional**, would not the same Supreme Court be willing to **redefine the day of worship** and declare Sunday laws and anti-Sabbath laws constitutional? I believe that both the definition of marriage and the Sabbath are **off limits** to the government because both were clearly **defined by God** and are not subject to redefinition by the state.

Sadly, even in some circles of the Seventh-day Adventist Church there are those who are **redefining the roles** of men and women in marriage and in the church, a step that has led **other denominations** to approve **gay marriage** and the ordination of **gay clergy**. Ellen White has warned:

*"Satan will arouse indignation **against the minority** who refuse to accept **popular customs and traditions**. Men of position and reputation will join with the lawless and the vile to take counsel against the people of God. **Wealth, genius, education**, will combine to cover them with contempt. Persecuting **rulers, ministers, and church members** will conspire against them. With voice and pen, by **boasts, threats, and ridicule**, they will seek to overthrow their faith. By false representations and angry appeals, men will **stir up the passions of the people**. Not having a "Thus saith the Scriptures" to bring against the advocates of the Bible Sabbath, they will resort to **oppressive enactments** to supply the lack. To secure **popularity and patronage, legislators will yield** to the demand for Sunday laws." PK pp. 605, 606*

Thankfully the North American Division posted the following notice immediately after the Supreme Court's decision was announced:

An Affirmation of Marriage—NAD responds to Supreme Court Rulings.

“Numerous activities among state legislators and courts have recently been occurring in the United States concerning same-sex unions. On June 26, the United States Supreme Court ruled on two landmark decisions regarding same-sex unions.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe in strengthening the family and following the biblical principles and patterns that God set forth in His Word for marriage between **one man and one woman**, the oldest **human [is it really a human institution?]** institution dating back to the sixth day of creation. We cannot deny the biblical pattern any more than we can deny creation and not undermine the value and validity of the **Bible as God's handbook for our lives**.

Based on recent developments and decisions, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America is concerned with the growing attacks on the biblical institution of marriage and feels that it is appropriate and necessary to **reaffirm the stated positions of the Church as they relate to Christian marriage**. Seventh-day Adventists believe that the biblical teaching is still valid today, because it is anchored in the very nature of humanity and **God's plan at creation for marriage**.

We reaffirm, **without hesitation**, our long-standing position. As expressed in the Church's Fundamental Beliefs, "marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship."

We hold that all people, no matter of their sexual orientation, are children of God. We do not condone singling out any group for scorn and derision, let alone abuse. However, it is very clear that God's Word does not countenance a homosexual lifestyle; neither has the Christian Church throughout her 2000-year history. Seventh-day Adventists believe that the biblical teaching **is still valid today**, because it is anchored in the very nature of humanity and God's plan at creation for marriage.” **Pastor Dan Jackson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.**

Attack #2: The Sabbath

The other institution that is being relentlessly attacked is **the Sabbath**. God has clearly defined the Sabbath as the **seventh day** of the week. But Christians have attempted to **redefine the Sabbath** as the first day of the week contrary to what God **established at Creation**.

The **attack** against the Sabbath is actually coming from **two fronts**.

First Line of Attack

The first line of attack is to get **Sunday observance laws** passed by the civil power. **Daniel 7** affirms that the little horn would think to change the law of God and in **Revelation 13** we are told that the same power will enforce that change in the law on pain of death. We all know from Scripture that the media and the civil powers of the world will **malign and persecute** those who keep the Sabbath.

In the European Union, **labor unions**, **social institutions**, **Roman Catholic and Protestant** churches and **business establishments** are pressuring the parliament to pass a Sunday law that would apply to the **entire European Union**. The pretext for this law seems to be harmless. The rationale that is given is that such a law will be a benefit for the **family**, and allow for **personal relaxation and church attendance** so that people can reconnect with their **spiritual roots** in an increasingly **secular** and **materialistic** society.

It is clear that any attempt to legislate Sunday observance by the **secular power** would be a **redefinition** of God's definition established at creation: The Seventh Day!! A Sunday law in the European Union is inevitable and we know that eventually the **United States will follow suit** and establish its own Sunday law contrary to the Establishment and Free Exercise clauses of the First Amendment to the Constitution.

Sooner or later there will be Sunday laws and anti-Sabbath laws in the United States. There is nothing subliminal about this first line of attack against the Sabbath—it is open and frontal.

Second Line of Attack

The **second line** of attack against the Sabbath is **covert** and **indirect** rather than overt and direct. The media is constantly **bombarding us** with the idea that evolution is a **proven fact** and that anyone who does not agree is **obscurantist and ignorant**. Virtually all **Roman Catholic theologians** and **many evangelicals**, and even **some Adventists** have taken a second look at the creation story and have concluded that it did not take place in **six literal days** twenty four hour days, that there was death long before sin, that the **days of creation lasted millions** of years and that God used **evolution as His method** of creation.

Serious Implications

The implications of denying a literal creation account are devastating. **If the evolutionary hypothesis is true**, then the discussion about marriage and the Sabbath **is over**. Why argue in favor of God's original plan for marriage and the Sabbath if we **can't take the Genesis creation** story literally? Marriage between a man and a woman and the

observance of the Sabbath are **only relevant and normative** if God created them. Satan knows this and this is the reason why he is attempting to **destroy confidence** in the Genesis story.

If there was no Garden of Eden and we came into existence by a slow evolutionary process that took millions of years, why worry about the meaning of marriage and the Sabbath? If we can't trust in the Bible story then culture can define marriage and the Sabbath.

Well has Ellen White described Satan's attempt to undermine trust in the Bible as God's word:

*"Satan is making the world believe that the Bible is a **mere fiction**, or at least a book suited to the **infancy of the race**, but now to be **lightly regarded**, or cast aside as **obsolete**. And to **take the place** of the word of God he holds out **spiritual manifestations**. Here is a channel **wholly** under his control; by this means he can make the world believe **what he will**." GC, p. 557*

Sadly, in some of the biology departments of our **very own universities** the theory of evolution is being taught as fact and one of the research professor wrote a book that favors the theory and also married two women on a beach in southern California.

Stability of Society: First Reason

What is it that makes for a **stable society** and what leads a society to **fall apart**? The answer is two-fold.

Factor #1: The **disintegration of the home**.

As marriage goes so goes the **home**, the **Church**, the **nation** and the **world**. In the United States **marriage** is in the process of **decay**. [1] **41%** of babies in the United States today are born to **unwed mothers**. [2] A little more than **50% of marriages** end in divorce and [3] there are many more where the marriage partners **move on and never get divorced**. Every day there are less and [4] **less stay at home moms** so children grow up **without a stable** home environment where television and video games become the source of moral (or should we say immoral) values. As a result, society falls apart.

Stability of Society: Second Reason

Factor #2: Disrespect of the greatness of God

The second reason why society falls apart is because it **forgets God** and **loses respect** for Him. When people forget that God is their Creator, they also forget that they are accountable to him and that in the judgment they must render Him **an account** for their conduct. To a great degree the contemporary world and church have **lost their fear and respect** for God. And **why** has this happened?

God gave us a **weekly reminder** of His greatness and power, a sign that he is our Creator and we are His creatures and that we owe him our respect and obedience. That sign is the Sabbath. But as man has forgotten the Sabbath he has forgotten the Lord.

It goes without saying that if there was **not a Garden** of Eden but rather we are the product of **evolutionary development** then why worry about marriage and the Sabbath? If we **can't trust the Bible story** then we might as well **allow culture to dictate** what kind of marriage is acceptable and which day of worship is more convenient.

God's People Blamed

The redefinition of these two institutions is having and will have **grave consequences** for American Society and the world:

*"Those who honor the Bible Sabbath will be denounced as **enemies of law and order**, as breaking down the **moral restraints of society**, causing **anarchy and corruption**, and calling down the **judgments of God** upon the earth. Their conscientious scruples will be pronounced obstinacy, stubbornness, and contempt of authority. They will be accused of **disaffection toward the government**. Ministers who deny the obligation of the divine law will present from the pulpit the duty of yielding obedience to the civil authorities as ordained of God. In legislative halls and courts of justice, commandment keepers will be misrepresented and condemned. A false coloring will be given to their words; the worst construction will be put upon their motives." GC, p. 592*

The story of **Elijah** will be repeated on a **global scale**. Elijah was blamed for the calamities of society and **God's people will be called** 'troublers of the people.'

The Last Sign in Sodom

Genesis 19:4-11

"Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom — both young and old — surrounded the house. ⁵ They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them." ⁶ Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him ⁷ and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. ⁸Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof." ⁹ "Get out of our way," they replied. And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, and now he wants to play the judge! We'll treat you worse than them." They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door. ¹⁰ But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door."

Special Relevance

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a **special relevance** for this time. Our name was providentially chosen to announce to the world **our identity**. Our name indicates that we believe that the **creation story is literal**, that the seventh day today is the same seventh day of creation and that therefore marriage should be contracted as it was at the beginning. By **precept and example** we should trumpet our message: "Fear God and give glory to Him for the hour of His judgment has come."

*"The **greatest** and **most favored nation** upon the earth is the United States. A gracious Providence has **shielded** this country, and poured upon her the choicest of Heaven's blessings. Here the persecuted and oppressed have found refuge. Here the Christian faith in its **purity has been taught**. This people have been the recipients of **great light** and **unrivalled mercies**. But these gifts have been repaid by **ingratitude and forgetfulness** of God. The Infinite One keeps a reckoning with the nations and their guilt is **proportioned** to the light rejected. A fearful record now stands in the register of heaven against our land; but the **crime** which shall **fill up the measure** of her iniquity is that of making void the law of God." *ST*, July 4, 1899*

#2 - Biblical Evidence for Male Headship

Male headship or leadership in the home and in the church is not to be understood as the man being the **head honcho**, the **dictator** or the **boss** but as one who is the loving leader, protector, provider, counselor, guide and loving companion of the wife and of the church members. The Bible provides the following reasons for male headship in the home and in the church:

#1: Man was created first

The apostle **Paul**, harking back to the creation account, explained that the woman is **not allowed to teach** or to **have authority** over the man because the man was **created first** and then woman:

Genesis 2:7

*“And the Lord God **formed man** of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”*

1 Timothy 2:12, 13

*“And I do not permit a woman to teach or to **have authority** over a man, but to be in silence.
13 For Adam was **formed first**, then Eve.*

It will be noticed that Paul’s rationale for the submission of the woman to the man in an **ecclesiastical leadership** setting is based on the **creation order** and not on **culture** or the **fall**. The Teacher’s Commentary captures well the role that God has reserved for men:

*“1 Tim 2:11-15 does not teach that women cannot exercise their spiritual gifts when the body meets. We know that women can, and are to [exercise their spiritual gifts] (Acts 2:17; 1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:26). Instead the passage has a more **narrow focus**, on the role of a **ruling elder**. To ‘teach’ (1 Tim 2:12), as defined ‘with authority’ is an **elder’s function**. This particular function in the body of Christ and only this function - is **reserved for men**.” The Teacher’s Commentary Copyright © 1987 by Chariot Victor Publishing.*

In the times of Ellen White this was the position of the church:

On **December 19, 1878** an editorial appeared in **Signs of the Times** where **J. H. Waggoner** clearly stated the view of the church of that time on the issue of women's ordination to the church office of 'elder':

*"The **divine arrangement**, even **from the beginning**, is this, that the **man is the head** of the woman. Every relation is disregarded or abused in this lawless age. But **the Scriptures** always maintain this order in the family relation. 'For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.' Eph. 5:23 Man is entitled to certain privileges that are not given to woman; and he is subjected to some duties and burdens from which the woman is exempt. A woman may pray, prophesy, exhort, and comfort the church, but **she cannot occupy the position of a pastor or ruling elder**. This would be looked upon as usurping authority over the man, which is here [1 Timothy 2:12] prohibited."*

A reader asked the following question of the editor of **Signs of the Times in 1895**:

"Should women be elected to offices in the church when there are enough brethren?"

Here is the **editor's response**:

*"If by this is meant the office of **elder**, we should say **at once, No**. But there are offices in the church which women can fill acceptably, and oftentimes there are found sisters in the church who are better qualified for this than brethren, such offices, for instance as church clerk, treasurer, librarian of the tract society, etc., as well as the office of deaconess, **assisting the deacons** in looking after the poor, and in doing such other duties as would naturally fall to their lot. The qualifications for church elder are set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:7-9. **We do not believe that it is in God's plan** to give to women the **ordained offices** of the church. By this we do not mean to depreciate their labors, service, or devotion. The sphere of woman is **equal [italics in the original]** to that of man. She was made a help meet, or fit, for man, but that does **not [italics in original]** mean that her sphere [or role] is **identical [italics in original]** to that of man's. The interests of the church and the world generally would be better served if the **distinctions given in God's word** were regarded." *Signs of the Times*, "Question Corner # 176: Who Should Be Church Officers?" January 1895*

#2: Woman taken from man

Second, the **manner of Eve's creation** suggests that she was to be **submissive** to her husband's loving headship:

Genesis 2:21, 22

*"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had **taken from man** He made into a woman, and He brought her **to the man**."*

The **creation account** explicitly affirms that the woman was taken **from the man**. And in the New Testament, Paul unambiguously confirms this fact:

1 Corinthians 11:8:

Paul states that the woman should be submissive to the headship of the man in a **public worship** setting because *“man did not come from woman, but woman from man.”*

As in the case of 1 Timothy 2:11, 12, Paul’s rationale for the willing submission of woman to man’s loving headship in an ecclesiastical setting is based on the **creation order** that was established by God and not on **culture** or on **the fall**.

In the Bible, **origin and authority** are closely related. For example, Jesus is pre-eminent and above all creation because He **pre-existed it** and brought it **into existence**. Jesus is described as the **Head of the body** because He brought the church into existence and sustains it (Colossians 1:15-18).

By way of analogy, **children** are required to render **respect and obedience** to their parents’ authority because they **derived their existence** from them. Adam was the **source of Eve** and as such she owed him **submissive and loving respect** as her head.

#3: Eve was created to be man’s helper

According to the creation account, Eve was made to be **man’s helper** and not he hers:

*“And the Lord God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will **make him a helper** comparable to him.”*

Noteworthy is the **possessive pronoun** that God used in Genesis 2:18. God stated clearly ‘*I will make a helper **for** him.*’

1 Corinthians 11:9

The apostle Paul, under inspiration and referring back to Genesis, explained that the woman is to be submissive to the man in an **ecclesiastical setting** because Eve was created to be man’s helper: *“neither was man created for woman, but **woman for man.**”*

It will be noticed once again that Paul’s argument here is based on the **creation order** and not on the **fall** or on **culture**.

Women’s ordination advocates have gone to great lengths to attempt to prove that the word ‘helper’ does **not contain the idea of submission**. In fact, they point out that it is used most frequently in the Old Testament to refer to **God helping man**, that is, a **superior helping an inferior**. So it is argued that if anything, the **woman is superior to the man** as his helper. But this argument is flawed for several reasons.

First, the word ‘helper’ as it is used for God clearly applies to one who is greater than man. God is **eternal and infinite** and we are **time-bound and finite**. It bears noting that most of the times that the word “helper” is used of God helping man it is in a context where man is in serious trouble and needs God’s intervention to help him escape his predicament. If a person is sinking in quick sand and cries out “help!” would not the helper be greater than the one who is helped? Of course! The relationship of God to man is clearly that of a **greater to a lesser** by His **very nature** but the same is not true of the relationship between the man and the woman.

The logic of the egalitarians is seriously flawed because it **contradicts the clear words** of the apostle Paul. In Paul’s estimation it is true that woman and man were created by God as **equals** and yet he makes it crystal clear that functionally the woman was **made to help the man** and not vice-versa.

An assistant to the **president of a large conference** on the West Coast of the United States who favors women’s ordination asked the question: *‘Did God create woman with the intent that she be a **lesser order of humanity?**’*

The context of the administrator’s question is important. He is dealing with the fact that the woman was created to be man’s helper. He states: *‘In our English language, the word ‘helper’ carries with it the suggestion of lesser to greater. But the Hebrew does not carry such meaning.’*

The assistant, as is frequent with egalitarians, has built a **straw man** as tall as **Nebuchadnezzar’s image**. First of all, **complementarians** do not believe that the word ‘helper’ in Genesis means that the woman was made to be a **‘lesser order of humanity’**. This is a mere **caricature** of their view. What complementarians do believe is that woman was **created equal** to man but with a **different function**. She was made to complement man, not man to complement her. The Genesis account and the apostle Paul are both **crystal clear on this point**.

Further, is it true that in our English language the word ‘helper’ carries with it the suggestion of lesser to greater? Not always. Two beings can be **equal in status, dignity and value** as **persons** and yet one can be the other’s helper.

On a **human level** the word ‘helper’ can be understood in **two different ways**. A mother can tell her daughter to help her set the table. Although the mother and daughter are equal as beings, the ‘helper’ is subject to the mother’s authority. This would be the case of a lesser helping a greater. On the other hand a parent may help a child with his homework. Even though the parent is the ‘helper’ the child is under the parent’s authority. This would be the case of a greater helping a lesser. In at least one case, the word ‘helper’ is used in Scripture to describe a **lesser helping a greater (Ezekiel 12:14)**.

On a divine level the same is true. Even before sin came into the universe **Jesus was the Father’s helper**. He executed the Father’s will at creation. He was second in authority to

the Father. The Father placed Him as the commander of the angelic hosts. Does this mean that the Son was inferior to the Father in eternity past? Does this mean that Jesus was a **lesser order of deity**?

The simple fact is that though the Father and the Son are **equal as persons**, the Son is the Father's helper. In the plan of salvation, the **Father did not come to earth** to battle the tempter, to suffer and to die. Jesus **helped the Father** accomplish the work of redemption by doing His **Father's will**. Did this make Jesus 'a lesser being' than the Father? Does the fact that Jesus helps His Father make Him a **lesser divinity**? Of course not! According to Jesus **the greatest** in the kingdom is the one who condescends **to serve and help**. And yet, would the condescension of the Son make Him **greater than the Father**? Of course not because Jesus said: *'The Father is greater than I.'*

In the early church, the **seven deacons** were elected to **help the apostles** with the administrative matters of the growing church. Were the **deacons inferior** to the apostles as persons? Of course not! No doubt the deacons **followed the leadership** of the apostles and yet as **human beings** in the sight of God they **were equal**. They were **subordinate in function** because they were ordained to **help the apostles** but they were not a '**lesser order of humanity**' to use the administrative assistant's words. In short, the deacons were the apostles' helpers but they were **not inferior to them**.

#4: Adam was created taller than Eve

The Spirit of Prophecy provides us with a significant tidbit of information—God created Adam **a little taller** than Eve:

*"Eve was **not quite as tall** as Adam. Her head reached a little above his shoulders." Signs of the Times, January 9, 1879*

The question is: **Why did God create Adam taller than Eve**? Would not **egalitarianism** require them to be the exact **same size**? Some might think that this original height difference was **inconsequential** but upon closer inspection, we shall see that in God's original order, height difference is **related to authority**.

Ellen White explains elsewhere in her writings that **tall angels stand at the head** of companies and have **commanding authority** over the shorter ones. Notice the examples that follow.

When **Lucifer prepared for war** against Christ we are told that:

*"The angels were marshaled in companies, each division with **a higher** commanding angel at their **head**." 1SP, p. 23*

When Jesus was **arrested by the mob** in Gethsemane we are told that:

*"Many companies of holy angels, each with a **tall** commanding angel at their **head**, were sent to witness the scene." EW, p. 168*

As God's people are **crying out for deliverance** in the final time of Jacob's trouble we are told that the **angels wished** to intervene to deliver them:

*"But a **tall** commanding angel suffered them not. He said, "The will of God is not yet fulfilled. They must drink of the cup. They must be baptized with the baptism." EW, p. 272*

Regarding the **physical height** of Jesus before He came to this world we are told:

*"Before Christ left heaven and came into the world to die, He was **taller** than any of the angels. He was majestic and lovely." ZBC, p. 904*

Yet when Jesus took the **form of a servant**, "He was but **little taller** than the common size of men then living upon the earth." ZBC, p. 904

When Jesus **ascended to heaven** He was restored to His **original height**. Ellen White describes the physical size of Jesus when the saints will finally enter the Holy City:

*"He stood **head and shoulders above** the saints and above the angels." EW, p. 288*

#5: Adam named Eve

Despite egalitarian claims to the contrary, the creation story indicates that before the entrance of sin into the world, **Adam gave Eve the name** 'woman'.

Genesis 2:23:

Adam said: "**She shall be called woman** because she was taken out of man".

In the Bible, giving names is an **exercise of authority** (Daniel 1:7; Philippians 2:9-11). **Parents** give names to their children because they **brought them into existence** and therefore have authority over them. Even before sin, Adam, not Eve, was entrusted with the task of **naming the animals** that he had been given dominion over (Genesis 2:19, 20).

#6: The man is commanded to take the initiative in leaving father and mother in marriage.

Genesis 2:24

*"Therefore **a man shall leave** his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."*

#7: God commanded Adam not to eat from the tree, not Eve

Even before the creation of the woman, **God had commanded Adam** not to eat from the forbidden tree. There is **no indication** in the story that God gave this command directly to Eve. The Genesis story seems to indicate that Adam was **expected to relay** this information to his wife:

Genesis 2:15-17

*"Then the Lord God took **the man** and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded **the man**, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

This '**chain of command**' should not surprise us. It follows the **basic pattern** of **how God speaks His will**. In Scripture the **Father speaks** His will through the Son ("*He [Christ] was the commander of all Heaven. He imparted **to the angelic family** the high commands of his Father.*" *Spiritual Gifts, volume 3, p. 36*) the **Son speaks** through the Spirit, the **Spirit speaks** through the angels, the **angels speak** through the prophets and the prophets then **relay God's message** to the people (see Revelation 1:1-3).

Let me give you an example of how this **mode of communication** functions on a **human level**. I am the president of Secrets Unsealed and as such it is my role to provide **general supervision** to the ministry. When I have important information to share with the employees I meet with the **department chairs** and share the information with them and then I expect them to **share it with their part time** employees. The word of the department chairs is **really my word** and the employees who are under the department chairs are **expected to follow** my instructions even though they did not hear them directly from me.

In the same way, God spoke His **instructions to Adam** who was expected in turn to **relay them to Eve**. In this way, Eve was expected to **obey God's word** through the **instrumentality of Adam**. Adam's word was to be considered God's word. Genesis 3 indicates that **Eve understood** this chain of command when she said to the serpent: "*God has said . . .*"

In Biblical thought, when God gives a **command to the husband**, he is expected to teach his **entire family** to obey the command because he, as the spiritual leader, is the **head of the family**. For example, God said about Abraham:

Genesis 18:19

*"For I have known him, in order that he may **command his children and his household** after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."*

Does God expect anything less from husbands today?

Before Adam and Eve sinned we are told that:

*“The Sabbath was committed **to Adam**, the father and representative of the whole human family” PP, p. 48*

Notice that God did not commit the Sabbath to **Adam and Eve**, the **father and mother** of the human family! He committed it to Adam. Does the fact that the Sabbath was committed to Adam mean that **God did not expect Eve to keep it**? To the contrary! Ellen White states that it was given to and for both:

*“God saw that a Sabbath was essential for **Adam and Eve**, even in Paradise. In giving them the Sabbath, God considered their spiritual and physical health.” Christ Triumphant, p. 18*

How are we to understand that the Sabbath was **given to Adam**, the **father and representative** of the human race and yet it was also given to Eve? Is Ellen White talking out of **both sides of her mouth**? Of course not! Clearly the Sabbath was given to Adam as the father and representative of the whole human family and he was **expected to teach his wife and successive generations** the meaning of the Sabbath and the importance of its observance. Regarding this responsibility Ellen White explains:

*“**Adam** carefully treasured what God had revealed to him, and **handed it down** by **word of mouth** to his children and children's children.” Spirit of Prophecy, volume 1, p. 59*

#8: The woman fell into transgression

Besides providing several pre-fall arguments, Paul also provided several **post-fall rationales** for the submission of the woman to the authority of the man.

1 Timothy 2:13, 14

*“And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. ¹³For Adam was **formed first**, then Eve. And **Adam was not deceived**, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.”*

Samuele Bacchiocchi has stated correctly:

*“Adam willingly let his wife **take the lead** . . . She **usurped Adam's headship** and instead of being his helper to live as God intended she led him into sin . . . Adam failed to exercise his spiritual leadership by **protecting Eve** from the serpent's deception, and, on her part, Eve failed to respect her **submissive role** by staying by her husband's side . . . The great fault of Adam in the Fall was his failure to exercise his role of **spiritual leadership**. Instead of leading his wife into obedience to God's command, he **allowed his wife** to lead him into disobedience.” Prove All Things, pp. 83, 84*

Ellen White hints at the headship of Adam when she affirmed that Adam 'mourned that he had permitted Eve to wander from his side'. *PP*, p. 56

#9: God required an accounting from Adam before Eve.

In spite of the fact that Eve sinned first, God required an accounting from Adam before Eve:

Genesis 3:8-11

"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ Then the Lord God called to Adam [with the definite article] and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." ¹¹ And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

The critical question is this: If Eve was the first to sin, why didn't God hold her initially responsible? Why did God address Adam first? The words of God to Adam are too clear to be misunderstood:

Genesis 3:16:

"Because you have heeded the voice of your wife [instead of mine], and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it."

The insinuation seems to be that Adam should have listened to God's voice and Eve in turn should have listened to the voice of her husband who taught her what God had said. Thus, by obeying Adam, Eve would have been obeying God.

Basically God was saying to Adam:

"I commanded you not to eat from the tree and gave you the responsibility of making sure your wife obeyed my command. Instead, you relinquished your leadership role by obeying your wife's voice instead of mine."

I believe that this chain of command helps us better understand what Paul meant when he wrote that God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of the man and man is the head of the woman (1 Corinthians 11:3). Jesus receives information from His Father who is His head and then relays the information to man as his head. Ellen White has profoundly stated:

*"What speech is to thought, so is Christ to the invisible Father. He is the manifestation of the Father, and is called the Word of God." *5BC*, p. 1131*

The next link in the chain of command is when **man receives the information** from Christ and relays it to the woman. In other words, when the man is **subject to the headship of Christ** he will in turn exercise a **Christ-centered headship** of the woman and thus she will be under the **headship of Christ through the witness of the man**.

But Adam **broke the chain** of command. Instead of exercising loving headship for his wife by relaying what Christ had relayed to him, Adam **relinquished his leadership role** to her and obeyed **her voice**, which in turn led him into transgression. So to speak, **Eve usurped the headship position** of Christ over the man and as a result the man disobeyed Christ. In short, instead of the **woman obeying Christ through the man**, the man **obeyed his wife** and thus **disobeyed his head, Christ**.

This idea is further bolstered by God's words to Eve after her transgression:

Genesis 4:16

*"Your **desire** shall be for your husband, and **he shall rule** over you."*

Was this declaration by God a **confirmation** of a reality that had existed before the fall, or was it a **divine sentence** pronounced upon woman by God only after the fall? Expressed another way, was Eve's desire for her husband and her husband's rulership over her a **less than ideal** arrangement that **kicked in after the fall** or was it a reaffirmation of **God's original plan** albeit in a less than desirable **sinful environment**?

The answer to this question is found in **Genesis 4:7** where the identical two words 'desire' and 'rule' appear in the story of Cain and Abel.

All Bible versions that I have consulted translate Genesis 4:7 in similar fashion. Let's take the **NIV** as an example. God says to Cain:

*"If you [**Cain**] do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it [**sin**] **desires** to have you, but you must **master** it [**sin**]."*

It will be noticed that the NIV as well as other versions **personify sin as a crouching beast desiring** to dominate Cain but Cain is instructed to **rule over it**.

The **KJV** provides a different perspective:

Genesis 4:7 (KJV)

*"If thou [**Cain**] doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee [**Cain**] shall be **his** [**Abel's**] desire, and thou [**Cain**] shalt rule over **him** [**over Abel**]."*

Ellen White agrees with the contextual translation of the KJV:

*“Abel’s offering had been accepted; but this was because he had done in every particular as God required him to do. If Cain would correct his error, he would not be deprived of his **birthright**: Abel would not only **love him [his desire would be for Cain]** as his brother, but, **as the younger**, would be **subject to him [he would lovingly be subject to his brother]**. Thus the Lord declared to Cain, “Unto thee shall be his **desire**, and thou shalt **rule** over him.” Bible Echo, April 8, 1912*

It will be noticed that Ellen White explains the meaning of the word ‘desire’ (used only in **Genesis 3:16; 4:7; and Song of Solomon 7:10**) as ‘love’ and the word ‘rule’ as willing submission of the **younger** to the **older**.

This translation lends support to Paul’s statement that before the fall Adam was to rule over his wife because he was **created first and then Eve**. She was **younger** and he was older. She, on the other hand, was to lovingly submit to her husband because he was older and she was younger.

Thus the desire and willing submission of the younger to the older existed both **before and after sin** and provides one rationale for female submission. Since the very beginning of history the younger son was to **willingly be subject** to the loving rulership of the older son. And Adam, who was created first, was to **rule over his wife** who was created second. As stated before, this does not mean that woman was **ontologically inferior** to man nor that **Abel was ontologically inferior to Cain**.

#10: Nakedness was not experienced until Adam sinned.

When Eve ate the fruit and she approached Adam we are told that she had not experienced the consequences of the fall:

*“Eve was before him, just **as lovely and beautiful**, and apparently **as innocent**, as before this act of disobedience. She expressed greater, higher love for him than before her disobedience, as the effects of the fruit she had eaten. He saw in her **no signs of death**.” (The Story of Redemption, p. 36)*

After Adam sinned nakedness ensued:

Genesis 3:9-10

*“Then the LORD GOD called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”¹⁰ So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because **I was naked**; and I hid myself.”*

#11: After sin Adam named Eve again.

After the entrance of sin into the world, Adam once again took the leadership initiative by **naming his wife**:

Genesis 3:20

*“And **Adam called** his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.”*

#12: Paul explicitly stated that the man is the head of the woman.

In 1 Corinthians 11:3 we are clearly told:

“God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of the man and the man is the head of the woman.”

Notice that Paul does not say that the man **was** the head of the woman after sin entered the world and until Jesus died on the cross. The husband was **still the head** of the wife even when Paul wrote many years after the cross.

Some women's ordination lobbyists have attempted to **soften or even eliminate** the idea that the husband is the head of the woman by arguing that the word 'head' here means '**source**' or '**origin**'. One seminary student went so far as to suggest that the word 'head' means '**completion**'. This is how the ordination advocate tortuously explained it:

*“As Christ is the **enabler** (the one who brings to completion) of the church, so the husband is to **enable** (bring to completion) all that his wife is meant to be”*

This is certainly a **novel private interpretation** that denotes an extreme case of *eisegesis* (reading into the text one's personal opinion). Contrary to the **clear text** of Genesis, this explanation makes **Adam Eve's helper** rather than the other way around. Not a **single lexicon** provides 'completion' as a possible meaning of the word and **not a single Bible version** translates it this way! In fact the **God's Word Translation** renders the word 'head' as 'authority':

“However, I want you to realize that Christ has authority over every man, a husband has authority over his wife, and God has authority over Christ.”

Evangelical scholar **Wayne Grudem**, who has dedicated the better part of his career to research and write about the women's ordination issue, has done an exhaustive study of the word **kephale** in the **LXX, Plato, the New Testament, Josephus, Philo, Plutarch and the church fathers** (*Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, pp. 552-559) and he has found that the word does indeed mean 'head'. It would be very enlightening indeed for egalitarians to **digest the persuasive evidence** that has been provided by Grudem.

Several texts from the writings of Paul and Peter clearly reveal that the word **kephale** is used to denote **authority/headship** (see Ephesians 1:22; 5:23, 24; Colossians 1:18; 2:10; I Peter 2:7). Bible words should not be treated like **play dough** that can be molded to **take the shape** that the interpreter wishes them to have.

Notably, the apostle Paul in the well-known marriage passage links the word **kephale** (head) with **hupotasso** (submit).

Ephesians 5:22-24:

*“Wives, **submit [hupotasso]** 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 [hupotasso]** to Christ, so let the wives be **[subject]** to their own husbands in everything” (see also Colossians 3:18; I Corinthians 14:33-35; Titus 2:4, 5).*

According to Greek lexicons the word **hupotasso** means ‘to be subject, subordinate, place under.’ In the light of this meaning, would anyone dare say that wives are not instructed by God to be subject to their husbands after the cross? (See 1 Peter 3:1, 5).

If wives were not required to be subject to their husbands then **the church would not be expected to be subject to Christ either** because the willing submission of the wife to the husband is **predicated on the willing submission of the church to Christ**.

The **Jewish Bible Commentary** makes a good point regarding the meaning of 1 Corinthians 11:3. It correctly suggests that if **Jesus** does not find the headship of His Father demeaning and if **the man** does not consider the headship of Jesus demeaning, then **wives** should not find the headship of their husbands demeaning either!

The fundamental problem is that in this **sinful world** we consider **subjection to be a negative thing**. We assume that those who **submit or subject** themselves to the authority of another **are inferior** to the one to whom they subject themselves. If this were the case, then the **subjection of Jesus to His Father** after sin is **eradicated from the universe** would be a **bad thing** (see 1 Corinthians 15:24-28) and yet the New Testament presents it in a **positive light**. To be subject to God’s established order is sublime and to **refuse is rebellion!** The story of **Lucifer’s rebellion** is a living illustration of this fact.

It is common for egalitarians to argue based on **Ephesians 5:21** that submission is a **two way street** with the husband equally submitting to his wife and the wife to the husband in a perfect egalitarian fashion. After all, the apostle Paul did write:

*“Submitting yourselves **one to another** in the fear of God.” **KJV***

But there are several reasons why this egalitarian **argument is faulty**.

First of all, this arrangement would **not be practical** in daily life and therefore does not **make any sense**. What is the meaning of **mutual submission**? Can there really be any **authority structure** when two individuals mutually submit to one another?

Are we to think that Paul was saying that submission is a **two-way street** between **parents and children** in which **parents should submit** to the authority of their children and children to their parents? Are we to think that Paul was saying that **masters and slaves**

should be mutually submissive to one another? Are the **commanding angels** in heaven mutually submissive to the angels that they command? Is God the Father and God the Son **mutually submissive** to one another?

Second, the idea of mutual submission does **not agree with the immediate context**. Verses 22, 24 clearly state that it is the **wife who should** submit to the authority of her husband, not the other way around.

Third, in **other passages** the apostle makes it absolutely clear that it is wives who **should be submissive** to the authority of their husbands (Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; I Peter 3:1-6). **Never, not even once**, do we find any text in the New Testament that indicates that **husbands are to be subject** to their wives.

Fourth, this is a **novel interpretation** of the text unknown until the **feminist movement** in recent times.

Fifth, verse 21 is the introduction to the **succeeding context**. The KJV captures the correct meaning of the expression 'one to another': "*Submitting yourselves **one to another** in the fear of God.*"

What is meant by the expression 'one to another'? Does it mean **mutual submission**? Not according to the succeeding context. The following context explains what the expression means:

"The wife (one) should submit to the husband (another)" (Ephesians 5:22, 24).

"The children (one) should submit to their parents (another)" (Ephesians 6:1-3).

"The servant (one) should submit to his master (another)" (Ephesians 6:5-8).

But submission does not mean slavery. Along with the idea of submission the apostle provides **mitigating factors** to **regulate the authority** of husbands, parents and masters. Husbands are **to love** their wives and thus they are not at liberty to mistreat them (Ephesians 5:25-33). Parents are **not to provoke** their children to wrath by abusing their parental authority (Ephesians 6: 4) and masters are not to use their authority **to threaten their servants** because they too are servants of Christ (Ephesians 6:9)

Sixth, the submission of wives to their husbands is predicated upon the **submission of the church to Christ** (Ephesians 5:24). Are we to understand that Christ and the church are to be **mutually submissive**? The idea is **preposterous**. The church is under the authority of Christ and receives **orders from Him** as its head.

Seventh, the meaning of the Greek word **hupotasso** must be taken into account. Some egalitarians **redefine** this word in this one verse giving it a **different definition** than where it is found elsewhere in the New Testament. Whereas according to the lexicons the word means 'to submit, to be subject to someone's authority' some egalitarians have

redefined the word in Ephesians 5:21 to mean 'to be considerate and thoughtful of someone' or 'to put someone else's interests first'. Needless to say, **no lexicon** gives such definitions of the word.

The word *hupotasso* is used **38 times** in the New Testament and always refers to one party being in subjection to another. Notice just a few examples of the use of *hupotasso*:

- **Jesus** was subject to the authority of His father and mother (Luke 2:51).
- **Demons** were subject to the authority of the apostles (Luke 10:17).
- **Citizens** are subject to the ruling authorities (Romans 13:1-5).
- When the great controversy is over, **Jesus will subject** Himself to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:28).
- **Church members** are called upon to be subject to the authority of the elders (1 Peter 5:5).
- The **church** must be subject to Christ (Ephesians 5:24).
- **Servants** should submit to the authority of their masters (Titus 2:9).
- God has **placed everything** in subjection to Christ (Hebrews 2:8).
- **Angels, authorities and powers** are in subjection to Christ upon His ascension to heaven (1 Peter 3:22).
- As we submit to our earthly father so we should **submit to our heavenly Father** (Hebrews 12:9).
- **Christians** should submit themselves to God (Hebrews 12:9).

Finally, Ellen White has clearly defined 'mutual submission':

*"The husband is **the head of the family**, as Christ is the **head of the church**; and any course which the wife may pursue to lessen his influence and lead him to come down from that dignified, responsible position is displeasing to God. It is the **duty of the wife to yield her wishes and will** to her husband. **Both should be yielding**, but the Word of God gives **preference** to the judgment of the husband. And it will not detract from the dignity of the wife to **yield to him** whom she has chosen to be her counselor, adviser, and protector. The husband should **maintain his position** in his family with all meekness, yet with decision." *1T*, pp. 307, 308*

#13: Adam was held accountable for the entrance of sin not Eve.

Romans 5:12-21 explicitly points out that **Adam was held accountable** by God for the entrance of sin into the world, **not Eve** (see also I Corinthians 15:22, 45-47) and therefore Jesus, as the head of the human race is the **second Adam**, not the **second Eve**.

Romans 5:12

*“Therefore, just as through **one man sin entered the world**, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”*

1 Corinthians 15:22

*“For as in **Adam all die**, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”*

Ellen White uses several different terms to describe the leadership position of Adam upon his creation. She refers to him as the **king**, the **ruler** and the **monarch** of the world. Never do we find Ellen White describing Adam and Eve as the **kings**, the **rulers** and the **monarchs** of the world. In fact, Ellen White describes Eve as Adam’s queen.

At creation, Adam was installed **as king** and as such he was the **head and representative** of the entire human family (FLB, p. 32; PP, p. 67). After sin Adam **lost his throne** (PP, p. 67) and Jesus became a man, conquered Satan in Adam’s place and became the **new head and representative** of the human race (ST, January 16, 1986) until **Adam is reinstated** in his first dominion when the two Adams meet (GC, p. 647)

#14: The death sentence was pronounced against the man, not the woman.

Even though both Adam and Eve came under the sentence of death because of sin, the sentence was only pronounced upon the man:

Genesis 3:19

*“In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground [**Eve was not taken out of the ground**], for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”*

#15: The man was cast out of the Garden of Eden and along with him the woman.

Although both the man and the woman were cast out of the Garden, Scripture only mentions the banishment of the man:

Genesis 3:22-24

*“Then the LORD God said: “Behold, **the man** has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest **he** put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”²³ therefore the LORD God sent **him** out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which **he** was taken. ²⁴So He drove out **the man**; and He placed cherubim at the east of the Garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.”*

#16: Ellen White confirmed male headship in the home and the church.

Ellen White makes it crystal clear that the husband is **still the head of the wife**. As I pointed out earlier, Ellen White has repeatedly confirmed that male headship in the home did **not cease at the cross**. It is still God's plan that the husband be the head of the wife in the family relationship (and as we shall shortly see, in the church as well):

*"The Lord has constituted the husband the **head of the wife** to be her **protector**; he is the house-band of the family, binding the members together, **even** as Christ is the **head of the church** and the Savior of the mystical body. Let every husband who claims to love God carefully study the requirements of God in his **position**. Christ's **authority** is exercised in wisdom, in all kindness and gentleness; **so** let the husband exercise **his power** and **imitate** the great Head of the church." *Counsels to the Church*, pp. 145, 146*

From this statement we can reach several **inevitable conclusions**.

First, if it were true that the husband is no longer the head of the wife then **Christ would no longer the head of the church** because the headship of the husband over the wife is predicated upon the headship of Christ over the church!

Second, it is important to note that Ellen White is clearly alluding to **Ephesians 5:31-33**. In these verses Paul is not arguing from a **plan 'B' post-fall perspective** but rather from God's **original pre-creation** plan as can be seen by his reference to **Genesis 2:24**. Clearly, in some way, the relationship between husband and wife is a **model for the relationship** between Christ and His church:

*"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning **Christ and the church**. 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."*

Finally, if the **church does not feel oppressed** by the loving headship of Christ then, why would the **wife feel oppressed** by the loving headship of her husband?

But the big question is this: Is the headship of man in the home applicable in the **church as well**? Both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy affirm that is:

First Timothy 3:1-6

*"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. ² A bishop then must be blameless, **the husband of one wife**, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; ³ not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; ⁴ one who **rules his own house well**, having his **children in submission** with all reverence ⁵ (for if a man does not know how to **rule his own house**, how will he **take care of the church** of God?)."*

Titus 1:5-9

*“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint **elders in every city** as I commanded you—⁶ if a man is blameless, the **husband of one wife**, having **faithful children** not accused of dissipation or insubordination. ⁷ For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, ⁹ holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”*

*“**He** who is engaged in the work of the gospel ministry must be faithful in **his** family life. It is as essential that as a **father he** should improve the talents God has given **him** for the purpose of making the **home** a symbol of the heavenly family, as that in the work of the ministry, **he** should make use of **his** God given powers to win souls for the **church**. As the **priest** in the **home**, and as the ambassador of Christ in the **church**, **he** should exemplify in **his** life the character of Christ. **He** must be faithful in watching for souls as one that must give an account. In **his** service there must be seen no carelessness and inattentive work. God will not serve with the sins of **men** who have not a clear sense of the sacred responsibility involved in accepting a position as **pastor of a church**. **He** who fails to be a faithful, discerning shepherd in the **home**, will surely fail of being a faithful **shepherd of the flock** of God in the **church**.”*
Manuscript 42, 1903, pp. 1, 2 (“The Training of Children,” typed May 4, 1903) 6MR, p. 49

*“The family of the one suggested for office should be considered. Are they in subjection? Can the **man** rule **his** own house with honor? What character have **his** children? Will they do honor to the **father's** influence? If **he** has no tact, wisdom, or power of godliness at home in managing **his** own family, it is safe to conclude that the same defects will be carried into **the church**, and the same unsanctified management will be seen there. It will be far better to criticize **the man** before **he** is put into office than afterward, better to pray and counsel before taking the decisive step than to labor to correct the consequences of a wrong move.”*
5T, p. 618

*“The qualifications of **an elder** are **plainly stated** by the apostle Paul: “If any be blameless, the **husband of one wife**, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”* 5MR, p. 449

*If a **man** does not show wisdom in the management of the **church in his own house**, how can **he** show wisdom in the management of the **larger church** outside? How can **he** bear the responsibilities which mean so much, if **he** cannot govern **his** own children? Wise discrimination is not shown in this matter. God's blessing will not rest upon **the minister** who neglects the education and training of **his** children. **He** has a sacred trust, and **he** should in no*

case set before church members a defective example in the management of **his** home." 5MR, p. 449 (1901)

It must be pointed out that Ellen White also warned husbands not to abuse their headship role by constantly reminding their wives of their position of authority:

*"It is no evidence of manliness in the husband for him to **dwell constantly** upon his position **as head** of the family. It does **not increase respect** for him to hear him quoting Scripture to sustain his **claims to authority**. It will not make him more manly to require his wife, the mother of his children, to act upon his plans as if they were **infallible**." AA, p. 360*

#3 – BECAUSE OF THE ANGELS

The Passage

Paul's argument in **I Corinthians 11:3-12** (ESV) reveals that **several years after the cross** the man was still perceived as the head of the woman within a **congregational setting**. Let's take a look at the passage:

*“But I want you to understand that the **head** of every man is Christ, the **head** of a wife is her husband, and the **head** of Christ is God [**chain of command**]. Every man who prays or prophesies with **his [physical] head covered** dishonors **his head** [Christ, because by covering his head he gives the impression that he is relinquishing the headship role that Jesus gave Him over the woman], but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head [physical] uncovered **dishonors her head** [the man, because in this way she gives the impression that she is the head of the man]—it is the same as if her head were shaven. For if a wife will not cover her head then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her **cover her head**. For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the **image and glory of God**, but woman is the **glory of man**. For man was not made **from** woman, but woman **from** man. Neither was man created **for** woman, but woman **for** man. That is why a wife ought to have a **symbol of authority** on her head, **because of the angels**. Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man of woman for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.”*

Questions about the Passage

Several questions come to the surface as we read this passage:

- What did Paul mean when he wrote that **the man who covers** his head dishonors **his** head? Whose head does he dishonor—**his own or Christ's**?
- When a woman fails to cover her head in public worship **whose head does she dishonor**, her husband's or her own?
- Why did Paul say that it is a dishonor to the man for the woman to worship with her **head uncovered**?

- Why did Paul say that it is a dishonor for the man to worship **with his head covered**?
- Are Paul's arguments for female submission based on the **fall or culture** or are they based on the **creation order**?
- Why does Paul state that the man is the **image and glory of God** but the woman is the **glory of man**? Doesn't Genesis 1:26, 27 clearly teach that woman was created in the image of God as well as man?
- What did Paul mean when he wrote that the woman must wear a veil as a sign of submission to the man **because of the angels**?

Paul's Basic Argument

Now let's seek for answers to these questions. I believe that the key to understand verses four and five is found in **verse three**. What Paul is saying is this:

*"**God is the head** of Christ, **Christ is the head** of the man and **man is the head** of the woman. If a man covers his head in public worship he is dishonoring Christ who is his head and if the woman uncovers her head in public worship she is dishonoring the man who is her head."*

Purpose of the Veil

In the **culture** of Paul's day the woman who uncovered her head in public worship was **sending mixed signals** because people would get the impression that there were **two heads**, not one. But when the head of the man alone was uncovered it was clear to the worshipers that **he was the head** in the man/woman relationship in the home and in congregational worship.

Though his remarks would go over like a **lead balloon** in today's feminist society, **Albert Barnes** was right on target when he wrote the following explanation of the feminine head covering in 1 Corinthians 11:

*"The sense is, she is **subordinate to him**, and in all circumstances—in her demeanor, her dress, her conversation, in public and in the family circle—should recognize **her subordination to him**. . . To remove that [veil], is to remove the appropriate mark of such subordination, and is a public act by which she thus shows dishonor to the man." Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc*

Image and Glory

How do we explain Paul's affirmation that the man is the **image and glory** of God while the woman is described simply as the **glory** of man?

This certainly sounds like a **sexist remark** by today's **politically correct standards**. But who says that what is considered proper in today's society is proper in God's sight? As we

shall see, Paul's **foundational argument** is not based on the culture of his day at all but rather on the **creation order**.

Weren't **both** man and woman created in the **image of God**? Indeed! The creation account is too clear to be misunderstood (Genesis 1:26). But the Genesis story also reveals that the woman derived the image of God **through the mediation of the man**. This fact can be clearly discerned by comparing Genesis 1:26, 27 with Genesis 2:18-24.

Genesis 1:26 provides us with the **summary statement** that God intended to create man, that is, both male and female in His image. **Genesis 1:27 and 2:18-24** then explain the **process that God followed** when He made male and female in His image. The argument is not difficult to understand. God created the man in His image and the woman was created from the man and therefore **she derives the image of God** through the man.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's **Commentary** is therefore correct when it states:

"Man . . . image and glory of God—being created in God's 'image' first, and directly; the woman subsequently, and indirectly, through man's mediation". Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Bible soft, Inc

Thus God mediated His image in woman **through the man**. This is one reason why Adam stated: *"this is now flesh of **my** flesh and bone of **my** bones."* Notice that the **woman did not say**: *"he is now flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones."* It was the woman who derived her flesh from the man.

Jamieson Fausset and Brown continue the argument:

*"The woman is created in the image of God as well as the man (Gen 1:26-27). But as the moon in relation to the sun (Gen 37:9), so woman shines not so much with light direct from God as with light **derived from man**--i.e. in her order in creation--though in grace she comes into direct communion with God. Even here much of her knowledge is immediately given her **through man**, on whom **she is dependent**. Ministry to man, whom she elevates in his **more responsible** position, is her 'glory.'" Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc*

The Glory of Man

And why is the woman called 'the glory of the man'? The answer is not difficult to find. Man is the glory of God because God created him first directly. The woman is the glory of man because she was taken from the man. Woman is called '*the glory of the man*' because she was **created from and for her husband** (as Paul explicitly states) to give **him honor, glory and respect**.

Thus the woman is to stand in her relationship to man much as **Jesus stands in relationship to His Father**—He lives to give honor and glory to His Father and **never to**

Himself. In fact, the apostle Paul refers to Jesus as ‘*the radiance of God’s glory*’ (Hebrews 1:3) and ‘*the glory of God in the face of Jesus*’ (2 Corinthians 4:6; see also John 1:14, 18).

Ellen White provides a profound insight on this matter. She explains that when **Lucifer questioned** the position of Jesus, the **Father called the heavenly council** together to explain His Son’s true position. It is worthy of note that Jesus did not speak up to defend Himself but rather exalted **His Father’s glory**:

*“But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself contrary to **God’s plan**, but would **exalt the Father’s glory** and execute **His purposes** of beneficence and love”*
Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36

At each and every stage of his life—past, present and future—**Jesus has lived to bring glory and honor to His Father.** He has never sought position, rank or power. His motto has ever been: “*He who has seen me has seen the Father.*”

The relationship between Adam and Eve was to be a reflection of this. The noted commentator **Albert Barnes** expressed it this way:

*“She [Eve] was made **for** him; she was made **after** he was; she was taken **from** him, and was “bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.” All her comeliness, loveliness, and purity are therefore an expression of **his honor and dignity**, since all that comeliness and loveliness were made **of him and for him.**”*

So it was to be with Eve. In fact Ellen White refers to Eve as Adam’s second self:

*“A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his **second self**, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation.”* *PP, p. 46*

Because of the Angels

But what did Paul mean when he wrote that the woman ought to have a **symbol of authority** on her head **because of the angels**?

Whose authority is Paul referring to? Is the veil a symbol of **her authority** over the man or is it a sign of the **man’s authority over her**? The context would seem to indicate that the veil on her head is a sign of the **man’s authority** because that is the **central point** that Paul has been trying to get across in the passage.

The commentators have provided multiple interpretations of Paul’s mention of angels. **Albert Barnes candidly admits**:

“I do not know what it means; and I regard it as one of the very few passages in the Bible whose meaning as yet is wholly inexplicable.”

It bears noting that whenever the preposition *dia* ('because of') appears in the New Testament in the **accusative case** it always denotes a **causal relationship**. Paul is saying that the woman should wear the veil as a sign of submission to the authority of the man 'because of three reasons'. The **first** is that man did not come from woman but woman from man. The **second** is that man was not created for woman but woman for man. The **third** is 'because of the angels'. The NIV expresses it this way:

*[1] "For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; ⁹ [2] neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. ¹⁰ For this reason, [3] **and** because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head."*

Paul's reasoning is that the **headship/submission** relationship that God originally established between **man and woman at creation** was intended to serve as **an object lesson** to the angels. That is to say, the angels were to see on earth a **small-scale model** or reflection of the eternal relationship of the Father and the Son in the Godhead. This is the reason why God the Father said His Son: "Let **us** make man in **our** image, according to **our** likeness." Adam and Eve were not merely made in the image of God individually. Rather their relationship was a reflection of the relationship between the Father and the Son in the Godhead.

In the heavenly economy, the Son of God:

- Is a distinct **personality** from the Father.
- And yet in another sense the Father and the Son **are one** (John 10:30).

*"From eternity there was a **complete unity** between the Father and the Son. They were **two**, yet **little short** of being identical; **two** in individuality, yet **one** in spirit, and heart, and character." *The Youth's Instructor*, December 16, 1897*

- Was (and is) in the **bosom** of the Father (John 1:18).
- Is the **express image** of the Father's person (Hebrews 1:3).
- Is ontologically **equal** with His Father.
- Is **co-substantial** with the Father.
- Is subject to the **Father's authority**.
- Renders the Father **glory and honor**.

Likewise, in the earthly economy, Eve:

- Was a **distinct personality** from Adam.
- And yet Adam and Eve were **one** (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6).
- Was taken out of Adam's **bosom**—a rib near his heart.
- Was the **image** of God through Adam.
- Was **ontologically equal** with Adam.

- Was **co-substantial** with Adam—flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones.
- Was **subject** to Adam’s authority.
- Rendered Adam **glory and honor**.

The Big Question

But the question that immediately suggests itself is this: Why was it necessary for God to make a small-scale model on earth of His relationship to His Son in heaven? Why would the angels need such a revelation? The answer is clearly revealed in the Spirit of Prophecy.

Lucifer’s Complaint

It is crucial to remember that the original complaint of Lucifer against God in heaven was related to **functional roles**. Lucifer was jealous of **Christ’s position** and argued in favor of an **egalitarian arrangement** in the heavenly order. Ellen White explains what led to Lucifer’s jealousy:

*“But when **God said to His Son**, ‘Let us make man in our image,’ Satan was jealous of Jesus. He wished to be consulted concerning the formation of man, and because he was not, he was filled with envy, jealousy, and hatred. He desired to receive the highest honors in heaven next to God [**honors that belonged to the Son of God**].” *EW*, p. 145*

In **Genesis 1:26-28** there is an **unusual fluctuation** between **singular** and **plural** nouns and pronouns. The evidence indicates that there is a **plurality** in **unity** in the Godhead and a **plurality** in **unity** in man:

*“Then **God** [**one person, the Father**] said [**to Jesus, His Son**], “Let **Us** [**Father and Son**] make **man** [**generic: Adam without the definite article**] in **Our** [**Father and Son**] image, according to **Our** [**Father and Son**] likeness; let **them** [**man and woman**] have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”²⁷ So **God** [**the Father**] created [**the**] **man** [**non generic use: Adam with the definite article**] in **His** [**the Father’s**] **own image**; in the image of **God** [**the Father**] **He** [**the Father**] created **him** [**singular, Adam**]; **male and female** He created **them** [**Adam and Eve**].²⁸ Then God blessed **them** [**Adam and Eve**], and God said to **them** [**Adam and Eve**], “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.”*

The Spirit of Prophecy evidence indicates that Lucifer and the higher-ranking angels knew that Jesus was the Son of God but they attempted to deceive the angels into thinking that Jesus was a created being **on the same level as Lucifer**:

*“Satan was **well acquainted** with the position of honor Christ had held in heaven **as the Son of God**, the **beloved of the Father**.” *Confrontation*, p. 29*

"This fact the [fallen] angels would obscure, that Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and they came to consider that they were not to consult Christ." This Day with God, p. 128

At this point Jesus was subject to the Father's will as **Michael the Archangel** and had been installed by the Father to command the heavenly hosts (see Revelation 12:7-9). We are told:

*"The Son of God was **next in authority** to the great Lawgiver." RH, December 17, 1862*

*"He [Jesus] was the commander of all Heaven. He imparted to the angelic family the **high commands** of his Father." 3SG, p. 36*

*"He who could influence the angels of God against their **Supreme Ruler**, and against **His Son**, their loved **Commander**, and enlist their sympathy for himself, was capable of any deception." Confrontation, p. 45*

Lucifer wanted the angels to think that it was unfair for the Father to consult Jesus as **one equal** with Himself when Jesus was **subject** to the Father's will as the Commander of the angelic hosts.

When Lucifer aspired ascend to the position of Jesus, the **Father called a meeting of the angels** of heaven to confer **special honor** upon His Son and to **explain** their relationship. He stated that although he and His Son were **equal**, His Son was **subject** to His will. This is how the Spirit of Prophecy describes it:

*"The **great Creator** assembled the heavenly host, that **He might** in the presence of all the angels confer **special honor** upon His Son. The Son was seated on the throne with the Father, and the heavenly throng of holy angels was gathered around them. The Father then made known that it was **ordained by Himself** that Christ, **His Son, should be equal** with Himself; so that wherever was the presence of His Son, it was as His own presence. The word of the Son was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the Father. His Son **He had invested with authority** to command the heavenly host. Especially was His Son to work in **union with Himself** [**let us make man**] in the anticipated creation of the earth and every living thing that should exist upon the earth. His Son would carry out **His [the Father's] will** and His [**the Father's**] purposes but would do **nothing of Himself alone**. The **Father's will** would be fulfilled in Him." SR, p. 13*

*"**The King of the universe** summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence **He might set forth** the true position of **His Son** and show the relation He sustained to all created beings. The **Son of God shared the Father's throne**, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent One encircled both. . . . Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven **the King declared** that none but Christ, the **Only Begotten of God**, could fully enter into His purposes, and **to Him it was committed** to execute the mighty counsels of **His [the Father's] will**. The Son of God had wrought the **Father's will** in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to*

Him, as well as to **God**, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself contrary to **God's plan**, but would exalt **the Father's glory** and **execute His purposes** of beneficence and love." *PP*, p. 36

This meeting made **Lucifer angry**:

*"The **exaltation** of the Son of God **as equal** with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was **also entitled** to reverence and honor . . . There had been **no change [because Jesus had the same position that He had held before His Father called the meeting]** in the position or authority of Christ. Lucifer's envy and **misrepresentation** and his **claims to equality** with Christ **had made necessary** a statement of the true position of the **Son of God [but Jesus already had that position]**; but this [position] had been the **same from the beginning**. Many of the angels were, however, blinded by Lucifer's deceptions . . . Although they had heretofore been in perfect harmony with the order that God had established, they were now discontented and unhappy because they could not penetrate His unsearchable counsels they were dissatisfied with **His purpose in exalting Christ**. These stood ready to second Lucifer's demand for **equal authority with the Son of God**. But angels who were loyal and true maintained the wisdom and justice of the divine decree and endeavored to reconcile this disaffected being to the will of God. **Christ was the Son of God**; He had been **one with Him before** the angels were called into existence. He **had ever stood at the right hand of the Father**; His supremacy, so full of blessing to all who came under its benignant control, had not heretofore been questioned." *PP*, pp. 37-39*

In order to illustrate on a smaller scale the relationship between the Father and the Son, God **then created Adam and Eve** in His image to illustrate on a **smaller stage** the ontological equality and functional differences within the Godhead. Thus the submission of the woman to the man was an object lesson to the angels of the submission of the Son to the Father.

We are not comparing **apples and oranges** here. In 1 Corinthians 11 the apostle Paul is appealing to the **creation story for his argument**. The allusions to the creation story are **numerous**. [1] Paul refers to the creation of **male and female**. [2] He refers to **God's image**. [3] He underlines that **Eve came from Adam** and that [4] she was **made for him** and therefore was **subject to his authority** and [5] he appeals to the woman's long hair which was given to her by nature at creation.

The Bible does mention that the **angels were looking on** when Jesus and His Father created the world **Job 38:4** states as much. The apostle Paul also explains that the events of this world are an object lesson for **the angels** (I Corinthians 4:9).

Summarizing

So, summarizing Paul's line of reasoning in I Corinthians 11 we have the following picture:

- The **head of Christ** is the Father.
- The **head of the man** is Christ.
- The **head of the woman** is man.
- The wife should wear a veil or have **long hair** in public worship.
- The veil or long hair is a **sign of her submission** to the authority (*exousia*) of the husband.
- If the wife participates in public worship without a veil or her head shaved she **dishonors her husband** who is her head.
- The man is the image and **glory of God** and the woman is the **glory of man**.
- The man is the image of God directly and the woman is the image of God through the **mediation of the man**.
- Man did not come from woman but **woman came from man**.
- Neither was man created for woman but rather **woman for man**.
- The **ontological** equality of man and woman and the **functional submission** of the woman to the man is an object lesson to the angels about the ontological **equality of the Father and the Son** and the **functional submission** of the Son to the Father.

Application Beyond Corinth

1 Corinthians 11:13-16: There is another distinction between men and women that God established by nature at creation. God created women with **long hair** and men with **short hair**:

*"Judge among yourselves [**you tell me**"]: Is it proper for a woman **to pray to God** with her head uncovered? ¹⁴ Does not even **nature itself** teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? ¹⁵ But if a woman has **long hair**, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her **for a covering**. ¹⁶ But if anyone seems to be contentious, **we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.**"*

Timeless Principle

Some have argued that in I Corinthians 11:1-12 the apostle is simply enforcing a **cultural custom** that existed in his day which is **no longer obligatory** and therefore **women do not need** to obey his counsel. After all, are we to expect women to **wear veils to church** in the twenty-first century? Would not such a practice be considered **odd and antiquated** by **today's standards**?

It bears noting that this custom of women wearing veils in a public worship context is **not totally absent** from world culture today. In some societies it is still extant. I well remember

the time when **Roman Catholic women** in Latin America would never enter a church without a veil on their heads, a custom that still exists in **some European countries** when tourists enter holy shrines. And we all know that in **Muslim countries**, women not only wear veils to worship but also in the secular affairs of life.

Am I saying that women in **western society** should embrace the custom of wearing veils when they come to church to worship? If I suggested such a thing I would immediately be branded as **guilty of fanaticism!** I am not suggesting that women in western society must follow this custom. **Customs may vary from culture to culture** and yet the **foundational principle** upon which the customs are built remains constant.

For instance, in some cultures the **Bible is always placed on top** of every other book because it is considered to be **above all other knowledge**. But in other cultures it is placed **underneath every other book** because it is the **foundation of all knowledge**. The question is: Which cultural custom is right and which is wrong? The fact is that they are both right! These are **two opposite ways of expressing the same** fundamental **constant and unchangeable principle**—reverence and respect for the Bible as the **supreme source** of knowledge! The principle is identical in both cases but the manner of expressing the principle varies from culture to culture.

In 1 Corinthians 11 the apostle is expressing a **universal and constant principle** that was established at **creation**. This is made clear by his multiple allusions to the **creation order**. This principle is that the **man is the head and the woman** she should be submissive to the man's leadership. This principle was established **at creation** and continues to be God's plan after the inception of sin into the world. Yet the way of **expressing this principle** and making it visible can vary from culture to culture.

Relationship of Husband and Wife

*"The Lord has constituted the **husband** the **head of the wife** to be her protector; he is the house-band of the family, binding the members together, **even** as Christ is the head of the church and the Savior of the mystical body. Let every husband who claims to love God carefully study the requirements of God in his position. Christ's **authority** is exercised in wisdom, in all kindness and gentleness; **so** let the **husband exercise his power** and **imitate the great Head of the church**." *Counsels to the Church*, pp. 145, 146*

*"Many mothers do not take half the interest in the constitutional wants of their children than the intelligent farmer shows to the brutes around him. It is **woman's right** to look after the **interest of her husband**, to have a care for **his** wardrobe, and to seek to make **him** happy. It is **her right** to improve her mind and manners, to be social, cheerful, and happy, shedding sunshine in **her family**, and making it a little heaven. And she may have an interest for more than 'me and mine.' She should consider that **society** has claims upon her." *The Health Reformer*, June 1, 1873*

#4 – GOD’S LEADERSHIP PATTERN IN SCRIPTURE

The Godhead

The Father and the Son are **two distinct** persons yet Jesus explained that **they are one** (John 10:30). The Son is **co-substantial** with the Father and was **subject** to the Father’s will before sin entered the universe and will still be subject to the Father in eternity future after sin and death are eradicated from the universe (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36:

*“**The King of the universe** summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence **He might set forth** the true position of His Son and show the relation He sustained to all created beings. The **Son of God shared the Father’s throne**, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent One encircled both. . . . Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven **the King declared** that none but Christ, the **Only Begotten of God**, could fully enter into His purposes, and **to Him it was committed** to execute the mighty counsels of **His [the Father’s] will**. The Son of God had wrought the **Father’s will** in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself contrary to **God’s plan**, but would exalt **the Father’s glory** and **execute His purposes** of beneficence and love.”*

Male and Female

Genesis 1:26: God created Adam and Eve to **reflect** the relationship between the Father and the Son in the Godhead. Like the Father and the Son in the Godhead Adam and Eve were **two individuals** but one in substance. And Eve was **subject** to the Adam:

*“Adam was crowned **king** in Eden. To **him** was given **dominion** over every living thing that God had created. The Lord blessed Adam and Eve with intelligence such as He had not given to any other creature. He made **Adam** the **rightful sovereign** over all the works of His hands”
Ellen G. White, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, volume 1, p. 1082*

Just as male and female were **equal** and could be described with the **generic word 'man'** so the Father and the Son who are equal could be referred to with the **generic word 'God'** (see John 1:1, 2). And just as the Son was subject to the Father's headship, so the female is subject to the headship of the male. What is so difficult to understand about this?

First-born Males the Spiritual Leaders

*"In early times [before the times of Abraham] the **father** was the **ruler** and **priest** of his own family, and **he exercised authority** over his children, even after they had families of their own. His descendants were taught to look up to **him** as their **head**, in both **religious** and **secular** matters. This patriarchal system of government Abraham **endeavored to perpetuate**, as it tended to **preserve the knowledge of God**. It was necessary to bind the members of the household together, in order to build up a **barrier against the idolatry** that had become so widespread and so deep-seated." *PP*, p. 141*

*"A great responsibility rests upon the husband--house-band--to **bind the household together**, by the ties of kindness, love, and harmony. In the **patriarchal ages**, the husband and father was the **priest** of his own household. **And still** it is **his** duty to **invoke in their behalf** the divine blessing, and to **instruct** and **guide** them in the way of life." *Signs of the Times*, February 23, 1882*

Twelve Male Founders of Israel

In **Genesis 49:28** we find that twelve **male** patriarchs were chosen by God to be the founders of the Old Testament church. The twelve stones on the breastplate of Aaron represented the twelve male founders of Israel (see Exodus 28:15-21) who in turn represented all Israel. There was at least one woman—Dinah—who could have been chosen, but she was passed by.

Ellen White wrote: *"in the Old Testament the **twelve** patriarchs stood as **representatives of Israel**"* (*AA*, p. 19).

Male Rulers of the Tribes

Before the ordination of the seventy elders, Moses appointed able **men** to rule over Israel. Notably these men are called **heads** and **rulers**. This terminology is significant in light of the fact that the **Andrews University** Theological Seminary has published an official statement denying that any human leader can be referred to as a head:

Exodus 18:25

*"And Moses chose able **men** out of all Israel, and made them **heads** over the people, **rulers** of thousands, **rulers** of hundreds, **rulers** of fifties, and **rulers** of tens."*

Regarding the decision-making procedures in Israel on the **different levels** of 'church' organization Ellen White remarks:

*"They should be 'able **men**, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.' All matters of minor consequence were to be judged by the **men** placed over the **smaller** groups; matters of greater importance were to be carried to the **higher** officers; and the most difficult cases were still to be brought before **Moses**." RH, October 5, 1905*

Sometimes we think of the organizational system of Israel as God always acting directly through Moses. But Israel actually had a representative style of government that was very similar to the present organizational system of the Seventh-day Adventist Church:

- **Moses** = President of the General Conference

*"Moses was their **visible leader**, while Christ stood at the **head** of the armies of Israel, their **invisible Leader**." Confrontation, p. 25*

- **Priests** = elders and ministers.
- **Levites** = deacons (cared for the tabernacle, the poor, the offerings, etc.).
- Council of the **seventy** elders representing all the tribes of Israel = General Conference Executive Committee.
- **Tribes** = Divisions.
- **Thousands** = Unions.
- **Hundreds** = Conferences.
- **Fifties** = District.
- **Tens** = local church.

Seventy Males

Seventy **ordained males** were chosen as members of the **governing council** of Israel. This body was composed of representative **men** chosen from all twelve tribes (Numbers 11:16, 17, 24). Thus all of Israel was represented in this **governing** body. Regarding the seventy Ellen White remarks:

*"Later, when choosing seventy **elders** to share with him the responsibilities of **leadership**, Moses was careful to select, as his helpers, **men** possessing dignity, sound judgment, and experience. In his charge to these **elders** at the time of their **ordination**, he outlined some of the qualifications that fit a **man** to be a **wise ruler** in the church." AA, p. 94*

Notice several **important details** in this quotation:

- First, the function of the elders was to serve in positions of **leadership** for the **entire** congregation. They were to help Moses in the administration of Israel (see Numbers 11:16, 17).

- Second, the **leaders** of this governing council are specifically called **elders**.
- Third, the elders were all **men**.
- Fourth, the elders were **ordained** for their office.
- Finally, this Old Testament arrangement served as a pattern for **men** to be wise rulers in the New Testament **church**. In other words, the role of the Old Testament elders was not merely **descriptive** but also **prescriptive** of the qualifications for New Testament elders.

All Male Priesthood

According to the specifications laid down by the Lord an **all-male priesthood** from the house of Aaron was chosen by God to serve the spiritual needs of the congregation of Israel (Numbers 18:1, 2).

It bears noting that God expected this priestly order **to be respected**. When **Gideon** (Judges 8:24ff; PP 555, 556), **Korah** (Numbers 16:3), **Saul** (1 Samuel 13:8-14), **Jeroboam** (1 Kings 12:31) and **Uzziah** (2 Chronicles 26:16-21) subverted God's requirements and assumed priestly duties contrary to God's explicit instructions, the punishment was swift and drastic and the results disastrous.

Has God's plan changed in the New Dispensation?

*"The **same injunctions** that rested upon ancient Israel rest upon God's people now, to be separate from the world. The **great Head** of the church **has not changed**. The experience of Christians in these days is **much like** the travels of ancient Israel." HL, p. 282*

*"Since His ascension Christ has carried forward His work on the earth **by chosen ambassadors**, through whom He speaks to the children of men and ministers to their needs. The **great Head** of the church superintends His work through the instrumentality of **men ordained** by God to act as His **representatives**." AA, p. 360*

*"The people should not regard their ministers as mere public speakers and orators, but as **Christ's ambassadors**, receiving their wisdom and power from the **great Head** of the church. To slight and disregard the word spoken by Christ's representative is showing disrespect, not only to the **man**, but also to the Master who has sent **him**. **He** is in **Christ's stead**; and the voice of the Savior should be heard in **his representative**." GW, p.92*

All Male Levites

An **all-male group of Levites** was chosen and **ordained** to help the priests perform various spiritual functions in the sanctuary service (Numbers 8:10; 18:1, 2). In the history of the church the function of the Levites would be similar to the function of the deacons, and the deacons, like the Levites, were ordained by the laying on of hands.

Numbers 8:10, 11:

*“So you shall bring the Levites before the Lord, and the children of Israel **shall lay their hands on the Levites**; and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord like a wave offering from the children of Israel, that they may perform the work of the Lord.” (Numbers 8:10, 11)*

All Male Kings

One **looks in vain** for an example of a legitimate female king in the Old Testament. There were a total of **42 kings** that ruled in Israel and Judah from the time of the establishment of the monarchy in the days of Saul till the Babylonian captivity. The lone woman who ruled was **a usurper** of the throne, whose name was Athaliah.

The king was to be the visible **representative of God** among the people. In the monarchy he took the **place that had been occupied by Moses**. In fact, he was required to carry with him at all times the Book of the Law written by Moses:

*“Directions were given that **he who should sit on the throne** of Israel should “write him a copy” of the statutes of Jehovah “in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites.” “It shall be with **him**,” the Lord said, “and **he** shall read therein all the days of **his** life: that **he** may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: that **his** heart be not lifted up above **his** brethren, and that **he** turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that **he** may prolong **his** days in **his** kingdom, **he**, and his children, in the midst of Israel.” Deuteronomy 17:18-20.” *PK, p. 52**

Old and New Covenant

Those who favor women’s ordination have suggested that this impressive list of male leaders in the Old Testament was due to the fact that the Old Covenant featured a **less than ideal patriarchal** system but that under the **New Covenant** things have changed and as a result men and women can share **every leadership role** in the church equally because the **priesthood of all believers** has overturned the old order of things. Thus all of the Old Testament evidence that has been presented thus far is brushed aside as **descriptive** rather than **prescriptive**.

All Male Apostles

How about the New Covenant? The Spirit of Prophecy clearly explains that twelve **male apostles** were appointed by Jesus and **ordained** by the laying on of hands. Twelve males were chosen **intentionally** by Jesus because they were to continue the legacy of the **twelve male founders** of Old Testament Israel.

Ellen White makes this point clear when she states “*the twelve apostles stand as representatives of the gospel church.*” *AA, p. 19*

If Jesus had **wanted us to understand** that under the ‘new system’ inclusiveness required that the founding leaders of the church should be male and female he could have chosen **six men and six women** as apostles—or at least one woman! But He did not!

Those who favor women’s ordination claim that Jesus did not choose women apostles because it would have unnecessarily **upset the fabric of the Jewish culture** of the day. But this is **pure speculation** and has **no foundation in the Bible text**. Jesus did **not hesitate to question** the culture of His day and on some occasions he turned it **upside down**. Jesus was clearly **counter-cultural** in many regards and frequently upset the fabric of Jewish culture. Could we perhaps even call Him revolutionary?

One scholar admits that Jesus was revolutionary in the way that He treated women but then speculates that by doing this Jesus *‘pointed the way forward to women’s ordination.’* But are such **trajectory hermeneutics** so? Is there any proof in the New Testament of such a trajectory? Was the selection of twelve male apostles simply a relic passed along as a custom from a **prejudiced patriarchal past** to be replaced in due time? Did Jesus really point the way forward to women’s ordination by the revolutionary way in which He treated women **contrary to the conventions** of His day? Did Jesus simply wish to avoid upsetting the Jewish culture of His day and thus ordained twelve **male** apostles?

The simple fact is that Jesus went against the conventions of His day in the way that he treated **all** the **marginalized** of society—children, Samaritans, Gentiles, publicans, sinners, harlots, lepers, blind, lame, etc. Did the revolutionary treatment of these people by Jesus mean that He was **pointing the way forward** to their ordination? To answer yes to this question would be ludicrous! The fact is that Jesus was revolutionary in the way that He treated **people**, period.

The women’s ordination lobby argues that if the male gender of the apostles requires that the rulers of the church be male, then the fact that they were Jewish must mean that the rulers of the church must also be Jewish. This argument appears logical until one realizes that the ministry of Jesus **to the Jews** did not end until the stoning of Stephen (at the conclusion of the 70 week prophecy) three and a half years after Pentecost and even then the gospel did not go to the Gentiles until several years later when Peter was given the vision of the unclean creatures (Acts 10, 11)!

How then could Jesus have chosen a Gentile apostle? He could not have because He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and probation had not yet closed for them (Matthew 15:24; 10:5, 6). Bottom line: Jesus could not have chosen Gentiles at this point because there were none to choose from. Even at Pentecost all of the believers who were present were Jews from the Diaspora (Acts 2:5).

But there were plenty of Jewish women who could have been chosen as apostles but they were not. Why not choose His mother or Mary and Martha the sisters of Lazarus or Salome or one of the other prominent women who ministered to Him? Jesus did not have to wait

for the apostles to be male but he did have to wait until the door of the Jewish theocracy closed before He could include Gentiles. Simply put, there were no Gentile men available when Jesus chose the twelve but there were plenty of women available so the apparently logical argument of the women's ordination lobby is proved to be deficient.

What about Junias? Was she not a full-fledged apostle in her own right? First of all, there is no certainty whether the name Junias refers to a male or a female. Second, the phrase 'of note among the apostles is ambiguous'. It could mean that this person was an apostle or that the person was well known to the apostles. Notably, all other apostles in the NT were males. One ambiguous text cannot be used to sustain the ordination of women (see my fuller treatment of Junias in the paper I wrote for TOSC).

Sending out the Seventy

In **Luke 10** we find a description of **seventy men** that Jesus chose to help him in His task.

*"After these things the Lord **appointed** seventy others also, and sent them **two by two** before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go."*

There is no doubt that the seventy that Jesus sent out were **all males**. This is indicated by the consistent use of the **masculine** personal pronoun in the passage. Ellen White confirms that the seventy were all of the male gender:

*"Calling the twelve about Him, Jesus bade them go out two and two through the towns and villages. None were sent forth alone, but **brother** was associated with **brother**, friend with friend. Thus they could help and encourage each other, counseling and praying together, each one's strength supplementing the other's weakness. In the **same manner** He afterward **sent forth the seventy**."*

*"The seventy were to go forth to do a work similar to that which was being done by the twelve. They were all endowed with supernatural endowments as the seal of their heavenly calling. They were **ordained** to proclaim that which Jesus at the beginning of his ministry had bidden them to keep secret." *Signs of the Times*, December 10, 1894*

Successor of Judas

When Judas betrayed Christ and committed suicide, his successor was chosen from **two men** who were chosen from a **larger pool** of men:

*"Therefore, of these **men** (andros) who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these **must** become a witness with us of His resurrection." (Acts 1:21, 22)*

This occasion would have provided a **golden opportunity** for the apostles to be **inclusive** and choose a woman as a member of the council of the twelve. After all, **Mary** the mother of Jesus was present there along with **other influential women**.

Acts 1:14:

*“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the **women** and **Mary** the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.”*

*“From these scriptures we learn that the Lord has certain **men** to fill **certain positions**. God will teach His people to move carefully and to make wise choice of **men** who will not betray sacred trusts. If in Christ's day the believers needed to be guarded in their choice of **men** for positions of responsibility, **we who are living in this time** certainly need to move with great discretion. We are to present every case before God and in earnest prayer ask Him to choose for us.” 9T, p. 264*

Seven Male Deacons

As we have noted before, there is evidence that the roles of deacons and deaconesses in the early church were **complimentary yet different**. It is significant that the **seven deacons** that were originally ordained (Acts 6) were all of the **male gender**. Concerning the work overload that was carried by the twelve and their need of help, Ellen White explains that the church leaders at that time were men:

*“No one **man**, or even one set of **men**, could continue to bear these burdens alone, without imperiling the future prosperity of the church.” AA, p. 88*

She further states that the twelve **male** apostles were the spiritual leaders that had **oversight** of the church:

*“The time had come, the **apostles** stated, when the **spiritual leaders** having the **oversight [this is the meaning of the word episkopos]** of the church should be relieved from the task of distributing to the poor and from similar burdens, so that they might be free to carry forward the work of preaching the gospel.” AA, p. 89*

Acts 6:2, 3:

*“Then the **twelve** summoned the multitude of the **disciples** and said: “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, **brethren [adelphos not adelfe]**, seek out from **among you** seven **men** of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*

Some scholars have questioned whether these men were **actually deacons**. Ellen White harbors no doubt:

*"This advice was followed, and by prayer and the laying on of hands, seven chosen **men** were solemnly set apart for their duties as **deacons**."* AA, p. 89

*"May the Lord impress upon the minds and hearts of all connected with the sacred work of God, the importance of ascertaining whether those who are to minister as **deacons** and **elders** are suitable **men** to be entrusted with the flock of God."* ZBC, pp. 914, 915

*"There will come into this work **men** of varied temperaments, weak on some points. **Men** chosen as **elders** of the church or as **deacons** will be tempted on some points; but whatever the temptation may be, they may conquer it."* 5MR, p. 448

Ellen White has only **one statement** where she mentions deaconesses. In writing to A. T. Jones Ellen White stated:

*"You are not to set such an example that women will feel at liberty to tell you the grievances of their home life, and to draw upon your sympathies. When a woman comes to you with her troubles, tell her plainly to **go to her sisters**, to tell her troubles to the **deaconesses of the church**. Tell her that she is out of place in opening her troubles to any man, for men are easily beguiled and tempted. Tell the one who has thrown her case upon you that God has not placed this burden **upon any man**. You are not wise to take these burdens upon yourself. It is not your **appointed work**."* 21MR, pp. 97, 98

This statement is telling for several reasons:

- First, there is a **clear distinction** between the church office of pastor of the church and deaconess.
- Second, the deaconesses as **sisters** are not in the same group **as the deacons**.

The noted Bible commentator, **Adam Clarke**, described the distinction between the roles of male deacons and female deaconesses in the early church in similar terms to Ellen White:

*"There were deaconesses in the primitive church, whose business it was to attend the **female** converts at baptism; to instruct the catechumens, or persons who were candidates for baptism: to visit the sick, and those who were in prison; and, in short, perform those religious offices, for the **female part** of the church, which could **not with propriety be performed by men**. They were chosen in general out of the most experienced of the church; and were ordinarily widows, who had borne children. Some ancient constitutions required them to be forty, others fifty, and others sixty years of age. It is evident that **they were ordained** to their office, by the imposition of the **hands of the bishop**; and the form of prayer used on the occasion is extant in the apostolic constitutions."* *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 31, 1856

Paul and Barnabas

Paul and Barnabas, **both males**, were set apart for the gospel ministry by the laying on of hands:

*“Both Paul and Barnabas had been laboring as ministers of Christ, and God had abundantly blessed their efforts, but neither of them had previously been **formally ordained** to the gospel ministry by prayer and the **laying on of hands**. They were now authorized by the church not only to teach the truth but to baptize and to organize churches, being invested with **full ecclesiastical authority**.” *The Story of Redemption*, p. 303*

Jerusalem Council

*“The entire body of Christians was not called to vote upon the question. The “apostles and elders,” **men** of influence and judgment, framed and issued the decree, which was thereupon generally accepted by the Christian churches. Not all, however, were pleased with the decision; there was a faction of **ambitious and self-confident brethren who disagreed with it**. These men assumed to engage in the work on their own responsibility. They indulged in much murmuring and faultfinding, proposing new plans and seeking to pull down the work of **the men** whom God had ordained to teach the gospel message. From the first the church has had such obstacles to meet and ever will have till the close of time.” *AA*, pp. 196, 197*

Paul’s Criteria

According to Paul the elder/bishop must be the **husband of one wife** and have the ability to wisely **rule his own home**.

Some pro-ordination scholars have argued that the expression ‘husband of one wife’ really means ‘faithful to his wife’ (CJV), ‘faithful in marriage’ (CEV), or ‘married only once’ (NRSV). Upon closer inspection it becomes clear that these translations are really interpretations rather than translations. The Greek uses the gender specific words **gune** (woman) and **aner** (man) and the word ‘**faithful**’ (*pistos*) does **not appear anywhere** in the text even though Paul uses the word at least twelve times in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. Further, the **CJV** is inconsistent because it translates ‘faithful to his wife’ in Timothy but translates the identical expression ‘the husband of but one wife’ in Titus 1:6.

Timothy’s Ordination

Regarding the ordination of Timothy we are told:

*“Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the **council of elders** laid their **hands on you**.” (1 Timothy 4:14, ESV; see also 2 Timothy 1:6)*

At least three things stand out in this text:

- Timothy was set apart by the **laying on of hands**.
- There was a **the body of elders** who laid hands on Timothy.
- Timothy and the council of elders were of the **male gender**.

Elders in every City

Acts 14:23 that it was the custom of Paul and Barnabas to appoint elders in **every city where** they visited. But the question is: Were these elders exclusively of the male gender and were they set apart by the laying on of hands?

There is strong contextual evidence that elders were **set apart by the laying on of hands**. In 1 Timothy 5:22 the apostle Paul admonished his star pupil: *“Do not lay hands on anyone hastily.”* The context makes it quite clear that the apostle Paul was referring to elders when he wrote to Timothy because in the immediately preceding verses the apostle refers to the honor that should be rendered to them:

1 Timothy 5:17

*“Let the **elders** who **rule** well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine”*

The idea of **rulership** of male leaders in the church is bolstered by **Hebrews 13:17**:

*“**Obey** them that have the **rule** over you, and **submit** yourselves: for they [autoi: masculine gender] watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17).*

Were those upon whom hands were to be laid of the male gender? The text strongly suggests that they were. The word ‘**anyone**’ is gender specific, it is a singular, masculine adjective. It is inconceivable that the apostle Paul would have told Timothy that the elder must be the **husband of one wife** in one place and then turn right around and give **contrary counsel** in another place. Furthermore, Ellen White confirms that this text refers to the ordination of elders and that they should be of the male gender:

*“The apostle says: ‘Lay hands suddenly on no **man**.’ In the days of the apostles the ministers of God did not dare to rely upon their own judgment in selecting or accepting **men** to take the solemn and sacred position of mouthpiece for God. They selected the **men** whom their judgment would accept, and then they placed them before the Lord to see if He would accept them to go forth as His representatives. **No less than this should be done now**. In many places we meet **men** who have been hurried into responsible positions **as elders of the church** when they are not qualified for such a position. They have not proper government over themselves. Their influence is not good. The church is in trouble continually in*

consequence of the defective character of the leader. **Hands have been laid too suddenly upon these men.**" *4T*, pp. 406, 407

Ordination of Bishops

Before I quote **1 Timothy 3:1-7** a word needs to be said about the meaning of the word bishop. The original meaning of the word is that of someone who **oversees** and thus the word implies a **supervisory role**. It bears noting that the word supervisor literally means 'to look at from above' and according to the dictionary it means "to observe and direct the execution of a task," and "to observe and direct the work of someone". Thus the equivalent words for *episkopos* would be 'supervisor or 'overseer.' The function of the bishop was to oversee or supervise the work. Synonyms for this word are: 'oversee, superintend or manage'. Now that we have defined the meaning of the word we will focus primarily on the gender issue. In 1 Timothy 3:1-7 the apostle Paul was gender specific when he referred to those who were to oversee or supervise the affairs of the church:

*"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop [episkopos, overseer], he desires a good work. A bishop [episkopos] then must be blameless, **the husband of one wife**, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who **rules** his own house well, having his children **in submission** with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his **own house**, how will he take care of the **church of God?**); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." (1 Timothy 3:1-7)*

We don't even have to dig for clues in this passage on the gender issue. It is unnecessary to be a Greek scholar to understand three things:

- The bishop/elder must be the **husband of one wife**.
- **He** must have his **children in subjection**.
- Ruling his own house wisely **qualifies him** to carry on a supervisory role in the church.

Some have underlined the fact that in the Greek the expression 'if a man' is indefinite and **gender neutral** and really means 'if anyone'. They have further emphasized that the repeated use of the masculine pronoun 'he' in the translations is **not in the original**. Both of these statements are true. However, the translation is correct because the entire passage is qualified by the expression 'husband of one wife.' In other words, the entire passage has the husband in view. This is why it was disturbing to me that in a women's ordination service in the North England Conference a conference officer, when reading from I Timothy 3 took the liberty to change the Bible text stating that the bishop must be 'the wife of one husband.' This is not what the text says. The officer intentionally changed the words of the Bible!

Ordination of Elders

Now let's turn to **Titus 1:5-9** where the apostle Paul addresses his pupil, Titus:

*"For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should **set in order** the things that are lacking, and **appoint elders** in **every city** as I **commanded you** -- if a man is blameless, the **husband of one wife**, having **faithful children** not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop [episkopos] must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict."*

Once again the word 'man' is a rendering of the indefinite and gender neutral 'if anyone'. And the masculine personal pronouns in verse 9 are not in the original but are supplied by the translators. This might lead someone to believe that the passage is gender neutral but once again the translation is correct because the entire passage is **qualified** by the fact that the elders in view must be the **husbands** of one wife. Thus the entire passage is to be understood as **gender specific**.

Was this ordination practice something new or did it have Old Testament roots? Did Paul embrace it from a pagan background or was it a continuation of a long standing practice among the Jews? Ellen White answers:

*"The **same principles** of piety and justice that were to guide the **rulers** among God's people in the time of **Moses and of David** were also to be followed by those given the **oversight** of the newly organized church of God in the **gospel dispensation**. In the work of setting things in order in **all** the churches, and ordaining suitable **men** to act as **officers**, the apostles held to the high standards of **leadership** outlined in the Old Testament Scriptures. They maintained that he who is called to stand in a position of **leading responsibility** in the church "must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." Titus 1:7-9." AA, p. 95*

Meeting at Ephesus

As the apostle Paul was nearing the end of his life he called a meeting of the **Ephesian elders** at Miletus knowing that he would see them no more (Acts 20:17). When they arrived the apostle shared a brief biographical sketch of his self-sacrificing labors among them (Acts 20:18-27). Then the apostle exhorted the elders with the following words:

*"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers [episkopoi]**, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not*

sparing the flock. Also from **among yourselves men** [the gender specific word *aner*] will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears." (Acts 20:28-33)

Several facts stand out as we read this passage:

- These persons were **elders** who must have been **ordained** to their office because Paul had explicitly told Timothy to ordain elders in every city
- The elders were **overseers or bishops**, that is, they had a supervisory role
- They were to be **shepherds or pastors** to the flock and they were to protect the sheep that God has committed to their care
- They were **all males** as indicated by the **gender specific** word *aner* in verse 30

Ellen White confirms this fact:

*"On arriving at Miletus, however, he learned that the ship would be detained for a short time, and he immediately sent a message to the **elders** of the Ephesian church to come to him. The distance was but thirty miles, and the apostle hoped to secure at least a few hours' intercourse with these **men** upon whom the prosperity of the church must largely depend." LP, p. 198*

Baptism and the Ordinances

Writing about the proliferation of false teachers in the early history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen White explained how the door could be closed to them:

*"I saw that this door at which the enemy comes in to perplex and trouble the flock can be shut. I inquired of the angel how it could be closed. He said, 'The church must flee to **God's Word** and become established upon **gospel order**, which has been overlooked and neglected.' This is indispensably necessary in order to bring the church **into the unity** of the faith. I saw that in the apostles' day the church was in danger of being deceived and imposed upon by false teachers. Therefore the **brethren** chose **men** who had given good evidence that they were capable of **ruling well their own house** and preserving **order in their own families**, and who could enlighten those who were in darkness. Inquiry was made of God concerning these, and then, according to the mind of the church and the Holy Ghost, they were set apart by the **laying on of hands**. Having received their **commission from God** and having the **approbation of the church**, they went forth **baptizing** in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and **administering the ordinances** of the Lord's house, often waiting upon the saints by presenting them the emblems of the broken body and spilt blood of the crucified Savior, to keep fresh in the memory of God's beloved children His sufferings and death." EW, pp. 100, 101*

Several important conclusions emerge from this early statement by Ellen White:

- **Gospel order** is an indispensable ingredient in the preservation of the unity of the church and this gospel order is clearly revealed in **God's Word**.
- In the New Testament church, gender specific **brethren** chose gender specific **men** who could rule well their own households and preserve order there. After all, how could they preserve gospel order in the church if their family was in disorder?
- These leaders were set apart by the **laying on of hands**.
- The leaders first received their **commissioning** from God and then the commission was **approved** and **confirmed** by the church.
- Those **men** who had been ordained by the laying on of hands now were **authorized to baptize** and to officiate the **Lords' Supper**.

Paul's Concern for the Future of the Church

Ellen White has a very important passage where she describes Paul's concern for the future of the church. At this point Paul was almost at the end of his career and he was concerned about the **preservation of the truth from generation to generation**. Here is the gender specific statement:

*"Paul gave a solemn charge to Timothy that has the **same importance** in this day **as it did when given**. He said: 'And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful **men**, who shall be able to **teach others also**.' This injunction we must cherish, as did Timothy, as a sacred trust from the apostle. Paul saw that the night in which he could no longer work, was fast hastening upon him. He was to die a martyr's death, and the precious light given him of God was not to lose any of its brightness, but to be **committed to others** as a rich legacy. Timothy was to **train up others** to succeed him in the ministry of the gospel. He was not to think that his work was done in merely teaching the truth to unbelievers; he was to impart the knowledge he had received, to repeat the precious instruction he had heard from the lips of Paul, and to record the things which he himself had witnessed, that the light of truth might be **passed along** to others who were faithful, and who should be **ordained** to the ministry. These, in their turn, were to realize their responsibility, and **teach others also**, and thus the sacred truth of the gospel would be communicated **from one to another** throughout the ages.*

*Timothy was to have discernment that would enable him to choose **men** of fidelity and integrity, for he was to commit the word of God to **faithful men**. The **men** to whom the solemn truth of God was to be given in trust were not to be self-seekers, but **men** who would lose sight of self, and have an eye single to the glory of God, and work for the salvation of souls. They were to be willing to do everything in their power to advance the Redeemer's kingdom. They must not only be capable of comprehending the evidences of the truth themselves, but they must be able from their knowledge and experience to impart truth to others; they must be apt to teach. This was the precious light that Paul had received through*

inspiration, and it was his work to see that **no part of this instruction should be lost**. He charged Timothy with the responsibility of committing it to **faithful men**, who would in their turn **transmit** the precious legacy of truth, pure and uncorrupted, **to others**. The words, the ideas, of men were not to be mingled with the sacred truth of God in any way to lessen its divine importance. **Men** of ability, of humility--**men** who had a conscientious realization of the fact that they were not to misstate the lessons given them by Paul, **were to be chosen**, who would not take from or add to the sacred teaching of Scripture. Mark the care with which Paul guards the matter so that the light and knowledge of the gospel shall be imparted in its purity. Timothy was instructed to commit it to **faithful men**, who would seek **others** equally faithful, so that the precious truth might **reach even to our day**, and shine upon our pathway in undimmed brightness.

The New Testament was not then written, therefore there was need of the greatest caution, that the teachings of Christ might be imparted without adulteration. What a responsibility rests upon the **chosen men** of God **for this time**; for they, too, are to train up others to **succeed them** in the ministry, and they are also to see to it that self does not mingle with their work.

The work of the ministry is no common work. Christ is withdrawn only from the eye of sense, but he is as truly present by his Spirit as when he was visibly present on earth. The time that has elapsed since his ascension has brought no interruption in the fulfillment of his parting promise,--"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." God has provided light and truth for the world by having placed it in the **keeping of faithful men**, who in **succession** have committed it **to others** through **all generations** up to the **present time**. These **men** have derived **their authority in an unbroken line** from the first teachers of the faith. Christ remains the **true minister** of his church, **but he delegates** his power to his under-shepherds, to his **chosen ministers**, who have the treasure of his grace in earthen vessels. God superintends the affairs of his servants, and they are placed in his work by divine appointment.

The work of the messengers the Lord sends to earth is not understood, and the message of truth is too lightly regarded. The energizing presence of Christ is not felt as it should be among the **ministers** of God. They do not sacrifice all to him as they should; but Paul further charged Timothy to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." **All Christians** are represented as soldiers of the cross of Christ, but **especially this figure applies to the ministers of the gospel**. They are to fight under the banner of Prince Emmanuel, and wage war against his enemies, trusting in Christ, for he is the Captain of their salvation. The soldiers of Christ must prove themselves faithful, they must have courage, and be willing to endure hardness. They must expect to have hard things to meet, and they must accustom themselves to bear burdens with patience and fortitude, always maintaining and representing the simplicity of Christ." *ST*, April 7, 1890

Peter's View of the Matter

The apostle Peter gave some wise counsel to church and conference officers:

*"The **elders [presbuteroi]** who are among you I exhort, I who am a **fellow elder** and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: **Shepherd** the flock of God which is among you, serving as **overseers [episkopoi]**, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the **Chief Shepherd** appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." (1 Peter 5:1-4)*

Several facts can be gathered from this passage:

- Peter was an elder **among elders**.
- The elder is also an **overseer [episkopos]** of the church.
- The elder is **also a pastor** because the word 'shepherd' simply means 'pastor'.
- Jesus is the Chief Shepherd and the elders are the **under shepherds**.

But the question is: Was Peter referring to a gender specific group? Ellen White provides the answer:

*"The organization of the church at Jerusalem was to serve as **a model for the organization of churches in every other place** where messengers of truth should win converts to the gospel. Those to whom was given the responsibility of the **general oversight [the meaning of episkopos]** of the church were not to lord it over God's heritage, but, as **wise shepherds**, were to 'feed the flock of God, . . . being ensamples to the flock' (1 Peter 5:2, 3); and the **deacons** were to be 'men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.' These **men** were to take their position unitedly on the side of right and to maintain it with firmness and decision. Thus they would have a uniting influence upon the entire flock." AA, p. 91*

Ellen White explicitly confirms several things about this passage in 1 Peter 5:

- Peter was writing to the leaders who had the **general oversight** of the Jerusalem church.
- The model of organization of the Jerusalem church was serve as the model for the organization of churches in **every other place**.
- The elders were all of the **male gender**.
- Elders, overseers [bishops], and shepherds are three ways of describing the **same role** in the church.

But did Ellen White still apply this passage to individuals of the male gender **in her day**?

*"**Pastors** are needed--faithful shepherds--who will not flatter God's people, nor treat them harshly, but who will feed them with the bread of life--**men** who in their lives feel daily the*

converting power of the Holy Spirit and who cherish a strong, unselfish love toward those for whom they labor. AA, p. 526

*“In gaining a preparation for the ministry, young **men** should be associated with older ministers. Those who have gained an experience in active service are to take young, inexperienced workers with them into the harvest-field, teaching them how to labor successfully for the conversion of souls. Kindly and affectionately these older workers are to help the younger ones to prepare for the work to which the Lord may call them. And the young **men** in training should respect the counsel of their instructors, honoring their devotion, and remembering that their years of labor have given them wisdom. Wise counsel **for church and conference officers** is given by Peter in the following words: (1 Peter 5:2-4 quoted)” GW, p. 101*

While Ellen White underlines that ministers should be men, she also makes it clear that both men and women can serve as missionaries:

*“There are needed not only **ministers** but those who can act as missionaries--**men and women** of good understanding, of moral worth with moral backbone, who can circulate around among the people and shed light, precious light, everywhere.” Letter 15, 1879*

The New Jerusalem

The breastplate of Aaron had the names of the twelve sons of Jacob. In these twelve the entire congregation of Israel was included. The breastplate of Jesus has the names of the twelve apostles where the entire congregation of the church is included. The New Jerusalem will have the names of **twelve males** on the gates and **twelve males** on the foundations and twelve males will sit on **twelve thrones** judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). Does this fact exclude women? Of course not! Women are not any more excluded than the rest of the men who were not sons of Jacob or members of the twelve apostles. Regarding the border of the garment of the high priest, Ellen White remarks:

“The border was formed of a variety of precious stones, the same that form the twelve foundations of the City of God.” PP, p. 351

Ellen White Links male leadership in the home with leadership in the church.

*“**He** who is engaged in the work of the gospel ministry must be faithful in **his** family life. It is as essential that as a **father he** should improve the talents God has given **him** for the purpose of making the **home** a symbol of the heavenly family, as that in the work of the ministry, **he** should make use of **his** God given powers to win souls for the **church**. As the **priest** in the **home**, and as the ambassador of Christ in the **church**, **he** should exemplify in **his** life the character of Christ. **He** must be faithful in watching for souls as one that must give an account. In **his** service there must be seen no carelessness and inattentive work. God will not*

serve with the sins of **men** who have not a clear sense of the sacred responsibility involved in accepting a position as **pastor of a church**. **He** who fails to be a faithful, discerning shepherd in the **home**, will surely fail of being a faithful **shepherd of the flock** of God in the **church**.” Manuscript 42, 1903, pp. 1, 2 (“The Training of Children,” typed May 4, 1903) 6MR, p. 49

If a **man** does not show wisdom in the management of the **church in his own house**, how can **he** show wisdom in the management of the **larger church** outside? How can **he** bear the responsibilities which mean so much, if **he** cannot govern **his** own children? Wise discrimination is not shown in this matter. God's blessing will not rest upon **the minister** who neglects the education and training of **his** children. **He** has a sacred trust, and **he** should in no case set before church members a defective example in the management of **his** home” Manuscript 104, 1901. (“The Need of Reform,” October 8, 1901) 5MR, p. 449

#5 - Reflections on the Hermeneutics of Women's Ordination

The Rio Document

On October 12, 1986 the General Conference Executive Committee gathered at the Autumn Council in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, voted a document titled "Methods of Bible Study". Though the document was accepted unanimously and enthusiastically by the Executive Committee members some Adventist theologians, after the fact, vigorously protested its approval. What was the reason for their protest and why did the Executive Committee feel that it was necessary to bring up such a document for a vote?

The Rio Document described two radically opposed methods of interpreting the Bible, the *historical critical* (used by liberal scholars) and the *historical-grammatical* (the conservative method used by the Seventh-day Adventist Church). As was to be expected, the Rio document encouraged the use of the historical-grammatical method, but strongly discouraged the use of the historical-critical method even in a *modified form*. Unfortunately some of our very own Seventh-day Adventist theologians were using the historical-critical method in a *modified form* and this was the reason for their protest and what made it necessary for the representatives of the world church to take a stand! Here is one key portion of the document:

"In recent decades the most prominent method in biblical studies has been known as the historical-critical method. Scholars who use this method, as classically formulated, operate on the basis of presuppositions, which, prior to studying the biblical text, reject the reliability of accounts of miracles, and other supernatural events narrated in the Bible. *Even a modified use* of this method that retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason is unacceptable to Adventists."

The NAD Proposal

Now fast forward to January of 2014. When the representatives of the thirteen divisions of the world church presented their reports to the third session of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), those who presented the NAD report in favor of women's

ordination, advocated a *third way* of interpreting the Bible which they claimed was merely a tweaking of the historical-grammatical method. Actually, a careful examination of their method indicates that it is an *accommodation or compromise* between the historical-critical method and the historical-grammatical.

This *modified* hermeneutical method the NAD representatives called the ***principle-based-historical-cultural method***. The introduction of this *modified* method led to some animated discussion at the third session of TOSC. When some committee members who were opposed to women's ordination suggested that the NAD delegation had *modified* the hermeneutical method that was voted in the Rio Document, the suggestion was immediately and energetically denied even to the point of being deeply offended that such a suggestion should even be made!

As I listened to the NAD report and later read the book that they prepared, it became patently clear to me that the hermeneutical method that they were proposing was at odds with the traditional Seventh-day Adventist method of interpreting the Bible. Although the proponents affirmed that they were merely fine tuning the historical-grammatical method, they were, in actual fact introducing a *modified* use or *softer version* of the historical-critical method, a method that sets human reason above the Biblical text and suggests that extra-Biblical sources are indispensable for a proper interpretation of certain Biblical texts.

Those who use the historical-grammatical method believe that the Holy Spirit has placed *within Scripture itself* everything that is needed to correctly interpret its various parts. In practical terms, this means, for example, that we do not need to appeal to the extra-biblical Ephesian cult of Artemis to explain why Paul said that 'man was created first and then woman'. It is sufficient to go to Genesis where we find the source of Paul's remark. The principle that the Bible is *self-contained* and its own interpreter, is called the analogy of Scripture or *Sola Scriptura*.

Having read thousands of pages of evangelical literature in preparation for TOSC, I was amazed at how many of the methods, arguments and conclusions of the NAD document in favor of women's ordination were eerily similar to those that had been previously used by evangelical feminists. As I listened to the NAD presenters I asked myself: If the NAD manner of handling the controversial passages on women's ordination is correct, why were none of these passages interpreted in this fashion until the decade of the 60's when evangelical feminism began a serious drumbeat to ordain women?

Extra-Biblical Arguments

NAD leaders and scholars who support women's ordination have given many reasons for their view. It is affirmed that justice and mercy require it. It is said that North American culture makes it necessary, the same argument that has been used to justify the use of the

wedding ring. It is further stated that the witness of the Seventh-day Adventist church in North America will be compromised if the practice is not approved. Others have gone so far as to suggest that the Latter Rain can never fall until women are ordained. It has also become customary for the NAD delegation to highlight the testimonies of women who have been successful in ministry thus arguing that if these women have been so successful, then women should be ordained along with the men. It bears noting that none of these arguments are based on a 'thus saith the Lord'!

The Art of Explaining Away

But how does the NAD delegation handle texts like 1 Timothy 2:11, 12, 1 Corinthians 11:3, 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 where being of the male gender is required for pastoral leadership in the church? The answer is that these texts must be explained away or reinterpreted by an appeal to culture, to other supposedly contradictory texts (for example pitting what Paul writes about women in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 against what he says in 1 Corinthians 11:5), by quoting what other scholars have written, by creating or ignoring the contexts of biblical passages and by a reinterpretation of the meaning of biblical words. I believe that what is simple and clear in the Bible has been obfuscated by subtle and crafty reasoning.

Evangelical scholar, Wayne Grudem explains how those who favor women's ordination have explained away the clear texts of Scripture that require male leadership in the home and in the church:

"What about all those Bible verses that talk about male leadership in home and church? Something has to be done with them, so for the last thirty years evangelical feminist scholars have devised thousands of pages of arguments attempting to show that those parts of the Bible *don't apply to us today*, or *don't mean* what people have always thought they mean, or *aren't part of the Bible*, or are *contradicted by experience*, or are *simply wrong* When that happens, little by little, step by step, colleges and churches and denominations start to slide toward liberalism." Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path Toward Liberalism?* p. 17, emphasis supplied.

A Dire Warning

Grudem then warns Christian theologians about the dangers of using such arguments:

"If Scripture-eroding arguments go unchallenged in your circles, how can you protect your church or your organization in the future? While you *personally* may not change much else in your beliefs, *your students* and others who follow your leadership will take the principles you have used much further and will abandon much *more than you expect*." Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path Toward Liberalism?* p. 21, emphasis supplied.

An Analogous Example

An illustration of the truthfulness of Grudem's remarks can be seen in the slow and steady degradation of the quality of worship music in many Seventh-day Adventist circles. Although Ellen White warned in 1900 that just before the close of probation at *officially organized* Adventist meetings there would be 'shouting, with drums, music, and dancing' such an assertion almost seemed unrealistic until recently when drums, oscillating colored lights, smoke, electric guitars and dancing were seen on stage at *official* NAD youth events without a whimper of protest from leadership!

This downward slide of Adventist worship styles did not happen overnight. It was the result of giving 'here a little and there a little'. It was a slow and persistent process that took decades to happen but it has! Though the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Annual Council (in 1974), give clear guidelines regarding what constitutes appropriate worship music, all types of secular music genres have been embraced in the church—rock, jazz, merengue, rap, you name it—all in the name of retaining the youth in the church and speaking to contemporary culture. The clear Biblical and Spirit of Prophecy counsel, of course, must be ignored or explained away. Something similar has happened in the debate over women's ordination.

Are the Passages Clear?

Those who are opposed to women's ordination to pastoral leadership believe that passages such as 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Corinthians 11:1-15 are *clear and easy to understand* when they are read by the lay person in the pew. Expressions such as 'husband of one wife', 'the man is the head of the woman' and 'I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over the man' are understood by the common church member just as they read. It is worth noting that there was no dispute over the clarity of these passages for close to two thousand years of church history until the evangelical feminist movement began providing new interpretations of them at the beginning of the decade of the sixties.

In contrast, those who favor women's ordination affirm that these passages are *not as clear* as they appear from a simple reading of the text and therefore they must pass through the filter of the theological experts in order to be properly understood. The consensus among those who favor women's ordination seems to be that these passages applied primarily to the *local situation* that Paul was addressing, and therefore their counsel applies only to the original recipients and not to us today.

Is Ordination Pagan?

Some of those who favor women's ordination have claimed that ordination is not even a Biblical practice. They do their utmost to prove that the word 'ordain' does not really refer to setting someone apart by the laying on of hands, this despite the fact that the apostle Paul clearly states in 1 Timothy 5:22: "do not lay hands on anyone hastily".

Some women's ordination advocates further affirm that the word 'ordination' (Latin, *ordenatio*) had its origin in *pagan Rome* and therefore the practice is of pagan origin and should be discarded. Some of these scholars have even linked the Seventh-day Adventist concept of ordination with the sacramental view of the Roman Catholic Church, an idea that has no basis in fact.

Such arguments are at odds with the writings of Ellen White where she repeatedly uses the word 'ordination' to refer to the setting apart of apostles, deacons, elders and ministers by the laying on of hands. And nowhere in the writings of Ellen White do we find a Roman Catholic sacramental view of ordination that would give the impression that the act itself confers some supernatural virtue or illegitimate authority upon the recipient (see Acts of the Apostles, pp. 161, 162).

It is worth noting that the word 'ordination' comes from the Latin *ordo*, which means 'order'. The purpose of ordination is to set things in order in the church. Without setting members apart for various offices in the church it would be impossible for the church to function in order. For this reason Paul counseled Titus to *set things in order* in the church by ordaining elders in every city (Titus 1:5).

Creating and Ignoring Contexts

Those who favor women's ordination sometimes *fabricate* cultural contexts that do not exist in the text. For example, they confidently affirm that when Paul wrote that he did not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over the man because Adam was created first and then Eve, he was simply arguing against a particular heresy that was being taught by the women in the Ephesian churches. As the theory goes, the women of the Ephesian churches had embraced the cult of the goddess Artemis and were teaching that Eve was created before Adam. According to this view, Paul was simply correcting this particular misconception that existed in the minds of the Ephesian women. Thus an extra-biblical historical context that has been seriously questioned by reputable historians is imposed upon the biblical text and the text is understood as having only a local application to the churches in Ephesus.

On the other hand, women's ordination advocates sometimes *ignore contexts* that are clearly found in the text. One notable example is found in their use of Galatians 3:28 where they extract the phrase 'there is neither male nor female' from its legitimate context and use it to support women's ordination to church office even though the immediate context of this text has nothing to do with qualifications for church office. The text within its context clearly refers to equal access to salvation and incorporation into the body of Christ at

baptism and not to qualifications for church office that come later in the Christian experience after the believer has a proven track record.

Word Games

Further, pro-ordination advocates frequently offer new and exceptional definitions for words and expressions, definitions that are found nowhere in the most reputable lexicons or Bible versions. For example, they say that the expression 'husband of one wife' in 1Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 is an idiom that should be translated with the gender inclusive expression 'faithful to your spouse' even though the evidence for such a translation is practically non-existent in the lexicons and various Bible versions! They say that 'submit' does not mean 'submit' but rather 'be considerate'. Head does not mean 'head' but rather 'source' or 'origin' and the word 'rule' means 'responsible'.

There are certain words that don't bode well with the pro-ordination group. Headship, submission and authority are three of those words. When the words are used to describe the relationship between Christ and His Father in the Godhead they are perceived positively, but when they appear in the context of relationships between men and women in the home and in the church they are perceived negatively.

Questioning Ellen White Statements

Some pro-ordination scholars make statements that downplay the clear affirmations of Ellen White and a handful have even suggested that she be excluded from the ordination conversation because the Bible and the Bible only is to be our guide. For example, more than one has stated that there is no biblical evidence that Jesus ordained His disciples by the laying on of hands. Ellen White begs to differ:

"When Jesus had ended His instruction to the disciples, He gathered the little band close about Him, and kneeling in the midst of them, and *laying His hands upon their heads*, He offered a prayer dedicating them to His sacred work. Thus the Lord's disciples were *ordained* to the gospel ministry." DA, p. 296

Although it is true that the word 'appointed' in Mark 3:14 does not necessarily carry with it the meaning of ordaining by the laying on of hands, the Analogy of Scripture principle that a text is fully understood only in the light of the totality of Scripture helps us understand that those who were appointed to church office, in conformity with Jewish culture, were indeed ordained by the laying on of hands (Deuteronomy 34:9; Acts 6:6; Acts 13:3; 1 Timothy 5:22). If Mark 3:14 is not isolated from the rest of the Bible testimony, Ellen White's statement rings true!

Numberless Words

Ellen White once wisely wrote:

"Numberless words need not be put upon paper to justify what speaks for itself and shines in its clearness. Truth is *straight, plain, clear*, and stands out boldly in its own defense; but it is not so with error. It is so winding and twisting that it needs *a multitude of words* to explain it in its crooked form." EW, p. 96

The Hermeneutics of Anti-Sabbatarians

An illustration of Ellen White's comment and the dangers of an improper hermeneutic can be seen in the way that non-Adventist pastors and scholars handle the Sabbath question. For every biblical argument that Adventists have brought forth to sustain the perpetuity of the Sabbath, a counterargument has been proposed to *explain it away* by those who oppose its observance. Many of these arguments are very similar to those that are used against those who favor male-only ordination to pastoral leadership.

When one says that the Sabbath is a creation institution they counter that Genesis 2 does not say that God commanded Adam and Eve to rest. It was God Himself who rested, it is said, not man. And because there is no reference to the seventh day having an evening and morning, it is affirmed that God's rest is open to us on any day of the week. When one argues in favor of the Sabbath on the basis of the fourth commandment, they say that while the observance of a specific day was ceremonial and time bound, *the principle* of resting one day in seven is moral and universal. And they sustain their view by appealing to Scripture texts such as Colossians 2:16, 17 and Romans 14:5!

When one argues that Jesus and the apostles went to the Synagogue on the Sabbath, they say that their attendance was *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive*. That is, they attended the synagogue on the Sabbath because they were Jews and that is where Jews went on the Sabbath. But their presence in the synagogue on the Sabbath, it is argued, does not mean that they were *prescribing* the observance of the Sabbath for New Testament Christians!

It should be noted also that opponents of Sabbath observance are quick to point out that there is *no command* in the New Testament that *forbids* the church from keeping Sunday in honor of the resurrection. Ellen White warned about the danger of enjoining what the Bible does not forbid when she stated concerning the papacy:

"The very beginning of the great apostasy was in seeking to supplement the authority of God by that of the church. Rome began by enjoining what God had not forbidden, and she ended by forbidding what He had explicitly enjoined." GC, pp. 289, 290

Further, when one proves from Scripture that even after Pentecost both Peter and Paul attended the synagogue on the Sabbath day, opponents say that it was merely because they wanted to reach the Jews who worshiped there. They claim that just because Peter and Paul went to the synagogue to witness to the Jews does not mean that they were

prescribing the practice for Christians. Finally, when Adventists say that Jesus kept the Sabbath, they counter with John 9:16 where the text says that Jesus broke it.

Further Anti-Sabbatarian Arguments

But not only do anti-Sabbatarians provide arguments against our position, they also have some *in favor of their own*. Did not Christ resurrect on Sunday? (Matthew 28:1) Weren't the apostles gathered in the Upper Room on the first day of the week? (John 20:19) Didn't Jesus appear to the disciples once again a week later on a Sunday? (John 20:26) Wasn't the Holy Spirit poured out on a Sunday? (Acts 2:1-4) Didn't the apostle Paul gather with the church at Troas on Sunday? (Acts 20:7-9) Weren't offerings taken to church in Corinth on the first day of the week? (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2) Doesn't Revelation 1:10 affirm that Sunday was the Lord's Day at the end of the first century? With all this 'overwhelming evidence' it is claimed, who could deny that Sunday observance is taught in Scripture?

Further, it is argued by some Protestant scholars that an *earlier divine principle* that applied exclusively to the Jews has now been replaced and *superseded by a later divine principle*—the observance of Sunday in honor of the resurrection. Some scholars even go so far as to admit that the New Testament has no explicit command to discard the Sabbath and replace it with Sunday, but they say that by appearing to the disciples on Sunday Jesus was hinting that the *trajectory* should move in that direction. According to these scholars, the church then *completed the trajectory outside of Scripture* by instituting what was only hinted at in the New Testament.

For example, Willy Rordorf, in his book, [Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church](#) has argued that Jesus celebrated the Lord's Supper with His disciples on the Sunday evening of the resurrection thus *implicitly hinting* that on every successive Sunday the Lord's Supper should be celebrated in commemoration of His passion and resurrection. After Jesus ascended to heaven, contends Rordorf, the church in the second and third centuries *completed the trajectory* that Jesus had implicitly begun on Easter Sunday.

Thus the case for Sabbath observance, which is clear and unambiguous in Scripture, has been weakened by specious and sophisticated historical and cultural arguments based on human constructs, revisionist history and culture.

Paul K. Jewett

In 1975, evangelical scholar Paul K. Jewett, one of the pioneers of the women's ordination movement, published the book [Man as Male and Female](#) where he unapologetically affirmed that Paul as a Jew believed that the woman is subordinate to the man while as a Christian he considered the woman equal to the man in all things. He states:

“Because these two perspectives—the Jewish and the Christian—are incompatible, there is no satisfying way to harmonize the Pauline argument . . .”

So what is Jewett’s solution to the problem? In typical historical-critical fashion he questions the reliability of Paul’s Jewish testimony by stating that Paul’s Jewish view was a result of his human bias while his Christian view was divinely inspired. In his own words:

“To resolve this difficulty, one must recognize the human as well as the divine quality of Scripture.” (p. 134).

And contrary to what one Adventist scholar claimed, this method of pitting the human versus the divine in Scripture is used not only by liberal scholars but also by scholars who otherwise claim to have a very high view of Scripture! Ellen White has expressed the dangers of mere mortals sitting in judgment upon the inspired word of God:

*“When men venture to criticize the Word of God, they venture on sacred, holy ground, and had better fear and tremble and hide their wisdom as foolishness. God sets no man to pronounce judgment on His Word, selecting *some things as inspired* and discrediting *others as uninspired*. The testimonies have been treated in the same way; but God is not in this.”* Selected Messages, volume 1, p. 23

The very hermeneutic that Jewett uses to discard the distinctive roles of males and females he also uses to discard the Sabbath. His book, The Lord’s Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian Day of Worship is riddled with human reasoning, conjecture, assumptions, human constructs, reinterpretation, philosophical arguments, and historical revisionism. For example, in an attempt to resolve the seeming conflict between science and Scripture on the matter of the literal days of creation, Jewett affirms:

“God created the world in six days and rested the seventh, and that this is not a literal, empirical description of how the world came to be what we now see it to be. The sabbatical rhythm of time in the biblical view of creation is not to be understood scientifically, but theologically.” (p. 121).

In other words, we cannot take Scripture’s creation record literally as it reads in Genesis. It must pass through the filter of contemporary scientific discovery. To those who are unwilling to accept the *simple* and *clear* biblical testimony as it reads in Genesis 2:2, 3 and Exodus 20:8-11 on the matter of creation and the Sabbath, Jewett’s case may appear persuasive. But Jewett has simply pronounced judgment upon Scripture in the name of ‘science’ and culture!

Jewett's methodology of explaining away the clear statements of Scripture by imposing his own human construct is a dire warning to some Seventh-day Adventist theologians who are presently attempting to explain away the clear teaching of the apostle Paul regarding male headship in the home and in the church. After all, is it so difficult to understand phrases such as 'husband of one wife' and 'the man is the head of the woman'?

Historical Turning Points

In his incisive book, Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth, evangelical scholar Wayne Grudem has warned that those who drift away from faithfulness to the clarity and authority of the Bible on the matter of women's ordination will drift further and further from the Bible in other areas as well:

"People in the middle of *turning points* in history do not always realize it. I believe that today we are right in the middle of a *turning point* in the history of the Church. Christian organizations right now are deciding these issues. They are making commitments and establishing those commitments *in their policies*. Some organizations are affirming biblical principles, as the Southern Baptists did. Others are establishing egalitarian principles as *part of their policies*, as Willow Creek Community Church has done. There is a sifting, a sorting, a dividing going on within the evangelical world, and I believe that institutions that adopt an egalitarian position will *drift further and further* from faithfulness to the Bible *on other issues as well.*" Wayne Grudem, Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth, p. 52, emphasis supplied.

The Transitional Generation

Notably, history reveals that those who live in the midst of generational turning points do not always realize where things are trending. They cannot discern in their time the implications and consequences of their hermeneutics. While I am quite certain that most of those who favor women's ordination firmly believe in the 28 fundamentals of Seventh-day Adventist theology, I also believe that they fail to realize that in the next generation the methods they use to interpret the Bible will lead to unforeseen and unintended results. As a result the church will adopt a view of Scripture where culture dictates its meaning, extra-biblical sources become indispensable for its understanding and the interpreter is placed above the Bible. The Bible will then be seen as a divine book with much human baggage and as a result all sorts of unbiblical and anti-biblical practices will be justified and embraced.

There are already danger signals on the horizon. Jan Barna, a Seventh-day Adventist teacher, who undoubtedly believes in the 28 fundamentals, sees the Bible as 'contaminated by the social, cultural, historical, and language' of the writer. So while the Scripture contains the truth, it needs an interpreter to distinguish between the divine principle and the prophet's 'baggage.' Therefore, Barna concludes that 'a plain reading of Scripture could

be misleading.' Jan Barna, "Ordination of Women and the Two Ways to Unity: Ecclesiastical and Biblical," (presented to the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, Nov. 21, 2013), p. 4.

The question immediately suggests itself: If a distinction needs to be made between the divine message and the human baggage in Scripture, who would be responsible to make such a distinction? The answer is, the interpreter, of course! Thus the interpreter becomes Scripture's judge rather than Scripture being his judge.

This dichotomy between 'divine message' and 'human baggage' sounds much like a softer version of what was proposed by Emil Brunner (in his book, Truth as Encounter) and other Neo-orthodox theologians who argued that although the Bible is the record of the divine-human encounter, the objective reliability of the information is suspect because of human contamination. Thus, it is argued, that while the Bible *contains* the word of God it is not ***THE*** word of God!

Gay Marriage

The experience of many mainline churches clearly reveals that when the human element of the Bible is exalted above its divine authority, those churches become liberal and as a result women's ordination is followed in the not too distant future by gay marriage, gay clergy and even a rejection of the literal divine record of creation. As a result, the churches lose their sense of mission and dwindle into insignificance numerically and spiritually!

Churches that chose to adapt their message to the whims and desires of culture and science so-called soon lose their power to transform culture and become mere reflectors of culture's values. The salt has then lost its savor and is good for nothing except to be thrown out and trampled upon by men. The downward spiral from conservatism to liberalism in these churches did not occur overnight. The decades long erosion of biblical authority gutted them and accommodated them to post-modern thinking.

The stakes in the present discussion on the role of women in the home and in the church are high. At stake is how the Bible is handled, what hermeneutical methods are used to interpret it and how much we can depend on its clarity and authority. As Wayne Grudem has persuasively shown in his book, other more sinister dangers lurk on the horizon.

Scare Tactics

One notable scholar has accused me of using 'scare tactics' to turn people against the idea of women's ordination. I would be the first to admit that the use of scare *tactics* is out of place. Scare *tactics* are used to manipulate people when a danger is perceived rather than real. If dangers were imaginary it would be wrong to use fear as a motivating factor but if the dangers were real, would not fear prove to be a benefit?

Many historical examples of the genuine value of fear could be given but let's mention just one that had ecclesiastical implications. Was Ellen White wrong when she warned the church to fear the dire consequences of embracing the incipient heresies of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg? Was she wrong when she warned that the very existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was at risk? Of course not! The things she feared were *very real* and because of this, fear was of value in motivating the church to face the danger fair and square!

Dangers on the Horizon

Strong documented cases have been made that the push for women's ordination is more often than not followed by a push in favor of gay marriage and eventually gay clergy. This is not an imaginary danger. Many of the same methods and arguments are used for both: Who are we to judge, justice and mercy demand it, western culture requires it, the mission of the church would be compromised by forbidding it, personal testimonies have proved that it can be beneficial, it is a matter of civil rights, it is a question of religious liberty and the list goes on.

Those who object to linking the struggle for women's ordination with the struggle for gay rights argue that homosexual relationships are clearly condemned in Scripture while women's ordination is not. This distinction may appear clear to us but those churches that support gay marriage and clergy don't see it that way. They explain away the clear Bible testimony against gay marriage by stating that the Bible forbids only gay relationships outside of a *committed monogamous* marital relationship.

Others go even further by stating that the Biblical condemnation of homosexual behavior was culturally conditioned and does not apply in our 'advanced' culture. With regards to the sin of the men of Sodom, they reason that the men of the city were condemned because of a lack of hospitality or because they intended to commit homosexual rape. Others even say that gay relationships were condemned because they were connected with pagan temple rituals. Yet nowhere in the Bible do we find such specious reasoning!

The Seventh-day Adventist Church finds itself at a hermeneutical crossroads. The delegates of the world church gathered in San Antonio in 2015 will have to decide, not only whether they will approve the ordination of women to pastoral leadership but more importantly whether they will continue to uphold the historical-grammatical hermeneutic in its purest form *without modification*. If the delegates of the world church approve women's ordination they will basically be approving along with it a new hermeneutical method that will bring serious consequences. Only time will tell what will happen but the dangers of a shift in hermeneutics are real and serious.

In 1994 Dr. C. Raymond Holmes published the book: [The tip of an Iceberg](#). The subtitle of the book was "Biblical Authority, Biblical Interpretation, and the Ordination of Women in Ministry". In this must-read masterpiece Dr. Holmes proves, beyond a shadow of doubt that

a misstep in our hermeneutics concerning women's ordination will be devastating to the unity, mission, message and destiny of the remnant church. Will we allow this to happen to our beloved church? I hope and pray that we don't!

Summarizing the Evidence

First-born males, male founders of the twelve tribes, male rulers over the tribes in Moses' time, seventy males in the governing council of Israel, male Levites, male priests, the names of twelve males on the breastplate of Aaron, male kings, male apostles, male deacons, male elders, male bishops, male pastors, husbands of one wife, twelve males judging the twelve tribes of Israel, twenty four male names on the gates and foundations of the New Jerusalem. How much more evidence is needed to make a Biblical case for male leadership in Israel, in the home and in the church?

Yet the women's ordination lobby still insists that men and women should share the headship/leadership role in the home and in the church equally. What evidence can they present? The fact is that there is none.

#6 - “Issues Relating to the Ordination of Women with Special Emphasis on 1 Peter 2:9, 10 and Galatians 3:28”

Introduction

I have been asked to write a paper about headship in the New Testament. This is an almost impossible task because the subject is broad and legions of books and articles have been written on the subject. Others on this committee have been asked to write specialized papers dealing with controverted texts on the matter, such as 1 Timothy 2:11, 12 and 1 Corinthians 11:3-15 so I have decided to focus primarily (but not exclusively) on two specific texts that have been interpreted differently by egalitarians and complementarians.¹ These two texts are 1 Peter 2:9, 10 and Galatians 3:28.

In harmony with the *Sola Scriptura* principle, other texts will be brought to bear when they are related to the subject at hand. When appropriate, the writings of Ellen White will also be used. I have not included a section on hermeneutics because the subject has been well covered in the paper on 1 Corinthians 11:3-15 by Dr. Edwin Reynolds. So to speak, there is no need to ‘reinvent the wheel’. However, I think that a few words on hermeneutics would be in order.

¹ Egalitarians believe that men and women are ontologically equal and share equal and interchangeable roles in the home and in the church. While complementarians believe that men and women are ontologically equal they also believe that men and women have complementary and distinctive roles in the home and in the church. Unfortunately egalitarians sometimes erroneously portray complementarians as ones who do not believe that women are equal with men. This misconception is reflected, for example, in a document that was prepared by Scott A. LeMert, at the request of the Oregon Conference. LeMert, who is the Assistant to the President of the Oregon Conference, framed his remarks by asking the question “Did God create women with the intent that she be a lesser order of humanity?” The very title of the document is misleading because Seventh-day Adventist complementarians do not believe that women should be barred from the pulpit! Scott, A. LeMert, “Women in the Pulpit: Has God Called Them?” July 2010, p. 3.

Clarity of Scripture

In the discussion on women's ordination virtually every biblical argument that has been used against women's ordination to pastoral leadership² has been explained away or reinterpreted by an appeal to culture, by an appeal to other supposedly contradictory texts (for example pitting what Paul writes about women in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 against what he says in 1 Corinthians 11:5), by quoting what the scholars have written and by a reinterpretation of the meaning of biblical words. I believe that what is simple and clear to the common reader of the Bible has been mystified and relativized.

Ellen White once wisely wrote:

"Numberless words need not be put upon paper to justify what speaks for itself and shines in its clearness. Truth is straight, plain, clear, and stands out boldly in its own defense; but it is not so with error. It is so winding and twisting that it needs a multitude of words to explain it in its crooked form." *EW*, p. 96

Hermeneutics and the Sabbath

An illustration of Ellen White's comment can be seen in the way that non-Adventist pastors and scholars handle the Sabbath question. For every biblical argument that Adventists have brought forth to sustain the perpetuity of the Sabbath, a counterargument has been proposed to explain it away by those who oppose its observance.

When one says it is a creation institution they counter with the fact that Genesis 2 does not say that God commanded Adam and Eve to rest. It was God Himself who rested, it is said, not man.³ When one argues on the basis of the fourth commandment they say that while the observance of a specific day was ceremonial and time bound, **the principle** of rest one day in seven is moral and universal. "It is the principle of rest that counts not a specific twenty four hour period." And they sustain their view by quoting texts such as Colossians 2:16, 17 and Romans 14:5!

When one argues that Jesus and the apostles went to the Synagogue on the Sabbath, they agree, but they say that their attendance at the synagogue was ***descriptive*** rather than ***prescriptive***.⁴ That is, they attended the synagogue on the Sabbath because they were Jews

² By pastoral leadership I mean elders/overseers on various church levels including local church elders, senior pastors of local churches and also Mission, Conference, Union, Division and General Conference presidents. This had been the long standing understanding of the church until recent times. I do not believe that the ordination of elders/overseers on any level is in harmony with the testimony of Scripture or the Spirit of Prophecy

³ For the theological reason on why God did not command Adam and Eve to rest on that first Sabbath see my book [Hidden Sabbath Truths](http://www.secretsunsealed.org) available at www.secretsunsealed.org

⁴ There is no direct command to keep the Sabbath in the New Testament and this has been taken to mean that its observance by Jesus and the apostles was *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive*. It should be noted also that

and that is where Jews went on the Sabbath. But their presence in the synagogue on the Sabbath, it is argued, does not mean that they were prescribing Sabbath observance for New Testament Christians!

When one shows that Paul and Peter attended the synagogue on the Sabbath day after Pentecost they say that it was merely because they wanted to reach their fellow Jews who worshiped there. And when Adventists say that Jesus kept the Sabbath, they counter with John 9:18 where the text says that Jesus broke it.⁵

But not only do anti-Sabbatarians have arguments against our position, they also have some in favor of theirs. Did not Christ resurrect on Sunday? (Matthew 28:1) Weren't the apostles gathered in the Upper Room on the first day of the week? (John 20:19) Wasn't the Holy Spirit poured out on a Sunday? (Acts 2:1-4) Didn't Jesus appear to the disciples once again a week later on a Sunday? (John 20:26) Didn't the apostle Paul gather with the church at Troas on Sunday? (Acts 20:7-9) Weren't offerings taken to church in Corinth on the first day of the week? (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2) Doesn't Revelation 1:10 affirm that Sunday was the Lord's Day at the end of the first century? With all this 'evidence', who could deny that Sunday observance is taught in Scripture?

Further, it is argued by some Protestant scholars that an earlier divine principle—Sabbath observance—, which applied exclusively to the Jews, has now been replaced and superseded by a later divine principle—the observance of Sunday in honor of the resurrection. Some scholars even go so far as to admit that the New Testament has no explicit command to discard the Sabbath and replace it with Sunday, but they affirm that the Sunday appearances by Jesus hinted that the trajectory was moving in that direction. According to these scholars, the church, apart from the direct testimony of Scripture, then completed the trajectory by clearly instituting what was only hinted at in the New Testament.⁶ And the list goes on!

there is no command that *forbids* the church from keeping Sunday in honor of the resurrection. Ellen White warned us about the danger of enjoining what the Bible does not forbid when she stated concerning the papacy: "The very beginning of the great apostasy was in seeking to supplement the authority of God by that of the church. Rome began by enjoining what God had not forbidden, and she ended by forbidding what He had explicitly enjoined." GC 289, 290

⁵ Of course we know that Jesus did not break the Sabbath of Scripture, but rather the rabbinical Sabbath with all of its burdensome man made rules and regulations.

⁶ Willy Rordorf, in his book, Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church has argued that Jesus celebrated the Eucharist with His disciples on the Sunday evening of the resurrection thus implicitly teaching them that on every successive Sunday the Eucharist should be celebrated in commemoration of His passion and resurrection. After Jesus ascended to heaven, contends Rordorf, the church in the second and third centuries completed the trajectory that Jesus had implicitly begun on Easter Sunday.

The case for Sabbath observance, which is clear and unambiguous in Scripture, has been weakened by specious and sophisticated philosophical arguments based on human constructs, revisionist history and culture.⁷

Tip of an Iceberg

In his incisive book, Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth, evangelical scholar Wayne Grudem has warned that those who drift away from faithfulness to the authority and clarity of the Bible on the matter of women's ordination will drift further and further from the Bible in other areas as well:

"People in the middle of turning points in history do not always realize it. I believe that today we are right in the middle of a *turning point* in the history of the Church. Christian organizations right now are deciding these issues. They are making commitments and establishing those commitments in their policies. Some organizations are affirming biblical principles, as the Southern Baptists did. Others are establishing egalitarian principles as part of their policies, as Willow Creek Community Church has done. There is a *sifting, a sorting, a dividing* going on within the evangelical world, and I believe that institutions that adopt an egalitarian position will *drift further and further* from faithfulness to the Bible on *other issues* as well."⁸

⁷ In 1975, evangelical scholar Paul K. Jewett, one of the pioneers of the women's ordination movement, published the book Man as Male and Female where he unapologetically affirmed that Paul as a Jew believed that the woman is subordinate to the man while as a Christian he considered the woman equal to the man in all things. He states: "Because these two perspectives—the Jewish and the Christian—are incompatible, there is no satisfying way to harmonize the Pauline argument . . ." So how does Jewett resolve the problem? In typical historical-critical fashion he must question the reliability of Paul's testimony. In his own words: "To resolve this difficulty, one must recognize the human as well as the divine quality of Scripture." (p. 134).

Jewett also wrote the book The Lord's Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian Day of Worship where he applies the identical hermeneutic to dispose of the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. His book is riddled with human reasoning, conjecture, assumptions, human constructs, reinterpretation, philosophical arguments, and historical revisionism. Not surprisingly Jewett affirmed: "God created the world in six days and rested the seventh, and that this is not a literal, empirical description of how the world came to be what we now see it to be. The sabbatical rhythm of time in the biblical view of creation is not to be understood scientifically, but theologically." (p. 121). To those who are unwilling to accept the *simple* and clear biblical testimony of Genesis 2 and Exodus 20, Jewett's case appears persuasive. Jewett's methodology of explaining away the clear statements of Scripture is a dire warning to Seventh-day Adventist scholars who are attempting to explain away the clear teaching of the apostle Paul regarding the headship of man in the home and in the church. After all, is it so difficult to understand the phrase 'husband of one wife'?

⁸ Wayne Grudem, Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth, p. 52. Some Adventist scholars have objected to the use of Wayne Grudem's material because he believes in the eternal subordination of the Son to the will of the Father and has Calvinistic theological views concerning salvation. Yet the very same scholars do not object to using material from feminist scholars who openly oppose the traditional Adventist view of women in ministry. I believe that Grudem's work on the issue of women's ordination is valuable even though we do not agree with his Calvinistic soteriological views. Rather than throwing out the proverbial baby with the bathwater, should we not follow the Bible counsel to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21)? Ellen White presented a very favorable view of Calvin in The Great Controversy, pp. 211ff and yet her soteriological views are in many ways different from those of Calvin.

In other words, at stake in this discussion is not only the role of women in the home and in the church. At stake is how the Bible is handled, what hermeneutical methods are used to interpret it and how much we can depend on its clarity and authority.⁹ As Wayne Grudem has persuasively shown in his book, other dangers lurk on the horizon. If women's ordination is approved, will the next step be to bless gay marriages and eventually gay pastors such as has happened in many mainline Protestant denominations?¹⁰ Will it lead to a reinterpretation of the creation story in Genesis 1 and 2? At stake also is the very unity of the Seventh-day Adventist church as a world church with a representative style of governance. As Dr. C. Raymond Holmes has aptly put it, the women's ordination issue is merely 'the tip of an iceberg!'

Priesthood of all Believers

I have found that Seventh-day Adventist scholars who favor the ordination of women as elders/overseers most frequently appeal to Galatians 3:28 for Biblical support. Along with this text, egalitarians also link 1 Peter 2:9, 10 and claim that the priesthood of all believers has broken down patriarchal gender role barriers in the home and in the church and therefore both men and women can legitimately serve as elders/overseers¹¹ in the church. This claim we will examine in this paper. It bears noting that I have not been able to find the precise expression 'priesthood of all believers' either in Scripture or in the Spirit of Prophecy. However, I do believe that the *concept*, if properly understood, is present in both. Let's begin our study by quoting 1 Peter 2:9, 10:

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, *that* you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were *not a people* but are *now the people of God*, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."¹²

⁹ "All who exalt their own opinions above the written word, all who would change the *plain meaning of Scripture* to suit their *own convenience*, or for the sake of *conformity to the world*, are taking upon themselves a fearful responsibility. The written word, the law of God, will measure the character of every man, and condemn all whom this unerring test shall declare wanting" 4SP 190. "Let the Bible explain its own statements. Accept it just as it reads, without *twisting the words* to suit human ideas. "What is the chaff to the wheat?" LLM 55

¹⁰It might be asked how homosexual relationships can be justified when the Bible speaks out so clearly against them and they are not part of the creation order. The answer is that the biblical testimony is neutered and explained away by the claim that the Bible merely forbids lascivious homosexual relationships and not committed marital ones. It is argued that as the Bible forbids sexual relations outside a committed heterosexual marital relationship, so the Bible forbids homosexuality only outside a committed marital relationship. And yet nowhere in the Bible do we find such specious reasoning! Others, using Galatians 3:28 affirm that the principle that there is neither male nor female supersedes all other Biblical texts regarding marriage. It should not go unnoticed that the same text that is used to erase gender distinctions when it comes to women's ordination is used also to support gay marriage!

¹¹ Lamentably the word 'bishop' has been loaded down with theological 'baggage' in the course of church history and for this reason I prefer to use the word 'overseer' to translate the word *episkopos*.

¹² All emphasis in this paper is supplied.

Peter's Recipients

The two epistles of Peter have been referred to as Catholic Epistles because they were not written to specific church communities but rather to the universal church. The context of our verses indicates that the recipients of Peter's first letter were most likely Jewish and Gentile Christians who through Christ had become part of the New Covenant community of believers—the Christian church.¹³ Before coming to Christ Peter described them as 'no people' but after accepting Christ, he called them 'the people of God' because in Christ they had become full-fledged members of the New Covenant community.

Peter also described them as a 'royal priesthood' and a 'holy nation.' The text under review clearly indicates that when Peter described these believers as a 'royal priesthood' he was not referring to some specialized priestly caste of males but rather to *all* of God's people. Undeniably, *all* the members of God's New Covenant community were, in a certain sense, a royal priesthood.

Continuity or Discontinuity?

But at this point a very important question demands an answer. Is the concept of a New Testament royal priesthood of all believers totally *discontinuous* with the Old Testament? Stated another way, is the priesthood of all believers a radically *new concept* that kicks in for the first time under the New Covenant?

That this is not the case is indicated by Peter's reference to the entirety of Christians in the New Covenant community as a 'royal priesthood', an expression that he borrows from Exodus 19:6. The fact that Peter bases his argument on this Old Testament text indicates that the New Testament royal priesthood is deeply rooted in the Old Testament. Thus, at least in *some sense* there is a *continuity* of the Old Testament royal priesthood in the New Testament Church. In short, the entirety of Old Testament Israel as well as the entirety of the New Testament Christians is described as a 'royal priesthood' and a 'holy nation'.

Our first question naturally leads to another. In *what sense* is there continuity between the Old and New Testament royal priesthoods? Does the priesthood of all believers in the New Testament mean that while the Old Testament required priests to be of the male gender, in the New a change has taken place so that God now calls elders/overseers to serve in the church without regard to gender? It must be noted that if this were the case then there would be discontinuity rather than continuity!

¹³ It is to be noted that in the very next chapter (1 Peter 3:18-22) the apostle refers to baptism as the rite that incorporated the recipients into Christ and the New Covenant community.

All-Important Context

How then is this royal priesthood to be understood? It is important to remember that Peter is drawing his language from the historical context of Israel's official incorporation as God's Old Testament church at Mt. Sinai. Shortly before arriving at the Mount, by Paul's own testimony, Israel had been baptized *into*¹⁴ Moses (I Corinthians 10:2) and at Sinai they were going to enter into a covenant relationship with God to be officially incorporated as His chosen church.¹⁵ That is, in type, Israel had been baptized *into* Moses (their personal leader)¹⁶ in the Red Sea and now they were about to be incorporated as members of God's *corporate* Old Testament Church. Similarly, in the New Testament individuals are baptized *into* Christ (Galatians 3:26, 27) and then they become members of the body of Christ, the New Testament Church (1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:47).

Ellen White described the occasion when the children of Israel officially became members of God's church at Mt. Sinai:

"Soon after the encampment at Sinai, Moses was called up into the mountain to meet with God. Alone he climbed the steep and rugged path, and drew near to the cloud that marked the place of Jehovah's presence. Israel was now to be taken into a close and peculiar relation to the Most High--to be *incorporated as a church* and a nation under the government of God."¹⁷

It was when Israel was 'incorporated as a church and a nation under the government of God' at Mt. Sinai that God addressed the *entirety* of Israel with the words of Exodus 19:5, 6 and referred to the entire nation as a 'kingdom of priests'.¹⁸

It cannot be emphasized enough that in these verses God is addressing the *entirety* of Israel and not just a selective cadre of individuals who would serve in the specialized office of 'priest'. *Every person* in Israel—God's Old Testament Church—was called to be a member of the kingdom of priests. The priesthood of all believers therefore is not a radically novel idea that first appears in the New Testament but is rather deeply rooted in God's call to

¹⁴ The preposition *eis* ('into') is the same that is used in Matthew 28:19 where Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize *into* the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and it is the same preposition that is used in Galatians 3:27 (cf. Romans 6:3-5) where those who have been baptized *into* Christ 'have put on Christ'. Not only is the name of the Christ *invoked* at baptism but candidates are actually engrafted into the name. This is the reason why believers who have been baptized into Christ have adopted his name and are called 'Christians'.

¹⁵ The context clearly indicates that this was a covenant transaction. In verses 4-6 we are told that God offered to enter into a covenant relationship with Israel. Moses then relayed God's desire to the people to which they responded by promising: "All that the Lord has spoken we will do" (verses 7, 8) Moses then referred the promise of the people to God.

¹⁶ The Moses/Christ typology is further developed in Acts 3:22-26 and Hebrews 3:1-6.

¹⁷ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 303

¹⁸ Just because the entire nation of Israel was called a 'kingdom' does not mean that everyone was entitled to be king. Likewise, just because the entire nation was called a 'priesthood' does not mean that each and every one was entitled to occupy the office of priest.

ancient Israel. The priesthood of all believers already existed in the Old Testament period and therefore it should not be understood as a revolutionary new concept.

But is this covenant that God made with ancient Israel still binding for God's end time remnant Church? By strongly echoing the language of Exodus 19:5, 6, Peter is indicating that it indeed is, and the Spirit of Prophecy concurs:

"This covenant is of *just as much force today* as it was when the Lord made it with ancient Israel."¹⁹

Notably, Ellen White links the language of Exodus 19:5, 6 with that of 1 Peter 2:9, 10 as she compares God's call to ancient Israel with His call to His remnant people today:

"The Lord made a special covenant with his *ancient Israel* if they would prove faithful: 'Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.' He addresses his commandment-keeping people in *these last days*, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."²⁰

Priesthood but not Priests

So it is clear from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy that in both dispensations all of God's people were called to be a royal priesthood. Does this mean, however, that all of God's people were called to serve as 'priests' or spiritual leaders in the narrow sense of the word? Is it warranted to take a leap of logic and say that because every Israelite is addressed, every Israelite was then entitled to serve in the ministerial office of 'priest'? Of course not! Although the entirety of Israel was in a broad sense a priesthood, not everyone was a 'priest' in the restricted sense of the word. By God's own instructions only males from the house of Aaron could serve in the ministerial office of 'priest'.

¹⁹ Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, volume 1, p. 1103. We must not dichotomize Old Testament Israel and the New Testament Church as if they were radically different entities. It is certainly legitimate to *distinguish* Old Testament Israel from the New Testament Church but it is illegitimate to *dichotomize* them. Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church are to be understood as two stages of the same people of God. This is clearly indicated by the fact that a *single woman* represents the people of God both before Jesus was born (Revelation 12:1, 2, 5) and after (Revelation 12:6) and the twelve stars on the woman's crown represent both the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles (Revelation 12:1; Genesis 37:24). As the founders of the Old Testament stage were twelve males, so the founders of the New Testament stage were twelve males as well. This is the reason why the woman's crown has twelve stars. In the Old Testament the twelve stars are symbolic of the twelve male sons of Jacob and in the New Testament they represent the twelve male apostles. In continuity with the Old Testament, Jesus chose twelve males as founders of the New Testament Church. For those who are interested in pursuing the meaning and importance of the number 12 refer to my unpublished study, "A Providential Election".

²⁰ [PH011](#), p. 16

Spiritual Leaders

Priests, in the technical sense of the word, were the spiritual leaders of Israel and there was a clear distinction between the leaders and the people whom they served. In fact, immediately after God offered to make a covenant with the entirety of Israel as His church, God specified in Exodus 19:22-24 that there was a difference between all Israel as a royal priesthood and the males from the house of Aaron who served as priests.²¹

It will become clearer as we continue our study that in the New Testament all of God's people are called to be members of a royal priesthood (as also they were in the Old Testament) but not all are called to be spiritual leaders or elders/overseers in the narrow sense of the word. In line with the Old Testament priests, the spiritual leaders of the New Testament Church must be the 'husbands of one wife' and must 'rule their own house well' and have their 'children in submission with all reverence' (1 Timothy 3:2, 3).

At this point we must ask a further question: In what sense was the entirety of Israel a royal priesthood when God invited them to enter a covenant relationship with Him at Mt. Sinai? Did each and every person now have direct access to God without a mediator? Of course not! As is well known only male priests from the house of Aaron could represent the people before God. Yet it must be understood that those priests only typified the priesthood of Christ. No mere human priest (and sinful at that!) could in reality truly mediate between man and God.²² The Old Testament priests served only as types of the one and only true Priest—Jesus Christ. Just as the blood of bulls and goats could not in reality remove sin (Hebrews 10:4) so a mere sinful human priest could not truly intercede for the sinner. The entire Old Testament ceremonial system was a shadow that pointed to Christ (Colossians 2:13-17; Hebrews 8:1, 2). In other words, Christ was the one and only true mediator even in the Old Testament period! In order to bridge the gap between heaven and earth, the Mediator was required to be God as well as man—and a sinless one at that!

So, even in the Old Testament period, Christ was the only true Mediator typified by the male priests. And today, as in the Old Testament period, we cannot approach the throne of God without the same Mediator. We can only come to the Father through Jesus who was symbolized by the priesthood of Aaron (John 14:6).

²¹ Some have claimed that God's original plan for Israel was that each and every Israelite, male and female, should be a priest and that a priesthood composed only of males was established by God as a 'plan B' after Israel sinned by building the golden calf at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 34). But this view does not square with the evidence because already in Exodus 19:20-24 there was a clear distinction between the priests and the people.

²² Scripture is clear that the priest and the victim had to be without physical blemish (Leviticus 21:17-21; 22:20-22). The absence of an external physical blemish represented the absolute internal moral perfection of Jesus as our High Priest (see Hebrews 4:15; 7:25, 26). Further, as illustrated by the ladder that Jacob saw in his dream, the gap between heaven and earth could only be bridged by one who is God (represented by the top of the ladder) and one who is man (represented by the bottom of the ladder). No mere human priest is morally blameless or God!

Priests as Instructors

It has been assumed that the central role of the Old Testament priests and Levites was to perform the sanctuary ritual that foreshadowed the Messiah's work. While this is no doubt true, there was another didactic function that was equally important. The Old Testament priests and Levites were called by God to perform the sanctuary ritual on behalf of the people but they were also called *to teach* them how the ritual pointed forward to the Messiah's salvific work. It was insufficient to merely offer lambs, burn incense, light lamps and bake bread. The priests were required to teach the people the meaning of each and every detail of the ritual service and how it foreshadowed Messiah's work.²³

But it was not even sufficient for the children of Israel to understand the profound meaning of the sanctuary ritual! God did not only love Israel; He loved the entire world! Once the people understood the meaning of the sanctuary ritual, God expected them to share the good news with the surrounding nations in order to prepare the world for the arrival of the Messiah.²⁴

Israel as Mediator

So, in what sense was the Israel called by God to be the royal priesthood which is described in Exodus 19:5, 6? Was every person in Israel called to be a priest in the sense of performing the sanctuary ritual?²⁵ Of course not! Because every member of Israel was a

²³Leviticus 10:8-11; "After the settlement in Canaan the divine precepts were to be repeated daily in every home; they were to be written plainly upon the doorposts and gates, and spread upon memorial tablets. They were to be set to music and chanted by young and old. *Priests were to teach* these holy precepts in public assemblies, and the rulers of the land were to make them their daily study." Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, pp. 454, 455

"Every dying victim was a type of Christ, which lesson was impressed on mind and heart in the most solemn, sacred ceremony, and *explained definitely by the priests*. Sacrifices were explicitly planned by God Himself *to teach* this great and momentous truth, that through the *blood of Christ alone* there is forgiveness of sins." 1SM 107

²⁴This is the same mission Christ has called every member of the Church to fulfill: "The church of Christ is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. Its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. Jesus said to the representatives of his church, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.' There is no limitation to this command. The good news of a Savior,--Christ dying as our sacrifice upon Calvary, Christ pleading as our high-priest and intercessor before God, Christ our king and deliverer, coming to redeem his children,--this is the message to be carried to all the world, to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. And the obligation rests upon all Christians." Ellen G. White, The Home Missionary, November 1, 1890

²⁵It might be argued that 1 Peter 2:4, 5 refers to all Christians regardless of gender as a holy priesthood and calls upon them to offer spiritual sacrifices. This cannot mean that all members of the church are now priests in the same sense as the Old Testament priests because the sacrificial functions of the Old Testament priesthood were fulfilled in Jesus Christ alone who offered a once for all sacrifice! The New Covenant has a better priest, better blood, a better sanctuary, a better covenant and a better hope. Yet even in the New Testament period church leaders are expected to teach the people how the didactic function of the Old Testament system pointed to Christ.

So what are the spiritual sacrifices that *all Christians* must now offer without regard to gender? David, who was *not a priest*, offered such sacrifices already in the Old Testament. In his penitential Psalm of repentance David prayed to God: "For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not

member of the covenant community, each was expected to mediate the gospel *to the world* in order to draw it out of darkness into Christ's marvelous light. That is to say, every Israelite who became a member of God's church at Mt. Sinai was called by God to be a missionary with the specific purpose of preparing the world for the arrival of the Messiah. But the fact that all Israel was called to mediate Christ to the world did not mean that the teaching office of the male priesthood was unnecessary.

The Gospel Prophet Isaiah beautifully portrayed the role of Israel as God's mediator of the gospel light to the nations:

"It is *too small* a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a *light to the Gentiles*, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6)²⁶

As already noted, Peter picked up on this theme in 1 Peter 2:9, 10 by clearly alluding to the language of Exodus 19:6. Writing to the entire church membership of his day, as God had spoken to the entirety of Israel, Peter assured them that in the New Testament Church all Christians are a royal priesthood chosen with the *specific purpose* of declaring to the world the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.

It bears noting that when the conjunction *hopos* ('that') is used with the subjunctive mood as it is in this text, it expresses goal, purpose or objective.²⁷ In other words, the objective of God's call to each and every member of Israel was to evangelize the world and the priests and Levites were called upon to teach the people how to do it! Likewise, every member of the church is called to announce to the world what Jesus has done but it is the role of the elders/overseers to teach the people how to do it.

The discussion in Exodus 19 and 1 Peter 2 does not center on who represents us before God or even on leadership roles in the church. Later on in his first epistle Peter does discuss the qualifications of church officers²⁸ and he makes it clear that only certain qualified *men* are called to be elders/overseers of the flock (1 Peter 5:1-4)!²⁹

despise." In other texts sacrifices are identified with praise (Psalm 116:17; Hebrews 13:15, 16), joy (Psalm 27:6), thanksgiving (Psalm 107:22; Hebrews 13:15, 16) and mercy (Hosea 6:6)

Regarding the spiritual sacrifices of 1 Peter 2:5, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary states: "As priests, Christians are to offer to God the 'spiritual sacrifices' mentioned in 1 Peter 2:5; they also offer themselves as living sacrifices (see Rom. 12:1), a body of believers completely dedicated to God." The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 7, p. 502

²⁶The mission here is not restricted to an elite class of priests; God's call is for each and every Israelite to share the gospel with the world. Notably, the apostle Paul quoted Isaiah 49:6 when He and Barnabas began their mission to the Gentiles (see Acts 13:45-47).

²⁷ A. Kretzer, Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, electronic edition, '*hopos*'

²⁸ Notably, Peter uses the words elder (*presbuteros*), overseer (*episkopos*) and shepherd (*poimen*) in this passage to describe the work of church elders: "The *elders* who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow *elder* and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: *Shepherd* the flock of God which is among you, serving as *overseers*, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." The apostle Paul

Ellen White confirms Peter's point as she quotes a portion of 1 Peter 2:10:

"From the beginning it has been God's plan that *through His church* shall be reflected *to the world* His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory."³⁰

Although it is true that every believer now has direct access to God through the Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) Jesus Christ (and it has always been so!), this is not the point that Peter or Ellen White are stressing here. A priest is an intermediary between two parties. He mediates between God and man and man and God. The emphasis here is that every Christian should mediate the gospel of Christ to the world. As the moon mediates the light of the sun to the earth on a dark night, so God's people are to mediate God's light to the world in the midst of its moral darkness.

Jesus said: "I am the light of the world" (John 9:5) but He also said "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). Jesus is the original light who shines on us and we are to reflect His light. This is the task of every Christian, male and female, bond and free, Jew and Greek, but it does not follow that because all should be involved in the task of evangelism, both male and female should be elders/overseers to lead out in the church. We should not take the text beyond where Peter wanted to go with it!

There is clearly no dichotomy between God's leadership arrangement in the Old Testament and in the New. In both dispensations the entire people as a royal priesthood was called to mediate God's truth to the nations but neither in the Old Testament or the New does this qualify all to officiate as priests or elders/overseers without regard to gender in the narrow sense of the word.

Under the Old Covenant God established that males should officiate as priests and under the New, He commands that elders/overseers should be the 'husbands of one wife'. According to the explicit specifications laid down by the Lord in the Old Testament, an all-male priesthood was chosen from the house of Aaron to serve the spiritual needs of the congregation of Israel (Numbers 18:1, 2) and in the New Testament God has established that elders/overseers should be monogamous males.

uses the words *presbuteros* and *episkopos* to describe a church office and he underlines that those who occupy such an office must be the 'husbands of one wife'.

²⁹Ellen White leaves no doubt that the elders that Peter refers to were of the male gender: "The organization of the church at Jerusalem was to serve as a model for the organization of churches in *every other place* where messengers of truth should win converts to the gospel. Those to whom was given the responsibility of the *general oversight* [the meaning of *episkopos*] of the church were not to lord it over God's heritage, but, as wise shepherds, were to 'feed the flock of God, . . . being ensamples to the flock' (1 Peter 5:2, 3); and the deacons were to be '*men* of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.' These *men* were to take their position unitedly on the side of right and to maintain it with firmness and decision. Thus they would have a uniting influence upon the entire flock." AA 91

³⁰ Ellen G. White, Acts of the Apostles, p. 9

Paul's Appeal to the Priesthood

What I have proposed above seems to be suggested by Paul as well as Peter. One Seventh-day Adventist scholar recently supported Tyndale's contention that "The 'elder', the New Testament counterpart of a priest, is to be carefully distinguished from the Old Testament office. An elder is 'nothing but an officer to teach, and not to be a mediator between God and us.'"

It is true that there is a distinction between the Old Testament priests and the New Testament elders/overseers. This distinction, however, can be carried too far. Though it is true that the office of priest and the office of elder are not identical, and that the elder is not a mediator between man and God (but neither were the Old Testament priests who merely foreshadowed Christ's priesthood), the office of the *elder/overseer* is in another sense a continuation of the Old Testament priesthood. This is the argument of the apostle Paul 1 Corinthians 9:1-14.

It seems like some members of the Corinthian churches were critical of full time gospel workers who were taking their believing wives with them on missionary journeys at church expense. All of those whom Paul mentions as taking wives are of the male gender: Paul³¹ and Barnabas, the other male apostles, the **brothers** of Jesus and Peter (verses 5, 6). Thus the issue was the proper remuneration of workers so that their wives could accompany them for team missionary outreach. This reminds us of Ellen White's recommendation that wives who teamed up with their husbands in gospel work should be fairly remunerated (see below)!

After presenting the problem, the apostle Paul argued that full time gospel workers and their wives have the right to be remunerated for their labors. The apostle uses several analogies to get his point across. Soldiers do not go to war at their own expense, vineyard husbandmen have a right to eat of the fruit of their labors and those who tend the flock should be able to drink its milk (verse 7).

After giving these examples from a military, agricultural and animal husbandry context, Paul provides two proofs from Scripture to bolster his point. The first is that according to the Mosaic legislation an ox must not be muzzled while he is treading the grain (verses 8-10). The second argument is taken from the ministry of the priests in the sanctuary service:

"Do you not know that those who *minister* the holy things *eat* of the things of the temple, and those who serve *at the altar* partake of the offerings of the altar? **Even so** the Lord has *commanded* that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:13, 14).

³¹ It is uncertain whether the apostle Paul was married at one time or not.

Paul clearly draws a parallel between the priests who were paid from the tithe for serving in the sanctuary and full time preachers who proclaim the gospel message. The context clearly indicates that as male priests were remunerated from the tithe for their labors in the sanctuary, so male gospel workers should be remunerated for theirs. By extension, wives who team up with their husbands, though not ordained, should be fairly remunerated as well.

It has been claimed by egalitarians that there is no link between the Old Testament priesthood and the New Testament ministry. Ellen White begged to differ from this point of view. Referring to the meaning of 1 Corinthians 9:13, 14 she clearly stated:

"The apostle here referred to the Lord's plan for the maintenance of the priests who ministered in the temple. Those who were set apart to this holy office were supported by their brethren, to whom they ministered spiritual blessings. "Verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law" Hebrews 7:5. The Lord for the sacred offices pertaining to the temple and the priesthood chose the tribe of Levi. Of the priest it was said, "The Lord thy God hath chosen him . . . to stand to minister in the name of the Lord." (Deuteronomy 18:5.) One tenth of all the increase was claimed by the Lord as His own, and to withhold the tithe was regarded by Him as robbery. It was to this plan for the support of the ministry that Paul referred when he said, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." AA, p. 336

Adam Clarke comments on I Corinthians 9:5:

"Clemens Alexandrinus has particularly remarked that the apostles carried their wives about with them, 'not as wives, but as sisters, that they might minister to those who were mistresses of families; that so the doctrine of the Lord might without reprehension or evil suspicion enter into the apartments of the women."

Ellen White concurred with Clement of Alexandria:

"There are **ministers' wives**--Sisters Starr, Haskell, Wilson, and Robinson--who have been devoted, earnest, whole-souled workers, giving Bible readings and praying with families, helping along by personal efforts just as successfully as their husbands. These women give their whole time, and are told that they receive nothing for their labors because their husbands receive wages. I tell them to go forward and all such decisions will be revised. The Word says, "The laborer is worthy of his hire" Luke 10:7. When any such decision as this is made, I will, in the name of the Lord, protest. I will feel it my duty to create a fund from my tithe money to pay these women who are **accomplishing just as essential work as the ministers are doing**, and this tithe I will reserve for work in the same line as that of the ministers, hunting for souls, fishing for souls" DG, p. 106

"The ministers are paid for their work, and this is well. And if the Lord gives the wife, as well as the husband, the **burden of labor**, and if she devotes her time and her strength to

visiting from family to family, opening the Scriptures to them, although the **hands of ordination have not been laid upon her**, she is accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry. Should her labors be counted as naught, and her husband's salary be no more than that of the servant of God whose wife does not give herself to the work, but remains at home to care for her family?" Sons and Daughters of God, pp. 110, 111

Cultic Cultural Argument

It has been suggested that a male only priesthood was chosen for cultic or cultural reasons yet the evidence for such a claim is conjectural at best. God's choice of a totally male priesthood could actually be seen as counter-cultural because female priests were not unknown in the surrounding nations. The idea that only men were chosen because in the surrounding cultures women priestesses served as temple prostitutes is an unfounded assumption that does not have a shred of evidence in the Biblical text. In the pagan nations that surrounded Israel males also served as temple prostitutes that would have disqualified males from serving as priests as well! It would be far better to simply accept the Bible testimony rather than offer novel explanations about why God chose only men from the house of Aaron for the priestly office!³²

And it must be underlined that God expected His specifications to be strictly followed. When Gideon (Judges 8:24ff; PP 555, 556), Korah (Numbers 16:3), Saul (1 Samuel 13:8-14), Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:31) and Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:16-21) subverted God's requirements and assumed priestly duties contrary to God's explicit instructions, the punishment was swift and drastic and the results disastrous.

No Longer Males

It has been argued that priests were all male in the Old Testament because they foreshadowed the ministry of Jesus who was to be male upon His incarnation. According to this view, after Jesus fulfilled what the Old Testament priesthood represented, individuals can now serve as elders/overseers in the church without regard to gender. This argument sounds plausible but the logic behind it is flawed for at least three reasons.

First, the sacrifice of female sheep (Leviticus 14:10; Numbers 6:14) symbolized the sacrifice of Christ. If the sacrifice of a ewe could represent the sacrifice of Christ, why couldn't a woman priest represent the priesthood of Christ as well?

³² It is actually quite common for egalitarian scholars to argue their position based on the practices of the pagan cultures that surrounded God's people in biblical times rather than on Scripture. Not only do they argue that women priests were not allowed because of temple prostitution in the surrounding cultures but they also argue without a shred of evidence that Paul's admonitions against women teachers in 2 Timothy 2:11-13 were given because women in the church were teaching the heresies of the Ephesian temple cult of Artemis. One egalitarian scholar even told me privately that the entire idea of elders in Israel was imported from ancient Egyptian culture.

Second, both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy clearly affirm that Jesus had to be male because He came to recover what the first Adam, the male head and representative of the planet lost (Romans 5:12-21). Both Jesus and Adam serve as heads of humanity, Adam as the original head and Jesus as the new head. Thus the maleness of Jesus transcends the Old Testament sacrificial system.

Finally, Jesus did not cease to be male upon His ascension to heaven (First Timothy 2:5). If Jesus is still a male in the heavenly sanctuary, then why would His earthly spiritual leaders not be male as well? It would be incongruous to argue that it was imperative for all Old Testament priests be male because the Messiah who was to come would be male and then turn right around and argue that women can now serve as 'priests' even though Jesus is still a male!

Visible and Invisible Head

God's plan for male spiritual headship in the home and in the church has not changed. During the Old Testament period Jesus was the *invisible* head of the church and under His headship there were *visible male* spiritual leaders. After His ascension to heaven Jesus remains a male and the invisible head of His body (1 Timothy 2:5; Colossians 1:18) and therefore we would expect that under His headship there would be visible male leaders who oversee the operations in the church. In both dispensations Jesus is the invisible head of the church and under His headship there are visible male spiritual leaders.

Does the invisible male headship of Christ over His Church make visible male heads on earth unnecessary? Not at all! In the Old Testament, Christ was the invisible head and leader of Israel and Moses, the elders and the priests, all males, were his visible earthly representatives. Likewise, today Jesus, a male, is the invisible leader or head of the Church and He has visible male representatives to lead his church on earth. Ellen White clearly understood this when she stated:

"Since His ascension Christ has carried forward His work on the earth by chosen ambassadors, through whom He speaks to the children of men and ministers to their needs. The great Head of the church superintends His work through the instrumentality of *men* ordained by God to act as *His representatives*."³³

And again:

"Ambassadors for Christ have a solemn and important work, which rests upon some altogether too lightly. While Christ is the minister in the sanctuary above, He is also, **through His delegates**, the minister of His church on earth. He speaks to the people through chosen **men**, and carries forward His work through them, as when in the days of His humiliation He moved visibly upon the earth. Although centuries have passed, the lapse

³³ Ellen G. White, Acts of the Apostles, p. 360

of time has not changed His parting promise to His disciples: 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' From Christ's ascension to the present day, **men** ordained of God, deriving their authority from Him, have become teachers of the faith. Christ, the True Shepherd, superintends His work through the instrumentality of these **under shepherds**. Thus the position of those who labor in word and doctrine becomes very important. **In Christ's stead** they beseech the people to be reconciled to God.

The people should not regard their ministers as mere public speakers and orators, but as Christ's ambassadors, receiving their wisdom and power from the great Head of the church. To slight and disregard the word spoken by **Christ's representative** is not only showing disrespect to the man, but also to the Master who has sent him. **He is in Christ's stead**; and the voice of the Savior should be heard in **His representative**.³⁴

Galatians 3:28

Now we must turn our attention to Galatians 3:28 which is arguably the most used verse by egalitarians in favor of women's ordination to pastoral leadership:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Distinction of Male and Female

This text brings to view three categories of persons classified along ethnic, social and gender lines: Jews and Greeks, bond and free and male and female. The distinction between Jew and Greek and bond and free was not established by God at the beginning.³⁵ But the

³⁴ Ellen G. White, 4T 393

³⁵ Many evangelical egalitarians have attempted to frame the women's ordination issue along the lines of slavery. It is contended that the submission of wives to their husbands in the home and women to male leadership in the church is akin to slaves being subject to their masters. It is argued that as slaves have been emancipated from their masters so women must be emancipated from being subject to the husband in the home and to men in the church. But is the comparison valid?

It must be remembered that the distinction between male and female was part of God's original pre-fall plan at creation while slavery was a human institution established by sinful man. If we read the Bible carefully we will find principles that would eventually lead to the eradication of slavery. But there is no evidence in Scripture that it is God's plan to eradicate the functional differences between male and female.

Some have sought to make the struggle for women's ordination a matter comparable to the civil rights struggle for racial equality in the decade of the 60's. They argue that the subjection of women to male headship in the home and in the church is a deprivation of their equal rights with men and thus is tantamount to discrimination. But upon careful scrutiny this comparison falls on its face.

Ordination to pastoral leadership is *not an inalienable right* but rather a *calling* that is *not* given by God to all His creatures. While it is true that racial and gender equality are inalienable rights that the Creator has given

case of male and female is different because we are explicitly told in Genesis 1:27 that *God created* the distinction between male and female before the inception of sin:

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; *male and female* He created them.” (Genesis 1:27; cf. Genesis 5:2; Matthew 19:4)

The literal root meaning of the word ‘female’ (*thelys*) is ‘breast feeding’³⁶ and the word ‘male’ (*arsen*) literally means ‘that which discharges sperm’.³⁷ These words are intended to clearly distinguish between the male and female gender.³⁸ God did not create androgynous beings. The Genesis account unambiguously affirms that God created sexual differentiation between male and female for a specific purpose—so that the race could be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Thus homosexual marriages defeat God’s original plan for the human race and are explicitly forbidden in Scripture (Romans 1:27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13).

The question that begs to be asked is this: If male and female were part of God’s original plan for the human race, how then are we to understand Paul’s declaration that in Christ there is no longer male and female? Did the death of Christ reverse the creation order? Is God’s pre-fall plan of differentiation of the sexes abolished when a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior? Even further, is Paul hinting that the distinctive roles of males and females in the home and in the church come to an end when a person puts on Christ?

First Option

There are at least four different ways to understand what Paul meant by the expression ‘there is neither male *and* female’.³⁹

to all His creatures, the same is not true about ordination to pastoral leadership. Basic human rights are different than role distinctions in the church because rights belong to all human beings by nature but roles in the church are according to God’s calling and guidelines and do not belong to all. An analogy might be useful here: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, by their nature, *own equal rights* but this does not mean that their *roles are identical* in the administration of the universe! After all, the Son does the bidding of the Father and the Holy Spirit does the bidding of the Son.

³⁶ J. B. Bauer, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, electronic edition, “*Thelys*”

³⁷ J. B. Bauer, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, electronic edition, “*Arsen*”

³⁸ That Paul was alluding to Genesis 1:27 is suggested by the fact that the LXX uses the very words *thelys* and *arsen* to describe male and female.

³⁹ Gerhard Hasel has suggested, along with other scholars, that the phrase that is translated in most versions ‘male *nor* female’ should actually be translated ‘male *and* female’ (as in the AS and NRSV). In distinction to the phrases ‘Jew *nor* Greek’ and ‘bond *nor* free’ the proposition *kai* is added to the equation in the expression ‘male *and* female’ suggesting that Paul is affirming ontological equality on the one side but gender distinction on the other. See Gerhard Hasel, “Hermeneutical Issues Relating to the Ordination of Women: Methodological Reflections on Key Passages,” Paper presented to the General Conference Commission on Roles of Women in the Church, May 23, 1994. Notably, as we shall see later in this paper, every single time that Ellen White alludes to Galatians 3:28 she omits the phrase ‘male *nor* female’ thus suggesting that she understood the phrase to be in a category all by itself.

The first option is that sexual differentiation between males and females no longer exists when a person comes to Christ. In other words, those who put on Christ suddenly and miraculously become genderless beings. This preposterous idea can be quickly discarded simply by looking at the physiological makeup of men and women. The cross did not eliminate gender distinctions. In Christ males are still males and females are still females!

Second Option

The second conclusion that could presumably be reached from this expression is that the gender distinctions that God established between males and females in marriage at the beginning no longer apply, that is, that God's original plan for heterosexual marriage has come to an end. According to this view though physiological differences remain, the marital gender roles of the male being the father and the female being the mother that God established at creation are no longer binding. It has been argued that if there is no longer male or female in this sense, then a man can marry a man and a woman can marry a woman. Some liberal Christian scholars understand Galatians 3:28 in this fashion and use this argument to support gay marriage!

For those who accept full biblical authority, this second view is untenable because Jesus affirmed that marriage between a male and a female is God's standard from the beginning and is still binding today (Matthew 19:4-6). It can also be rejected because Paul underlined that marriage is between a man and a woman (Ephesians 5:25) and homosexuality is unacceptable behavior (I Corinthians 6:9; Romans 1:26, 27). In God's original plan man was to beget and woman was to conceive. The male was to be father and the female mother. It would be unlike God's arrangement at the beginning to say that a man can marry a man and a woman a woman.

Tragically, one of the consequences of sin is the tendency to confuse the gender roles that God created at the beginning. In contemporary society gender roles are commonly blurred and even reversed. The strong emphasis on unisex clothing is but one example of the blurring of the male and female genders. From the beginning God clearly established that males should be males and females should be females without confusing or blurring their gender. We can certainly say: "What God has cast asunder let no man join together!" Regarding unisex clothing Ellen White has stated:

"God designed there should be a *plain distinction* between male and female dress, and has considered the matter of sufficient importance to give explicit directions in regard to it; for the same dress worn by both sexes would cause confusion, and great increase of crime."⁴⁰

Some evangelical and a handful of Adventist scholars who support women's ordination to pastoral leadership are also presently leaning toward accepting the legitimacy of gay

⁴⁰ Ellen G. White, [The Review and Herald](#), February 6, 1900

marriage.⁴¹ Yet in this they perhaps unwittingly contradict themselves. If these scholars were consistent with their own principles they could never favor gay marriage and this is the reason why:

Egalitarians claim that before sin entered the world male and female had totally interchangeable roles with no submission of the wife to the authority of the husband. They believe that female submission came in only after the fall and was removed as a less than ideal arrangement when Jesus died on the cross. Therefore they argue that after the cross we should return to the *original plan* of no male and female role distinctions in the home or in the church and no submission of the wife to the husband.

But if the beginning is the standard to be followed then egalitarians would be inconsistent with their own principles if they endorsed gay marriage because God did not establish gay marriage at the beginning. It would be disingenuous to apply the standard of the beginning to the roles of men and women in the home and in the church and not apply the same standard to marriage between a man and a woman. That is to say, it would be contradictory to appeal to the creation order for role interchangeability and not for heterosexual marriage! And yet some egalitarian scholars both inside and outside our church argue in favor of going back to the beginning for absolute gender role interchangeability but not for marriage between a man and a woman!

Third Option

The third way of understanding Galatians 3:28 is that while sexual differentiation remains and heterosexual marriage continues to be God's plan, post-fall *role distinctions* between males and females in the home and in the church have been abolished. That is to say, in this view males and females now have absolute role interchangeability in the home⁴² and in the church with no submission of the woman to the man presumably such as existed in the beginning before the inception of sin.

⁴¹ For example, on July 1, 2010 the top leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist church amended the Church Manual adding the clarifying phrase that marriage is between 'one male and one female.' According to the official Adventist News Network report, the 'approval [of the added wording] did not come simply or swiftly' The debate lasted for over an hour and a half and 'delegates faced a pileup of motions, amendments, amendments to previous amendments, and even one amendment to reconsider.' One wonders why adding such wording would be so controversial when the Bible is crystal clear that marriage is between one male and one female. Even though the overwhelming majority of delegates favored the added wording, a few feared alienating gays and lesbians from the church. Jeroen Tuinstra a representative from the Trans-European region made the first amendment suggesting that the wording should say: 'Marriage is a monogamous, loving relationship between two mutually consenting adults.' And why was this politically correct wording suggested? Tuinstra explained that adding the words 'between one male and one female' 'would further estrange gays and lesbians from the church.' Thankfully the suggested amendment was not met with favor on the floor and was soundly defeated. (Elizabeth Lechleitner, Adventist News Network, www.AdventistReview.org, July 2, 2010)

⁴² It bears noting that some egalitarians believe that role distinctions remain in the home after the cross but no longer apply in a church setting.

This option must now be examined carefully because it is the central issue in the present discussion about the viability of ordaining women as elders/overseers. In order to ascertain whether this option is correct, we must consider Galatians 3:28 within its immediate and broader contexts as well as the terminology that is used in the text. In other words, we must apply the time-honored principle of *Sola Scriptura*. Let's first formulate some questions that will guide us in our study.

Questions

What is Paul's central argument in the immediately preceding and succeeding contexts of Galatians 3:28? Is Paul discussing leadership roles in the church or is he rather describing how a person is saved and how saved people should treat other saved people within the covenant community regardless of their ethnic, social and gender differences?

At what moment in our Christian lives do we become sons of God and does becoming sons of God entitle us to serve as elders/overseers in the church regardless of gender?

What does it mean to be baptized 'into Christ' and at what moment can it be said that a person is 'in Christ'?

Is the baptismal ceremony gender inclusive or exclusive?

What is meant by the expression 'have put on Christ' and at what point in the Christian life does a person put Him on?

What is meant by the expression 'one in Christ Jesus' and at what point in our Christian experience do we become 'one in Christ Jesus'?

What does it mean to be Abraham's seed and at what moment in the Christian life does a person become a member of Abraham's seed?

Paul's Central Argument

Even a cursory look at Galatians 3 indicates that Paul is contrasting righteousness by faith and righteousness by works. The Galatians had previously been evangelized by Paul and upon their acceptance of Christ they had been justified by faith and had received the gift of the Holy Spirit. But now, under the influence of the Judaizers, they were backtracking in their religious experience to a works oriented concept of salvation.

To make his point, Paul begins by asking the Galatians: "Having *begun* in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?" Using the 'Father of Faith' as his prime example, he argues that Abraham was justified by faith in Christ apart from works and for this reason he is father of all those who are justified such as he was, be they Jews or Gentiles.

The entire context of Galatians 3 clearly indicates that Paul was addressing the issue of justification and the reception of the Spirit at the *beginning* of the Christian life, not offices or leadership positions in the church that come *later*. In fact, there is absolutely nothing in the entire book of Galatians to suggest that Paul was discussing church offices. His is a theological discussion about how people are saved and how saved people should live after they are saved, pure and simple! If we wish to know what Paul had to say about qualifications for church leadership offices we must go to the places where he addresses these specific issues in the Pastoral Epistles of First Timothy and Titus.

We must now examine several expressions in Galatians 3:26-29 to find answers to our questions. A study of these expressions will clearly reveal that in Galatians 3:28 Paul was not discussing qualifications for church office, not even in principle, but rather salvation and full *ontological equality* among the members of the body of Christ when they *began* their Christian life at baptism.

Backdrop of Acts

In order to ascertain whether the apostle Paul was discussing leadership positions in the church it would be helpful to return to Acts 2:38 for some valuable background information. In his Pentecostal sermon Peter presented a clear sequence of events that are experienced by those who choose to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord:

“Then Peter said to them, “*Repent*, and let every one of you be *baptized* in the name of Jesus Christ for the *remission* of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the *Holy Spirit*.”

In this text there are four consecutive things that occur when a person truly receives Jesus as Savior and Lord:

- Repentance
- Baptism
- Remission or forgiveness of sins
- Reception of the Holy Spirit

In the Great Commission to His disciples immediately before His ascension, Jesus added that a person must *believe*⁴³ and be baptized. This means that, along with repentance, a person must have faith in Jesus in order to be baptized and saved:

“He who *believes* and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”(Mark 16:16)

⁴³ Unfortunately the word ‘believe’ is too often identified with mere mental assent to a belief system. But the words *pistis* and *pisteuo* would be better translated ‘trust’ or ‘have faith’. To believe means to have implicit trust that Jesus will impute his life and death to the account of the repentant sinner.

Jesus also stated that those who believe and are baptized receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and along with it, the *charismata* or *gifts* of the Spirit among which are exorcisms, tongues and healings (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-31):

“And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” (Mark 16:17-18)⁴⁴

Thus, putting the concepts of Peter and Jesus together we have the following order:⁴⁵

- Repentance
- Belief or faith
- Baptism
- Remission or forgiveness of sins
- Reception of the *gift* of the Holy Spirit
- Bestowal of the *Charismata* or *gifts* of the Spirit
- Incorporation into the body of Christ—the Church

It is rather obvious that all of this takes place in the genuine believer’s life at the *beginning* of their Christian walk. *Everyone*, be they male or female, is required to go through this same process.⁴⁶ Baptism is the *inauguration* or initiation ceremony that first *links* a person with Christ and then with the church.⁴⁷ One who is baptized is a newborn babe in the faith, a new addition to the family of God. This is the reason Jesus compared baptism to birth

⁴⁴ To these gifts imparted to the believers by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the apostle Paul referred when he quoted Psalm 68:18: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men." (Ephesians 4:8). Ellen White explains that the *charismata* were given to the disciples when they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost:

“But not until after the ascension was the *gift* received in its fullness. Not until through faith and prayer the disciples had surrendered themselves fully for His working was the outpouring of the Spirit received. Then in a special sense the *goods* of heaven were committed to the followers of Christ. "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" Ephesians 4:8. "Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ," the Spirit "dividing to every man severally as He will" Ephesians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 12:11. The *gifts* are already ours in Christ, but their actual possession depends upon our reception of the Spirit of God." COL 327

⁴⁵ We can link what Jesus said with what Peter said because they were both referring to what occurred on the Day of Pentecost.

⁴⁶ Obviously there are exceptional cases like the thief on the cross who trusted in Jesus but could not be baptized because of extenuating circumstances. Also included are those who never heard the name of Jesus and yet embraced His principles in their lives: “Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 638

⁴⁷ On the day of Pentecost those who repented, believed in Jesus and were baptized into Christ were then added to the church (Acts 2:41, 44) and Paul affirms that all those who have accepted Christ were baptized into *one body* (1 Corinthians 12:13)

(John 3:3-8), and Paul assures us in the succeeding context of Galatians 3:28 that at the moment of baptism believers are adopted as children into God's family (Galatians 4:4-7).

Paul's Baptismal Theology

We must now examine Galatians 3:26-4:5 to ascertain if Paul's theology of baptism agrees with that of Peter and Jesus. These verses must be understood in the light of the foundational record that we have examined in the book of Acts because the baptismal theology of the apostle to the Gentiles is the same as that of Peter. So let's first take a look at Galatians 3:26, 27:

"For you are all *sons* of God through *faith* in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were *baptized* into Christ have *put on* Christ."

This verse brings to view four elements that we found in the book of Acts:

- Repentance⁴⁸
- Faith in Jesus
- Baptism
- Justification or forgiveness (putting on Christ)

But two additional elements must be added to Paul's baptismal theology. In both the preceding and succeeding context of Galatians 3:26, 27 the apostle informs us that the Galatians received the Holy Spirit when they believed (Galatians 3:3; 4:5) and in 1 Corinthians 12:1-13 he affirms that those who are baptized and receive the *gift* of the Spirit also receive the *charismata* or *gifts* of the Spirit.⁴⁹ So in the writings of Paul we have the same elements as in the book of Acts:

- Repentance
- Faith in Jesus
- Baptism
- Justification or forgiveness
- *Gift* of the Holy Spirit
- *Charismata* or *gifts* of the Holy Spirit
- Incorporation into the body of Christ—the Church

It is true that Paul does not mention the *charismata* in Galatians 3⁵⁰ nor the incorporation into God's church, but applying the *Sola Scriptura* principle we know by what he wrote to

⁴⁸ Although Paul did not explicitly mention repentance as a prerequisite for baptism in Galatians 3:26, 27 he did so in other places such as Acts 19:1-6; Acts 20:21 and Romans 2:4.

⁴⁹ In almost all cases the gift of the Spirit is expressed by the word *doma* while the gifts of the Spirit are described as *charismata*.

⁵⁰ Paul does describe the *karpos* or fruit of the Spirit in chapter 5 but the fruit of the Spirit is not to be confused with the *charismata* of the Spirit.

the Corinthians that at baptism the Galatians not only received the *gift* of the Spirit but the *gifts* as well (see 1 Corinthians 12:1-13). In 1 Corinthians 12:13 the apostle also underlines the fact that at baptism, the Corinthian members were incorporated as full-fledged members *into* the body of Christ.

Scripture is clear that baptism into Christ and *incorporation* into his body is without regard to gender because the book of Acts explicitly informs us that both men and women who believed in Jesus were baptized (cf. Acts 8:12; Acts 16:15). However, there is no evidence in the New Testament to the effect that both men and women were called to serve as elders/overseers in the church when they were baptized. To the contrary, the book of Acts uniformly refers to the leaders of the church as males. The twelve apostles, the seven deacons, Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, Titus and the elders at Ephesus were all of the male gender. And Paul emphasized in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 that the elder/overseer must be a monogamous *male*.

The New Testament is crystal clear in its teaching that baptism at the *beginning* of the Christian life can take place without regard to gender but it is equally clear that the position of elder/overseer which is conferred *later on* in the Christian life is very gender specific.

Ellen White confirmed that repentance, faith and baptism are merely the *first steps* in the new birth:

“True *repentance* of sin, *faith* in the merits of Jesus Christ, and *baptism* into his death, to be raised out of the water to live a *new life*, are the *first steps* in the *new birth* which Christ told Nicodemus he must experience in order to be saved.”⁵¹

It certainly would make no sense to affirm that a newborn baby is qualified to be the head or leader of the family. After a child is born, it grows up and matures and then it is qualified to be a leader. Baptism does not anymore qualify a new member to be a leader of God’s spiritual family—the Church—than a newborn baby is qualified to be a leader of a literal family. Ellen White, in full harmony with Scripture, has clearly stated that baptism is the *entrance* ceremony into God’s spiritual family:

“The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, powers infinite and omniscient, receive those who *truly* enter into covenant relation with God. They are present at every *baptism*, to receive the candidates who have renounced the world and have received Christ into the soul temple. These candidates have *entered* into the family of God, and their names are inscribed in the Lamb's book of life.”⁵²

Again Ellen White explains that baptism is the entrance ceremony into the church:

⁵¹ Ellen G. White, [The Youth's Instructor](#), February 1, 1874

⁵² Ellen G. White, [God's Amazing Grace](#), p. 143

“Christ made baptism the *entrance* to His spiritual kingdom . . . Those who receive the ordinance of baptism thereby make a public declaration that they have renounced the world, and have become members of the royal family, *children* of the heavenly King.”⁵³

Put on Christ

That baptism is the *inaugural* step in the Christian life is supported by Paul’s expression, ‘put on Christ.’ The word *enduo* (‘put on’) is used in the New Testament to describe the putting on of a garment.⁵⁴

The question is: According to Paul, at what moment is the garment of Christ’s righteousness ‘put on’ the believer? Is it put on at the beginning of the Christian life or later on? The answer is indisputable: The robe of Christ’s imputed righteousness is put on the true believer at the moment of baptism:

“Those who have pledged themselves *by baptism* to follow Christ, who have professed to *put on the robe* of Christ’s righteousness, are to consider the words of the apostle Paul, ‘If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.’”⁵⁵

The terminology of ‘putting on’ and ‘putting off’ must be understood in the context of the typology of the two Adams. The antithetical typology of Romans 5:12-21 describes everyone who is born into this world as being ‘in Adam’. That is to say, upon physical birth we are members of the family of the first Adam, the family of the lost! But *at baptism* when we are born again, the old Adam is ‘put off’ and the new Adam is ‘put on’ and we become members of the family of the new Adam—Christ (see also Colossians 3:7-10; Romans 13:11-14).

The apostle Paul clearly indicates that baptism is the ceremony that moves us out of the family of the first Adam and into the family of the second. This is the reason why immediately after presenting the antithetical typology of the two Adams in Romans 5:12-21 the apostle explains that it is at baptism that we dispose of the first Adam and are reckoned dead, buried and resurrected ‘in Christ’ (Romans 6:1-14). But moving out of the family of the first Adam and into the family of the second does not suddenly entitle us to serve as elders/overseers in the church, an office to which a person is called later in the Christian experience.

⁵³ Ellen G. White, [Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary](#), volume 6, p. 1075

⁵⁴ Study Matthew 6:25; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 15:51-55 in the light of 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. The NIV for example translates Galatians 3:26, 27: “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have *clothed* yourselves with Christ.”

⁵⁵ Ellen G. White, [A Place Called Oakwood](#), p. 53

Baptism and the Charismata (spiritual gifts)

It will be noticed that in the early verses of Galatians 3 the apostle affirmed that the Galatians received the Spirit when they *believed* in Christ at the *beginning* of their Christian experience (Galatians 3:1-4),⁵⁶ and in the immediately succeeding context of Galatians 3:26-29 Paul affirms that those who are adopted as sons into the family of God at baptism have received the Holy Spirit in their hearts (Galatians 4:6).

No doubt, everyone who truly repents, believes and is baptized into Christ at the *beginning* of the Christian life receives the Holy Spirit. The apostle affirmed as much when he wrote that a person who is baptized into the body of Christ receives the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). Jesus in John 3:5 had already spoken of the new birth as baptism of the water *and* the Spirit. Peter on the Day of Pentecost linked baptism with the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:38) and when Cornelius and his friends believed in Jesus, they received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47, 48). Clearly *all* candidates without regard to gender receive the gift of the Spirit upon embracing Christ at baptism.

A Pivotal Question

At this point we must ask a question that will set the stage for what comes next: Did the reception of the Spirit *at baptism* when the Christian life *began*, suddenly qualify believers to be set apart as elders/overseers of the church? The answer to this question is clearly no. Baptism and the reception of the Spirit at the beginning of the Christian life do not qualify anyone for church office. Baptism simply links a person with Christ and with His body, the church.⁵⁷

There is abundant evidence in Scripture, however, to indicate that at the moment of baptism believers receive not only the *gift* of the Spirit but also the *charismata* or *gifts* of the Spirit. That is to say, a believer who is baptized receives the *gift* of the Holy Spirit who then imparts *gifts*. In order for the body of Christ—the church—to function properly, believers, as individual diverse members of the body, must fulfill certain functions for the good of the entire body. But in order to carry out these functions believers must receive gifts from the Holy Spirit.

After Jesus told His disciples that ‘he who believes and is baptized will be saved’ He described the *charismata* that would be exercised by believers:

“And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” (Mark 16:16-18)

Like Jesus, Paul also made it abundantly clear that at baptism when a person *joins* the body of Christ they receive the Holy Spirit who then imparts certain *charismata* (I Corinthians 12:13). But these *charismata* that are given at the *beginning* of the Christian life must not be confused with the gender specific leadership roles that are given after the person has a *proven track record* in the home and in the church.

The spiritual *gifts* or *charismata* that members receive at the moment of baptism and the fruit_of the Spirit which comes as a result of union with Christ (Galatians 5:22-24) are imparted without regard to gender but this does not mean that at the moment of baptism everyone, male or female, is suddenly qualified to occupy a leadership position in the church as elder/overseer.

Other than repentance, faith in Christ and baptism, there is no list of personal qualifications that a person must possess in order to receive and exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church, but there are clear prerequisites for those who serve in the leadership position of elders/overseers. The same apostle who wrote about the gender inclusive *charismata* also explicitly specified that an elder/overseer must be 'the *husband* of one wife' and one who rules his house wisely and has his children in subjection. The apostle Paul was not speaking out of both sides of his mouth!⁵⁸

We must not confuse the gifts of the Spirit that are given to each and every believer at their baptism regardless of gender and the role of governance and leadership that is given only to males after they have a proven track record. The apostle Paul does not contradict himself when he states that at baptism the Spirit gives gifts to *all* as he sees fit and later says that the leaders of the home and the church should be 'husbands of one wife'.

⁵⁸ Some women's ordination advocates have argued in this manner: If the Spirit has called a woman to serve as an elder/overseer, who are we as mere mortals to deny her the right to serve in that capacity? But the real question is this: Would the Spirit call a woman to be an elder/overseer when the same Spirit instructed Paul that the elder/overseer must be the husband of one wife? Ellen White argues in favor of the supremacy of Scripture over feelings and impressions:

"The Spirit was not given--nor can it ever be bestowed--to *supersede the Bible*; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which *all teaching and experience* must be tested. Says the apostle John, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." 1 John 4:1. And Isaiah declares: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" Isaiah 8:20.

Great reproach has been cast upon the work of the Holy Spirit by the errors of a class that, claiming its enlightenment, profess to have no further need of guidance from the word of God. They are *governed by impressions* which they regard as the voice of God in the soul. But the spirit that controls them is not the Spirit of God. This following of *impressions*, to the *neglect of the Scriptures*, can lead only to confusion, to deception and ruin. It serves only to further the designs of the evil one. Since the ministry of the Holy Spirit is of **vital importance** to the church of Christ, it is one of the devices of Satan, through the errors of extremists and fanatics, to cast contempt upon the work of the Spirit and cause the people of God to neglect this source of strength which our Lord Himself has provided." *GC* vii

Husbands of One Wife

Some scholars who favor the ordination of women to positions of pastoral leadership have pointed out that the expression ‘husband of one wife’ really should be translated a ‘one woman man.’ Though it is true that the literal translation of the phrase is ‘one woman man,’ it also must be noted that the Greek has the words *gune* (woman) and *aner* (man) which, when they are used in the context of marriage, are gender specific.⁵⁹

I wonder if those who translate literally ‘one woman man’ in First Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 would be willing to do the same with Ephesians 5:25 where the apostle Paul states that husbands (*aner*) should love their wives (*gune*). Would it make sense to translate ‘men, love your women’ as Christ loved the church? Further, would it make sense to say, ‘women, submit to your men as to the Lord?’ (Ephesians 5:22) Clearly, the Greek words in a marriage context refer to a husband and wife relationship.

Lamentably some versions eliminate the gender specificity altogether by stating that *officers* (gender neutral) must be ‘faithful in marriage’ (CEV) or bishops (gender neutral) must be ‘married only once’ (NRSV). The fact is that the Greek is gender specific. Even those who literally translate ‘one woman man’ must admit that according to the text itself the elder/overseer must be of the male gender because the text does not read ‘a one man woman’.

Some who favor women’s ordination have argued that Paul’s mandate that the elder/overseer must be the husband of one wife simply means that they must be monogamous. This is no doubt true but the text clearly states that they must be monogamous *men*. The apostle Paul does not say that the elder/overseer must be the wife of one husband. Paul’s mandate is for monogamous *male* elders/overseers.

It is important to realize that Paul is not simply *suggesting* that the elder/overseer *should be* a monogamous male—it is an imperative *requirement*. In First Timothy 3 the apostle twice uses the verb *dei*. This verb, according to the [Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament](#) “designates an unconditional necessity; sentences with this vb. have

⁵⁹ Some have argued that the word *aner* can refer to human beings in general without regard to gender. This is true in extremely rare cases but is it also true that the context must dictate whether the word is gender specific or not. It is clear that in Titus and Timothy the word should be translated ‘husband’ because it is placed in juxtaposition with ‘wife’. Yet the question still remains: Why didn’t Paul use the gender specific word *arsen* which always refers to a male rather than *aner* which can sometimes refer to human beings in general? The reason is not hard to find. The word *arsen* does not mean ‘husband’. It simply underlines maleness. But Paul wanted to get across two ideas: Maleness and also marriedness. *Aner* is a word that includes both ideas.

fundamentally an absolute, unquestioned, and often anonymous and deterministic character.”⁶⁰

Four Lists of *Charismata*

The apostle Paul never includes the church office of elder/overseer in any of his four lists of spiritual gifts.⁶¹ By the time that Paul wrote the epistles to the Corinthians,

⁶⁰ W. Popkes, The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, electronic edition, “*dei*”

⁶¹ It is true that in Ephesians 4:11 Paul includes apostles among the spiritual gifts. However, a study of the New Testament evidence indicates that the spiritual gift of apostleship here is used in the general sense of ‘one who is sent’, what today we would call a missionary. It was imperative that the original apostles number twelve, a number that could not be increased or decreased. This is clearly indicated by the fact that the verb *dei* (‘must’) in Acts 1:21 is placed in an emphatic position. And the successor of Judas had to be an eyewitness of the Christ event from the days of John the Baptist till the ascension. This means that Barnabas, Apollos, Titus, Epaphroditus and Silvanus could not have been apostles in the same sense as the twelve because they were not eyewitnesses of the Christ event (Acts 14:4, 14; 1 Corinthians 4:6, 9; 2 Corinthians 8:23; Philippians 2:25; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:6). Furthermore, Ellen White clearly distinguished between the *apostolic office* that was given to the twelve and the *spiritual gift* that was given later on in the history of the early church:

“*Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers had been formed into churches, the organization of the church was further perfected, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained. Every member was exhorted to act well his part. Each was to make a wise use of the talents entrusted to him. Some were endowed by the Holy Spirit with special gifts—‘first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues’ 1 Corinthians 12:28. But all these classes of workers were to labor in harmony.*” AA 91, 92

The apostle Paul also lists ‘pastors’ as one of the spiritual gifts (Ephesians 4:11). Some have argued, therefore, that the word ‘pastor’, as we understand it today, is one of the *charismata* and because the *charismata* are given to all without regard to gender, women can serve in the church office of pastor.

In the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church before the death of Ellen G. White, those whom we now call pastors were most frequently and more correctly referred to as elders or ministers. But in the process of time the terminology changed and those who used to be called elders or ministers came to be called pastors. In the strict sense of the word the role of pastor is not a church office but rather a spiritual gift that is received at baptism. The spiritual gift of shepherding (which is the meaning of the word ‘pastor’) the flock is open to whomever the Holy Spirit chooses regardless of gender. Women with their motherly instinct are especially gifted to pastor or shepherd the little ones and the young women in the church. In my own church I have many women who serve as excellent counselors and role models and shepherd or ‘pastor’ the children and youth but they are not pastors in the technical sense of a leadership church office.

Though there might be an exception somewhere, I have not been able to find a single instance where Ellen White referred to a specific woman with the title of ‘pastor’ or ‘elder’. The designation ‘pastor’ or ‘elder’ was always reserved for men. I have not been able to find a case where Ellen White referred to women as ‘ministers’ as a noun.

It must be noted that according to the apostle Peter all elders should fulfill the function of pastors or shepherding. This can be clearly seen by his insistence that elders must shepherd and oversee the flock of God (1 Peter 5:1-4). But the flip side is that not all who have the spiritual gift of pastoring are qualified to serve in the church office of elder/overseer. The gift of pastoring or shepherding is one of the *charismata* received at baptism but the church office of elder/overseer is received later upon demonstration of the qualities that the apostle outlines in 1 Timothy and Titus.

It is in this context that we must understand Ellen White’s statement that the Holy Spirit qualifies both men and women to serve as ‘pastors of the flock of God’ (RH, January 15, 1901). If Ellen White by the word ‘pastor’

elders/overseers were already in existence. Why then didn't Paul mention them in any of his four lists of spiritual gifts?⁶²

I believe that there is a clear reason for the omission. Spiritual gifts are received at the *beginning* of the Christian life at *baptism* and the Holy Spirit imparts them without regard to gender. But being set aside as an elder/overseer is an office that is given when a person has a *proven track record* and meets the list of qualifications that the apostle Paul describes in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

Not Neophytes

In Galatians 3:28 the apostle Paul is clearly dealing with the status of a person at the *beginning* of the Christian life at *baptism* and not with the call to the ecclesiastical office of elder/overseer which occurs later in the Christian experience. This is undoubtedly the reason why Ellen White, in agreement with Scripture, underlined that even *male* neophytes are not qualified to be elders of the church:

“Said the inspired apostle: ‘Lay hands suddenly on no man.’⁶³ In some of our churches the work of organizing and of ordaining elders has been *premature*; the *Bible rule* has been disregarded, and consequently grievous trouble has been brought upon the church. There should not be so *great haste* in electing leaders as to ordain *men* who are in no way fitted for the responsible work--*men* who need to be converted, elevated, ennobled, and refined *before* they can serve the cause of God in *any capacity*.”⁶⁴

It cannot be overemphasized that baptism is the *induction* ceremony into Christ, which in turn incorporates a person as a member of the body of Christ, the Christian church. Everyone without regard to gender is commanded to participate in this *initiation* rite, and

had meant that women should serve in positions of pastoral leadership, as we understand them today, why didn't she ever refer to a specific female person with the designations 'pastor' or 'elder'? In her published writings Ellen White used the word 'elder' over three thousand times, the word 'pastor' one hundred and twenty times and the plural 'pastors' two hundred and two times and yet as far as I know she never referred to a specific woman with the prefix of 'elder' or 'pastor'. For instance, she never referred to Elder Stephen Haskell's wife as 'Elder Haskell' or 'Pastor Haskell'. The specific title of 'pastor' and 'elder' was always reserved for men. Further, when Ellen White wrote to an ordained pastor husband and his wife she referred to them as 'Elder and Sister Haskell' or 'Elder Haskell and his wife' or 'Elder and Mrs. J. J. Van Horn.' When she used the word 'elder' as a church office with a proper name it was always with the male gender.

Seventh-day Adventists have always followed the time-honored principle that singular texts must be read in the light of the preponderance of evidence. If we don't do this we will end up believing that at death believers will end up in the bosom of Abraham and unbelievers will be committed to the fires of hell!

It will be noticed that in Ephesians 4:11 the apostle Paul also mentions 'prophets' as one of the spiritual gifts. This has led some to claim that because Ellen White was a woman prophet, women should be allowed to serve as elders/overseers in the church. I have responded to this argument later on in this paper.

⁶² The four lists are in Ephesians 4:11; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-31.

⁶³ Ellen White is here quoting First Timothy 5:22 as the basis for her remarks.

⁶⁴ Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, pp. 617, 618

everyone who does so receives the *gift* of the Spirit and the *gifts* or *charismata* of the Spirit to be able to fulfill their particular function within the body.

Though it is clearly understood that one who occupies the leadership position of elder/overseer must be a baptized member of the church, this is not mentioned on the list as one of the qualifications. The reason is that elders/overseers were elected by the church a period of time after they had been baptized because they had to be experienced and give proof that they were called of God. For this reason Paul explained that the elder must not be a *neophytos* or neophyte (First Timothy 3:6). The word means 'a new convert' or one who has been 'newly planted in the church'.⁶⁵ Is a newborn babe qualified to lead?

If Paul had written about the rite of ordination of elders/overseers in verses 26, 27 and then stated in verse 28 that there is neither male nor female one would have to inevitably conclude that gender roles have been eliminated and males as well as females can serve as elders/overseers. But the context will not allow for this. The context is clearly referring to baptism at the *beginning* of the Christian life when a person has just been joined to Christ and the church, and not to the maturity that is required to be an elder/overseer. In contrast to the rite of baptism, ordination to the leadership position of elder/overseer takes place later in the Christian experience when the believer has exhibited the list of qualifications that Paul specified in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, one of which is 'a one woman *man*' or 'husband of one wife'.

Relational Use of the Word One

Now we must ask the question: Does the fact that male and female become one in Christ at the moment of baptism mean that there are no longer any gender specific roles in the home and in the church and that the wife must no longer be submissive to the authority of her husband?

The relational use of the word 'one' reminds us of the creation story where Adam and Eve, as male and female, became one on the very day of their creation (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6). Clearly, Adam and Eve were created ontologically equal but this did not mean that they had equal and indistinguishable *roles*. When God married them on the very day of their creation, the two became one and yet each had their distinct and complementary role. As evidenced from the New Testament, ontological oneness does not mean functional sameness.

⁶⁵ The KJV well translates the word *neophytos* with 'novice'. Perhaps the word 'beginner' captures the meaning well. The electronic edition of [Thayer's Greek Lexicon](#) defines the word as a 'new convert' and the electronic edition of [The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament](#) explains that the word refers to one who is 'newly converted' or has been "newly planted in the Christian Church."

The Godhead Model

The relationship of Adam and Eve as husband and wife was similar to that of the Father and the Son in the Godhead. The Scriptural evidence clearly indicates that though the Father and Son are ontologically equal they have distinct and complementary roles with the Son being submissive to the will of His Father as His head. And Adam and Eve, created in the image of both the Father and the Son⁶⁶, were to mirror a similar relationship, with Adam being the head and Eve being submissive to his authority (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:3).⁶⁷

Jesus once said: “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30) but does that oneness eliminate functional roles? There is significant evidence in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy that Jesus has been, is now and will ever be equal to His Father. And yet there is also persuasive evidence that Jesus has been, is now, and will be subject to His Father’s authority (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Corinthians 15:28). If the Father and the Son are one and ontologically equal and yet have different roles, with the Son being subject to His Father’s authority, then why can’t the same be said about the relationship between husband and wife as well, especially in light of the fact that Adam and Eve were created in the image and likeness of both the Father and the Son?⁶⁸

The Ephesian Model

That oneness and submission are not alien concepts can also be discerned in Paul’s theology of marriage in Ephesians 5:22-33. In verses 22-24 the apostle instructed wives to be submissive to their husbands as the church is submissive to Christ:

“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 [subject] to their own husbands in everything.”

⁶⁶ It is important to remember that Adam and Eve were created in the image of *both* the Father and the Son. This is clearly indicated by the plural pronouns ‘let *us* make man in *our* image, according to *our* likeness.’ Thus the *relationship* between husband and wife was to reflect the relationship between the Father and the Son. Is it just possible that God the Father wanted the angels to understand His relationship with His Son by looking at the relationship between Adam and Eve?

⁶⁷ I have written a supporting document titled ‘Subordinate but Equal’ where I provide significant evidence from Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy that Jesus is ontologically equal with His father and yet has been subject to His headship before, during and after sin. The document is available for those who are interested in pursuing this line of reasoning at www.secretsunsealed.org.

⁶⁸Who was speaking to whom when God said: ‘let us make man in our image according to our likeness?’ Ellen White affirms that it was God the Father who was speaking to His Son (EW 145). The New Testament confirms that the Father and the Son were co-partners in creation. The Father was the architect and Jesus was the master builder (see Hebrews 11:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:1-3). Is it just possible that God intended the headship of the Father and the submission of the Son in the Godhead to serve as a model for the relationship between Adam and Eve with Adam being the head and Eve being submissive to his loving authority?

After instructing wives to be submissive to their husbands' authority 'in the Lord'⁶⁹, the apostle goes on to admonish husbands to practice self-giving love for their wives just as Christ did for the church. They are to love their wives as they love their own bodies because at marriage they became one flesh. Clearly in the mind of Paul, oneness in marriage does not eliminate the submission of the wife to the husband as her head, just like oneness between Christ and the church does not eliminate the submission of the church to the headship of Christ. The argument of Paul is crystal clear: As Christ loves the church and the church willingly submits to His authority as its head, so husbands are to love their wives and wives should willingly submit to the loving authority of their husbands as their head.

Was this some post-fall plan 'B' that was discarded at the cross? Not so, because the apostle is basing his argument on the creation story as he quotes Genesis 2:24.⁷⁰ The entire context of this passage indicates that oneness and submission are both a part of God's creation order. Ontological oneness does not mean functional sameness. The question is: If oneness at creation does not eliminate the distinctive male and female roles in marriage, then why should oneness of male and female in Galatians 3:28 destroy their distinctive roles today?

Ellen White on Male Headship

Ellen White agreed fully with Paul when she wrote nineteen centuries later that the husband is *still* the head of the wife. Neither she nor Paul believed that male headship in the home and in the church ceased at the cross:

"The Lord has constituted the husband the *head* of the wife to be her protector; he is the house-band of the family, binding the members together, *even* as Christ is the head of the church and the Savior of the mystical body. Let every husband who claims to love God carefully study the requirements of God in his position. Christ's *authority* is exercised in wisdom, in all kindness and gentleness; *so* let the husband exercise his power and *imitate* the great Head of the church."⁷¹

From this statement we can reach at least two inevitable conclusions. First, if it were true that the husband is no longer the head of the wife then Christ would no longer be the head of the church because the headship of Christ over the church is predicated upon the headship of Adam over his wife!

Second, in her statement Ellen White is clearly alluding to Ephesians 5:31-33. As noted earlier, in these verses Paul is not arguing from a plan 'B' post-fall perspective but rather from God's original pre-creation plan as can be seen by his reference to Genesis 2:24.

⁶⁹ The apostle did not expect wives to be blindly submissive to the will of their husbands. Wives were to submit to their husbands only when the will of the husband is in harmony with the Lord's Will (see 1 Corinthians 7:39; 11:11; Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:18). As children have the duty to disobey their parents' authority if the will of the parents conflicts with God's will so the wife has the right and duty to disobey her husband if his will conflicts with the Lord's Will.

⁷⁰ Paul consistently argues for male headship and female submission on the basis of the creation story (Cf. 1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Corinthians 11:3-15)

⁷¹ Ellen G. White, Counsels to the Church, pp. 145, 146

Clearly the relationship between Christ and His church is illustrated by the relationship between Adam and Eve *at creation* and not after the fall. As Paul states it:

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning *Christ and the church*. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects⁷² her husband." (Ephesians 5:33)

Is the headship of Christ over the church a negative thing? Of course not! If the church does not feel oppressed by the loving headship of Christ, then why should the wife feel oppressed by the loving headship of her husband?

Paul explicitly states that the relationship between Adam and Eve *at creation* is illustrative of the relationship between Christ and His church. In the analogy, Jesus is depicted as the husband and the church as His wife. Although Christ and the church are one, there is a functional difference: Jesus is the head and the church is under His loving authority. Oneness between Christ and His church does not mean that they have an egalitarian relationship.

The Matter of Submission

It is important to note that in Ephesians 5:22-24 the apostle Paul links the word *kephale* (head) with *hupotasso* (submit):

"Wives, *submit* [*hupotasso*] 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* [*hupotasso*] to Christ, so let the wives be [subject] to their own husbands in everything" (see also Colossians 3:18; I Corinthians 14:33-35; Titus 2:4, 5).

According to Greek lexicons the word *hupotasso* means 'to be subject, subordinate, place under.' In the light of this meaning, would anyone dare say that wives are not instructed by God to be subject to their husbands 'in the Lord' after the cross? (Cf. 1 Peter 3:1, 5). If wives are not required to be subject to their husbands, then the church would not be expected to be subject to Christ either because the willing submission of the church to Christ is predicated upon the willing submission of the wife to the husband. If Jesus does not find the headship of His Father demeaning and if the church does not consider the headship of Jesus demeaning, then wives should not find the headship of their husbands demeaning either! (Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:3)

The fundamental problem is that in this sinful rebellious world we consider submission to be a negative thing. We assume that those who submit or subject themselves to the authority of another are inferior to the one to whom they subject themselves. If this were the case, then the subjection of Jesus to His Father both before and after sin is eradicated

⁷² According to the online edition of [Thayer's Lexicon](#) the verb *phobeo* in this instance means 'to reverence, venerate, to treat with deference or reverential obedience'

from the universe would be a bad thing (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28) and subjection of the church to the headship of Christ would be bad as well.

Mutual Submission?

It is common for egalitarians to argue, based on Ephesians 5:21, that submission is a two way street with the husband submitting to his wife and the wife to the husband. There are several reasons why this argument is faulty.

First, the idea would not be practical in daily life and therefore does not make any sense. What is the meaning of mutual submission? Can there really be any authority structure when two individuals mutually submit to the authority of one another?

Second, the idea of mutual submission is a *novel interpretation* of the text that was totally unknown in Christian interpretation until the feminist movement in recent times. One looks in vain for such an interpretation of the text before the rise of the feminist movement in the decades of the 60' and 70's.

Third, Ephesians 5:21 cannot be understood without reading the succeeding context. In Ephesians 5:21-6:9 Paul is not only addressing the submission of wives to their husbands. He also writes about the submission of children to their parents and bondservants to their masters.

Are we to understand that Paul was teaching that submission is a two-way street between parents and children in which parents should mutually submit to the authority of their children in an egalitarian relationship? Are we to think that Paul believed that masters and bondservants should be mutually submissive to one another? Would it make logical sense to think that a sergeant must be mutually submissive with the soldiers under his command? Are the commanding angels in heaven mutually submissive to the angels that they command? Is there any evidence in Scripture that God the Father and God the Son are mutually submissive to one another in an egalitarian relationship?

Fourth, the idea of mutual submission does not agree with the clear words of the text. Verses 22, 24 explicitly state that it is *the wife* who should submit to the authority of her husband and not the other way around.

Fifth, in other places of his own writings the apostle makes it absolutely clear that it is *wives* who should be submissive to the authority of their husbands:

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.” (Colossians 3:18, 19; cf. Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1-6)

Never, not even once, do we find any text in the New Testament that indicates that husbands are to be subject to the authority of their wives.

Sixth, verse 21 serves as the introductory statement to the entire *succeeding context*. When Paul writes 'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God' he is not merely addressing the relationship between husbands and wives in the next verse but rather all relationships in the church—wives to husbands, children to parents and bondservants to masters. In Verses 22-33 the apostle addresses the submission of wives to their husbands, in 6:1-4 the submission of children to their parents and in 6:5-9 the submission of bondservants to their masters.

But what then is meant by the expression 'one to another'? Doesn't it clearly mean mutual submission? Not according to the succeeding context which explains what the expression means:

The wife (one) should submit to the husband (another) (Ephesians 5:22, 24).

The children (one) should submit to their parents (another) (Ephesians 6:1-3).

The servant (one) should submit to his master (another) (Ephesians 6:5-8).

But submission does not mean to be trampled upon. Along with the idea of submission the apostle provides mitigating factors to regulate the authority of husbands, parents and masters. Husbands are to love their wives and thus they are not at liberty to mistreat them (Ephesians 5:25-33). Parents are not to provoke their children to wrath by abusing their parental authority (Ephesians 6: 4) and masters are not to use their authority to threaten their servants because they too are servants of Christ (Ephesians 6:9).

Seventh, as indicated previously the submission of the church to Christ is predicated upon the submission of the wife to the husband (Ephesians 5:24). Are we to understand that Christ and the church are to be mutually submissive to one another? The idea is preposterous. The church is under the authority of Christ and receives orders from Him as its head. Christ is not in subjection to the authority of the church, a concept that is taught by Roman Catholics but not by Protestants!

The Meaning of *Hupotasso*

Finally, the meaning of the Greek word *hupotasso* must be taken into account. Some egalitarians redefine this word in this *one verse* giving it a different definition than where it is found elsewhere in the New Testament. Whereas according to the lexicons the word means 'to submit, to be subject' to someone's authority'⁷³ some egalitarians have redefined the word in Ephesians 5:21 to mean 'to be considerate and thoughtful of someone' or 'to put someone else's interests first'. Needless to say, no lexicon gives such definitions of the word. The word is used 38 times in the New Testament and always refers to one party being in subjection to another. Notice the following examples:

⁷³ Many and various lexicons such as [Thayer's Lexicon](#), [The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament](#), [Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament](#) and Arndt and Gingrich's [New Testament Lexicon](#) all define *hupotasso* as "obey, arrange under, subordinate oneself to, to be subject to, to put in subjection, to place under, to submit to, to yield to."

- Jesus was *subject* to the authority of His father and mother (Luke 2:51).
- Demons were *subject* to the authority of the apostles (Luke 10:17).
- Citizens are *subject* to the ruling authorities (Romans 13:1-5).
- When the great controversy is over, Jesus will *subject* Himself to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:28).
- Church members are called upon to be *subject* to the authority of the elders (1 Peter 5:5).
- The church must be *subject* to Christ (Ephesians 5:24).
- Servants should be *subject* to the authority of their masters (Titus 2:9).
- God has placed everything in *subjection* to Christ (Hebrews 2:8).
- Angels, authorities and powers are in *subjection* to Christ upon His ascension to heaven (1 Peter 3:22).
- As we submit to our earthly father, so we should *submit* to our heavenly Father (Hebrews 12:9).
- Christians should *submit* themselves to God (Hebrews 12:9).

And with regards to the word *kephale*, Evangelical scholar Wayne Grudem has done an exhaustive study of the word in the LXX, Plato, the New Testament, Josephus, Philo, Plutarch and the church fathers and he has found that the word does indeed mean 'head'.⁷⁴

Several texts from the writings of both Paul and Peter clearly reveal that the word *kephale* denotes authority/headship (see Ephesians 1:22; 5:23, 24; Colossians 1:18; 2:10; I Peter 2:7). Bible words should not be treated like play dough that can be molded to take the shape that the interpreter wishes them to have.

In Christ Jesus

As we look at the experience of Jesus in the Gospels we see that he *ceased to breathe* when He died on the cross (John 19:30), He was then *buried* in the tomb, after which He *breathed again* when He resurrected from the dead. This experience of Jesus is actually replicated in miniature and symbolically when a believer is baptized and *begins* the Christian life.

As happened with Christ, the believer ceases to breathe before going under the water, does not breathe while he is buried under the water and breathes again when he comes forth from the water. In this way the believer is symbolically included in the experience of Christ. The believer is reckoned by God dead, buried and resurrected *with* Christ and seated *with* Him and in Him at the right hand of God (Ephesians 2:6). Thus at the moment of baptism the true believer is reckoned 'in Christ'.

That Galatians 3:28 is referring to the *initiation* ceremony into the Christian faith at the beginning of the Christian life is further confirmed by the prepositions 'into' and 'in' that

⁷⁴ Wayne Grudem, [Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth](#), pp. 552-559.

appear in verses 27 and 28. The first preposition is found in the phrase ‘were baptized *into* Christ’ (verse 27) and the second is in the phrase ‘one *in* Christ Jesus’ (verse 28). The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament explains the meaning of these two prepositions:

“Originally *eis* [into] denoted the same spatial dimensions as *en* [in], but as an indicator of direction *toward a goal*, not as an indicator of *location without direction*. Its use in the NT corresponds largely to classical usage, from which the specifically NT phrasing is commonly derived.”

The preposition *en* thus refers to a believer’s *position* in Christ while *eis* describes the believer’s initial *movement* into that position. In practical terms this means that when the Galatians were baptized into Christ they *moved into* their *position* ‘in Christ’.⁷⁵

This is the reason why believers ‘in Christ Jesus’ are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) and no longer face any condemnation (Romans 8:1) because they are seated in and with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6).⁷⁶

The Seed of Abraham

Galatians 3:29 adds valuable information to our analysis. In verse 16 the apostle has argued that the Seed of Abraham is a singular person, Jesus Christ. Yet in verse 29 the apostle adds that when believers are *baptized* into Christ they become Abraham’s seed in and through Christ.

In the days of Abraham circumcision at the *beginning* of physical life incorporated a person as a member of the covenant community. In the days of Paul, baptism (which replaces circumcision according to Colossians 2:11-13), takes place at the *beginning* of spiritual life and incorporates a person as a member of the New covenant community. Jews and Greeks, masters and bondservants, males and females become one in Christ at baptism and are children of Abraham because they all have the same faith that Abraham had. Once again, there is no reference to church office here but rather to membership in the covenant community.

⁷⁵ The preposition ‘into’ is used in several key baptismal texts. The preposition is used three times in Romans 6:3, 4 to describe the initial incorporation of believers into Christ: “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized *into* Christ Jesus were baptized *into* His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism *into* death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” The baptismal formula uses the same preposition: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them *in* [into] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19) and 1 Corinthians 10:2 describes the baptism of Israel into Moses. In Romans 16:7 the apostle Paul explained that Junias and Andronicus were in Christ before he was. This means that there was a specific point at which Paul, Junias and Andronicus were incorporated into Christ and that moment was baptism (see, Acts 22:16 for the specific moment when Paul was officially incorporated into Christ).

⁷⁶ Therefore, those who died, were buried and were resurrected with Jesus spiritually at baptism need not fear physical death because those who died in Christ will resurrect (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:18).

Summary

The emphasis of Galatians 3:26-29 then has to do with equality in Christ within the covenant community. When persons of different gender, social status and ethnic background are *baptized* they are all 'in Christ' and therefore are legitimate and equal members of the church. There can be no sense of superiority because of ethnic, social or gender distinctions. There can be no sense of rivalry between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female.

It is important to underline that Paul does not write that in Christ 'man is no longer the head of the woman' or that 'males and females can now serve as elders/overseers in the church.' Such statements would conflict with his own testimony in 1 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 5:22-33, First Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.⁷⁷ Clearly the cross did not erase

⁷⁷ One Adventist scholar who favors women's ordination has suggested that the gender specific requirement that elders must be the 'husbands of one wife' does not anymore disqualify women from being elders than the tenth commandment excludes women from obedience because God commanded men not to covet and not women. But such an argument is flawed. Does the fact that the tenth commandment only forbids a man to covet his neighbor's wife mean that it is allowable for the wife to covet another woman's husband? Perish the thought!

In Biblical thought, when God gives a command to the husband, he is expected to teach his wife and his entire family to obey the command because he is the head of the family. For example, God said about Abraham:

"For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

Someone might think that this was simply a patriarchal arrangement that kicked in after sin and was replaced at the cross. But is this the case? Let's answer this question by looking at how God expected the Sabbath to be passed on from one generation to another.

Before Adam and Eve sinned we are told that "The Sabbath was committed to *Adam*, the *father* and *representative* of the whole human family" Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 48 (cf. DA 281) Notice that God did not commit the Sabbath to Adam *and* Eve, the father and mother of the human family! He committed it to Adam. Does the fact that the Sabbath was committed to Adam mean that God did not expect Eve to keep it? To the contrary! Ellen White states that it was given to and for both:

"God saw that a Sabbath was essential for *Adam and Eve*, even in Paradise. In giving *them* the Sabbath, God considered their spiritual and physical health." Christ Triumphant, p. 18

How are we to understand that the Sabbath was given to Adam, the father and representative of the human race and yet it was also given to Eve? Is Ellen White talking out of both sides of her mouth? Clearly the Sabbath was given to Adam as the father and representative of the whole human family and he was expected to teach his wife and children as well as successive generations the meaning of the Sabbath and the importance of its observance. Regarding this responsibility Ellen White explains:

"*Adam* carefully treasured what God had revealed to *him*, and *handed it down* by word of mouth to *his* children and children's children." Spirit of Prophecy, volume 1, p. 59

the role distinctions that God established before sin. Man is still to fulfill the role of the father and 'house-band' and woman the role of the mother. The wife must still submit to the loving headship of her husband 'in the Lord' and husbands must still love their wives. There is not even the faintest hint in Galatians 3:28 or its context to indicate that Paul was addressing roles in the home or in the church. As expressed by Gordon Wenham:

"The context of vs. 28 shows that Paul is dealing with eligibility for baptism, not ministry . . . Paul is not talking about the roles of the sexes here therefore this passage is quite irrelevant to our discussion, and in no way contradicts what he has to say in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy."⁷⁸

The Fourth Possibility

It has taken us quite a while to get to the fourth possible meaning of the phrase 'there is neither male nor female.' The fourth possibility—and the one I believe to be correct—is that the *man-made* post-fall divisions and strife between Jews and Greeks, slaves and free and males and females will cease to exist in the minds of church members when they realize that when they *began* their Christian life as newborn babes they became members of the same family and therefore all are ontologically equal. Christ died to save all people regardless of their ethnicity, social status or gender and therefore in Christ they all belong to one and the same covenant community. Let not man cast asunder what Jesus has joined together!

The Cornelius Experience

The story of the conversion of Cornelius and his two friends in Acts 10 and 11 is illustrative of the meaning of Galatians 3:28. There are several things that Scripture says about Cornelius and his two companions. We know for a fact that:

- They *repented* (Acts 11:18).
- They *believed* (Acts 10:43).
- They received the *gift* of the Holy Spirit (10:44, 45).
- The Holy Spirit then immediately imparted the *charisma* or *gift of tongues* (Acts 10:46; 11:17).
- They were *baptized in water* as a seal of their union with Christ and with the Church (Acts 10:47, 48).

Several Adventist scholars have suggested that the inclusion of the Gentiles as *bona fide* members of the covenant community along with the Jews suggests that women should now be allowed to serve as elders/overseers in the church along with men. But can such a leap

And so it is that when God commanded the man not to commit adultery, he was to teach his wife and the rest of his family that the same commandment applied to them as well.

⁷⁸ Gordon Wenham, "The Ordination of Women: Why is it so Diverse?" Churchman 92 (1978), p. 312

of logic be legitimately taken? There is not the slightest hint in this story to indicate that functional roles in the home and in the church are being addressed. The text clearly indicates that when Cornelius and his two friends were baptized into Christ they were *saved* and became, so to speak, 'card carrying' members of the covenant community. The gift of the Holy Spirit that they received was one and the same as that which all newly baptized Jewish members received when they believed in Jesus! Peter later explained to the leadership in Jerusalem:

"If therefore God gave them [the Gentiles] the *same gift* as He gave us [the Jews] *when we believed* on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying: "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles *repentance to life*."

Up to this point Peter had cherished the misconception⁷⁹ that Gentiles could not be saved and become members of the New Covenant community. But the Cornelius experience taught Peter that Gentiles were not beyond the pale of salvation, nor were they second class citizens of Christ's kingdom but rather full-fledged members of the church with full rights and privileges.⁸⁰

There is nothing about qualifications for church office in this story. It is hermeneutically unfeasible to argue that equality of status in the sight of God and one another means equality of office in the church. This story cannot be used to determine who is qualified to occupy certain church offices. In order to ascertain the qualifications for church office it is necessary to go to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 where Paul clearly lays out those qualifications.

Commenting on the result of the Cornelius experience Ellen White perceptibly wrote:

"Thus, without controversy, *prejudice* was broken down, the *exclusiveness* established by the custom of ages was abandoned, and the way was opened for the gospel to be proclaimed to the Gentiles."⁸¹

One Adventist pastor has used this quotation to sustain the view that women should be ordained to positions of pastoral leadership as elders/overseers along with men. He argues that as the Jews were prejudiced against the Gentiles and barred them from full fellowship in the covenant community, so men in the church have been prejudiced against women and have barred them from positions of pastoral leadership. But isn't this like comparing apples with watermelons? Ontological equality in the church is one thing and qualification for church office quite another. The pastor's central argument seems to be: Because God is

⁷⁹ That the problem was Peter's own misguided perception and not an arrangement established by God is clearly indicated by Peter's remark: "In truth I *perceive* that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him." Acts 10:34, 35

⁸⁰ If they had full rights and privileges, were they not then entitled to serve as elders/overseers of the church? The answer is yes as long as they were called by God and met the qualifications that Paul established in First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and one of those qualifications is that they must be a 'one woman *man*'.

⁸¹ Ellen G. White, Acts of the Apostles, p. 142

no respecter of persons individuals can now serve as elders/overseers in the church without regard to gender. If they could not, then God would be a respecter of persons. But this line of reasoning has serious problems and implications.

Was the male only priesthood that God established in the Old Testament an exclusive and prejudicial system? Was a male only priesthood a mere 'custom of the ages' or did God institute it? Was God a respecter of persons because he allowed only males to serve as priests? These are serious questions that require serious reflection. If our answer to these questions is yes then we have to conclude that in the Old Testament God was prejudiced and a respecter of persons! But Peter himself stated that God is no respecter of persons.

In actual fact it was Peter who was prejudiced and a respecter of persons because of his own preconceived notions! In distinction to the priesthood of Aaron, the custom of excluding Gentiles from the covenant community was based, not on an arrangement established by God but upon the sinful prejudice of man.⁸² The fact is that God is no respecter of persons when it comes to a person's status, dignity and value but He is a respecter of persons when it comes to church office or function.

In all honesty, is the issue being addressed in Acts 10 and 11 a matter of *role distinctions* in the church? Is it a matter of gender? Does it really have anything to do with the ordination of individuals as elders/overseers? The context clearly indicates that the issue revolved around equal access to salvation, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the bestowal of the *charismata* at the *beginning* of their Christian experience. Does the following syllogism make logical sense?

- The Jews were prejudiced against the Gentiles and believed that they could not be saved and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- God removed the man-made barrier between Jews and Gentiles by giving the Gentiles salvation, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the *charismata* that He had given to the Jews.
- Therefore God has removed all role distinctions between men and women in the church and both can serve as elders/overseers.

At the risk of redundancy it bears repeating that baptism is the *initiation* rite that links us first with Christ and then with His church. At baptism Jews and Greeks, bond and free and males and females are one in Christ and become members of the one covenant community or family of faith. All are now brothers and sisters in Christ! What was previously a cause of strife and division no longer exists because all now belong to the same family.

In a real sense, however, Jews continue to be Jews and Greeks continue to be Greeks, masters continue to be masters and bondservants continue to be bondservants and males

⁸² In the sight of God, believing Gentiles could be included as members of the covenant community. Among others, we have the examples of Rahab and Ruth. Rahab and her family were spared because she believed that the Lord was the only true God (Joshua 2:8-11). Ruth's words to Naomi: "Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16) clearly indicate that she was repudiating her Moabite heritage and becoming an Israelite—and Ruth the Gentile became the progenitor of the Messiah!

continue to be male and females continue to be female. Yet one group cannot consider itself superior to another because of their ethnicity, social status or gender. They all have God as Father and Christ as brother and God is no respecter of persons. Jews and Greeks, bond and free, males and females have always been considered ontologically equal in the sight of God but unfortunately it has not always been so in the sight of men!

Colossians 3

Other Pauline passages confirm that Galatians 3:28 is dealing with equal status in the sight of God and fellow believers rather than with gender roles in the home and in the church. We will examine one of them.

In Colossians 3 the apostle Paul includes several clear allusions to the *initiation* rite of *baptism*. First he wrote that the members of Colossae had died and been raised with Christ (verses 1-3). Next he affirmed that those who had embraced Christ had *put off* the old man and *put on* the new. The use of the perfect tense indicates that Paul was discussing an experience that took place in their past experience, namely at baptism. Paul then concluded his argument by stating that because the Colossians had been incorporated into Christ and the covenant community by baptism, they became full-fledged members of that community and in consequence there is 'neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.' (Colossians 3:11)

Paul's point here is that Jews and Greeks, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian and slave and free have equal status, value and dignity in the sight of God and should therefore be considered in the same way in the minds of fellow believers. Where in the passage did Paul even faintly hint that he was discussing roles in the church?

The question might be asked: Could Jews, Greeks, circumcised, uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free *later* serve as pastors and elders of the church? Of course they could as long as they met all the biblical criteria, one of which was that they must be 'husbands of one wife'. But Paul is not addressing that particular point in this passage.

Notably, in the immediately succeeding context of Colossians 3:11, the apostle admonishes wives to submit to their husbands, husbands to love their wives, children to obey their parents and bondservants to obey their masters (Colossians 3:18-22). In the context there is no evidence whatever that Paul is advocating an elimination of gender roles in the home and in the church. Equality of status does not mean equality of roles and submission does not necessarily imply inferiority.

In none of the passages that we have examined does the emphasis fall upon functional roles or offices in the home and in the church. In all the passages the issue is equality of salvation, equality of standing before God and equality among the members of the covenant community at the beginning of the Christian life when a person receives Christ and is baptized.

Everyone in the church is equal in the sight of God. Everyone in the church has equal access to salvation. Every member has equal standing in the church. One group of church members should not consider themselves superior to others because of their race, gender, or social status. However, when Paul addresses the issue of elders/overseers in the church he is gender specific in stating that they must be husbands of one wife and rule their house and children wisely. Paul is not speaking out of both sides of his mouth!

Chronology of Galatians

It is important to realize that according to the vast majority of New Testament scholars, Galatians was one of the earliest epistles written by the apostle, most likely sometime between AD 49 and 57. The same scholars date First Timothy and Titus to a period later in Paul's ministry, most likely at some point between the years 61-67 AD. Though the precise date of Galatians and First Timothy is uncertain, one thing is quite certain: Galatians was written *before* 1 Timothy and Titus.

This leads to a very important question related to the meaning of Galatians 3:28. The question is this: Would Paul write earlier in his ministry that because in Christ there is neither male nor female (Galatians 3:28), women can serve in the roles of elder/overseer and then do an about face toward the end of his ministry and write to Timothy and Titus that elders and bishops must be husbands of one wife? To put it simply, was Paul in favor of women as elders/overseers early in his ministry when he wrote Galatians 3:28 and against it later on when he wrote First Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9? Did Paul change his mind about women's ordination and become a complementarian toward the end of his ministry after being an egalitarian at the beginning?

Unless one is willing to concede that the apostle Paul contradicted himself (as P. K. Jewett does), the opposite is true. Some egalitarian scholars use trajectory hermeneutics to argue that Paul evolved from being a complementarian at the beginning of his ministry to an egalitarian position later on—that is, Paul outgrew his early rabbinical bias against women and toward the end of his life became totally gender inclusive. Yet this view simply does not square with the evidence because Galatians was written before 1 Timothy and Titus! If anything, Paul grew out of an egalitarian position (Galatians 3:28) and later became a complementarian (First Timothy 3 and Titus 1)!

Ellen White and Galatians 3:28

Some egalitarians have used the following quotation from the pen of Ellen White to bolster their case in favor of ordinations to pastoral leadership without regard to gender:

“No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of *one family* by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every

compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan's circle the poor souls who have been deluded by his deceptions. It places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise.

In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. All are *brought nigh* by His precious blood. (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:13)⁸³

Are those who use this quotation in this manner respecting its legitimate context?

First of all, it is important to underline that although Ellen White is clearly alluding to Galatians 3:28 she did not include the phrase 'male or female' in this quotation. Not only did she stop short of quoting the last phrase of the verse, but at the beginning of the quotation she refers only to a distinction of nationality, race and caste. Gender is totally absent from the quotation!

Second, even a cursory reading of this quotation even apart from its context indicates that Ellen White is underlining the fact that everyone, regardless of national origin or social status, is ontologically equal and has free access to God and to salvation because all are one by creation and by redemption. There is not even the slightest hint in the statement that Ellen White was discussing the ministerial roles of men and women in the church. In fact, as I pointed out before, she does not even mention male and female in her quotation. She is clearly discussing how God sees people and how we should treat them in the light of this fact.

The misuse of this quotation is even more troubling when we take into consideration the context in which it appears. Does the quotation, within its immediate context, really have anything to do with the roles of men and women who minister to others? The answer is clearly no.

In the chapter where this statement is found, Ellen White is expounding upon the story of the Good Samaritan. She explains that the Good Samaritan represents Christ who came to minister to and save the lost irrespective of *their* nationality, race, rank, birth, attainments or caste. Ellen White then extends the meaning of the parable to us by emphasizing that we should be like the Good Samaritan. That is, we should follow the example of Christ and work for the salvation of the lost no matter what *their* caste, social class, rank, color, race, birth or attainments.

Ellen White's point is not that there should be no male or female role distinctions among those *who minister*. After all, she does not even mention male and female! Rather she is insisting that we should *minister to* individuals without regard to *their* caste or social status!! She is not saying that the roles of those *who minister* are the same without regard

⁸³ Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, p. 386

to gender but rather that those *who minister* should show no prejudice or partiality toward those to *whom they minister* be they bond or free, Jew or Greek. Thus this quotation has been taken out of its legitimate context and applied to those who minister rather than to those who are *ministered to*.

Though it is true that men and women who minister to others are ontologically equal (though they have different roles) it is illegitimate to use this quotation to prove such a point because Ellen White is not addressing those who minister but rather those who are ministered to. It would be correct to state that Jesus ministered to both males and females without regard to gender but He did not teach by precept or example that those who serve as elders/overseers should serve in all ministerial capacities without regard to gender—after all He did choose twelve male apostles!

Another statement that is frequently misused is found in The Review and Herald, December 22, 1891:

“Then as the children of God are *one* in Christ, how does Jesus look upon caste, upon society distinctions, upon the *division* of man from his fellow-man, because of color, race, position, wealth, birth, or attainments? The secret of *unity* is found in the *equality* of believers in Christ. The reason of all division, discord, and difference is found in separation from Christ. Christ is the center to which all should be attracted; for the nearer we approach the center, the closer we shall come together in feeling, in sympathy, in love, growing into the character and image of Jesus. With God there is *no respect of persons*.”⁸⁴

It bears noting that Ellen White in this article does not even allude to Galatians 3:28. She states that believers are not to be divided by national distinctions, sectarian differences, honor of rank, pride of caste, man-made separations between class and race, color, position, wealth, birth, and attainments. Once again, Ellen White does not even include women in the equation neither does she discuss church offices.

Even a casual glance at this quotation indicates that the potential reason for strife is due to the fact that one group or person might consider themselves superior to others because of their differences in nationality, sects, honor of rank, pride of caste, man-made separations between class and race, color, position, wealth, birth, and attainments. In other words, Ellen White’s emphasis is upon church unity because we are all one under God. Nothing in the statement or its context even faintly indicates that Ellen White is discussing ministerial roles in the church. If God was no respecter of persons when He chose males only to serve as Old Testament priests, why would He be a respecter of persons by choosing only males to serve as elders/overseers?

The emphasis of this Ellen White quotation is crystal clear: There should be no strife among believers because of nationality, caste or race. All are equal in dignity, value and standing in

⁸⁴ Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, December 22, 1891

the sight of God. But does this mean that in the family the woman ceases to fulfill the role of mother and the man no longer fulfills the function as father? Does it mean that motherly and fatherly roles are interchangeable? Does this mean that men and women have identical roles in the church and that if women submit to the spiritual headship of men they are inferior? A reading of this quotation in its original context indicates that Ellen White is not discussing roles in ministry at all and she never even mentions the matter of gender. She is simply saying that there should be no strife in the church over the status of people. All are equal in the sight of God and should be in the sight of their fellow believers.

Ellen White and Headship

Ellen White, in full harmony with Paul, unambiguously affirms that the husband is still the head of the wife and that wise male headship in the home qualifies a man to exercise wise male headship in the church.

As I pointed out earlier, Ellen White has repeatedly confirmed that male headship in the home did not cease at the cross. It is *still* God's plan that the husband be the head of the wife in the family relationship. Here is but one example:

"The Lord has constituted the husband the head of the wife to be her protector; he is the house-band of the family, binding the members together, *even* as Christ is the head of the church and the Savior of the mystical body. Let every husband who claims to love God carefully study the requirements of God in his position. Christ's authority is exercised in wisdom, in all kindness and gentleness; *so* let the husband exercise his power and *imitate* the great Head of the church."⁸⁵

Male Headship in the Church

But does male headship in the home 'spill over' to male headship in the church? That is, does male leadership in the home qualify a man to be a leader in the church? The answer to this question is clearly found in both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

The apostle Paul explicitly stated, when he wrote to Timothy, that the elder/overseer who is a one-woman *man* should be "one who rules his own house well, having *his children* in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule *his own house*, how will he take care of *the church of God?*)" (First Timothy 3:4, 5)

And when Paul wrote to Titus he affirmed that the elder/overseer who is the husband of one wife is required to have "faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination." (Titus 1:6)

In words that are impossible to be misunderstood Ellen White agreed with Paul:

⁸⁵ Ellen G. White, Counsels to the Church, p. 145, 146

“The family of the one suggested for office should be considered. Are they in subjection? Can the *man* rule *his* own house with honor? What character have *his* children? Will they do honor to the *father's* influence? If *he* has no tact, wisdom, or power of godliness at home in managing *his* own family, it is safe to conclude that the same defects will be carried into the church, and the same unsanctified management will be seen there. It will be far better to criticize *the man* before *he* is put into office than afterward, better to pray and counsel before taking the decisive step than to labor to correct the consequences of a wrong move.”⁸⁶

And again:

“He who is engaged in the work of the gospel ministry must be faithful in *his* family life. It is as essential that as a *father* *he* should improve the talents God has given *him* for the purpose of making the *home* a symbol of the heavenly family, as that in the work of the ministry, *he* should make use of *his* God given powers to win souls for the *church*. As the *priest* in the *home*, and as the ambassador of Christ in the *church*, *he* should exemplify in *his* life the character of Christ. *He* must be faithful in watching for souls as one that must give an account. In *his* service there must be seen no carelessness and inattentive work. God will not serve with the sins of *men* who have not a clear sense of the sacred responsibility involved in accepting a position as *pastor of a church*. *He* who fails to be a faithful, discerning shepherd in the *home*, will surely fail of being a faithful *shepherd of the flock* of God in the *church*.”⁸⁷

Ellen White wrote the following words to a man who had failed to exercise wise leadership in his home:

“You have not ruled well your *own house*, and while you lack so much at home, you cannot be entrusted to dictate important and responsible matters in the *church*. This scripture was presented before me; “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?”⁸⁸

Ellen White underlined that God’s plan for *male* leadership in the church is the same as existed in the Old Testament:

“The same principles of piety and justice that were to guide the *rulers* among God's people in the time of Moses and of David were also to be followed by those given the oversight of the newly organized church of God in the gospel dispensation. In the work of setting things

⁸⁶ Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, p. 618

⁸⁷ Ellen G. White, Manuscript 42, 1903, pp. 1, 2 (“The Training of Children,” typed May 4, 1903) 6MR 49

⁸⁸ Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, Supplement, August 19, 1862

in order in all the churches, and ordaining suitable *men* to act as *officers*, the apostles held to the high standards of leadership outlined in the *Old Testament Scriptures*.”⁸⁹

Sweeping Generalizations

I have found that frequently, sweeping generalizations are made among Adventist egalitarians to impress the reader with the idea that women’s ordination to pastoral leadership was a common occurrence in New Testament times. Usually only Scripture references are given and the impression is left that it was common for women to serve in *every* leadership position conceivable in the New Testament Church.

For example, after providing the usual New Testament references (but no quotations) in favor of women in positions of leadership, the North Pacific Union Women in Leadership Ad Hoc Committee released the following statement: “We see no teaching that prohibits the church from appointing women to any position of ministry or leadership and much that suggests such actions to be entirely appropriate.”⁹⁰

Notably, the seven page document does not make reference to First Timothy 3:1-7 or Titus 1:5-9, because if the redactors had done so, their central thesis would have been overthrown.

In order to prove that we should ordain women to pastoral leadership, another notable Adventist scholar provided a list of leadership positions that were occupied by women in the New Testament Church:

“. . . women did not immediately receive *full and equal* participation with men in the ministry of the church. However, Phoebe is mentioned as a ‘deacon’ (Rom. 16:1); Junia was a female apostle (Rom. 16:7), and leaders of the church at Philippi were women (Phil. 4:2, 3). Priscilla assumed an authoritative teaching role *over* men (Acts 18), and the ‘Elect Lady (2 John) may well have been a prominent church *leader* with a *congregation under her care*.”⁹¹

It is no doubt true that Phoebe ministered to the church of Cenchrea but there is no proof that she was ever ordained or that she was a deacon in the technical sense of the word; it is inconclusive whether Junias was a female or an apostle as our scholar so confidently states; Philippians 4:2, 3 nowhere says that the women at the church of Philippi were *leaders* but rather that they were fellow-laborers with Paul. My wife is a fellow-laborer with me in ministry but this does not mean that she is an elder/overseer! Nowhere are we told in Acts 18 that Priscilla assumed an *authoritative* teaching role *over* men. Rather the text clearly explains that Priscilla and Aquila *both* taught Apollos the word of God more accurately

⁸⁹ Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 95

⁹⁰ John McVay, Al Reimche and Sue Smith, “Reflections on the Theology and Practice of Ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” draft dated 10/3/2012, p. 6

⁹¹ Richard Davidson, *Pacific Union Recorder* “Yes: The Bible Supports the Ordination/Commissioning of Women Pastors,” Special Constituency Edition (August 2012), pp. 45, 47

(Acts 18:26) and this was done on a one to one basis *in private*⁹² after Apollos had given a public lecture in the synagogue, not in congregational worship! There is nothing in Scripture that would forbid a woman from serving, along with her husband, as a Bible worker!

And finally there is no hint in the text to indicate that the Elect Lady of 2 John was an apostle, an elder or an overseer. Nor is there any evidence that she was ordained to be the leader of a specific local church. Ellen White identifies this woman as “a *helper* in the gospel work, a woman of good repute and wide influence.”⁹³ There were many women that could be described this way who were never ordained or served as leaders of churches, women such as Lydia, Dorcas and Priscilla.

Some Adventist egalitarian scholars have documented that in our denominational history from 1872 to 1915 women were licensed to preach, several served as very successful evangelists, many were Conference treasurers and many others served as conference departmental directors. What is most frequently left unsaid is that none of these women were ever ordained, received a ministerial *credential* or served in leadership positions such as senior pastors or elders of churches or as Conference, Union or General Conference presidents.⁹⁴

⁹² The NIV indicates that the teaching took place at home, not in a public setting.

⁹³ Ellen G. White, Acts of the Apostles, p. 554

⁹⁴ Some have suggested that there was at least one woman besides Ellen White who received a ministerial credential. Ellen White wrote about Dr. Caro, a prominent dentist in New Zealand: “Sister Caro is a superior dentist. She has all the work she can do. She is a tall stately woman, but sociable and companionable. You would love her if you should see her. She does not hoard her means, she puts it into bags which wax not old. She handles an immense amount of money, and she uses the money to *educate young men* to become laborers for the Master. I am greatly attached to her. She holds her diploma as dentist and her *credentials as minister*. She speaks to the church *when there is no minister*, so you see that she is a very capable woman. Her husband is a physician and surgeon.” Letter 33, 1893 quoted in 9MR 25

What some fail to reveal is that according to The Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook for 1894 Dr. Caro received a *ministerial license*, not a Ministerial Credential? Ellen White affirmed as much when she stated: “She [Sister Caro] is a queenly woman, tall, and every way proportioned. Sister Caro not only does her business, but she has a *ministerial license* and bears many burdens in their church at Napier [New Zealand]. She speaks to the people, is intelligent and every way capable. She supports her three sons--two in Battle Creek, and one in England who is studying law . . . Dr. Caro supports the home. Sister Caro takes in a great deal of money, but nothing is expended in luxuries. She is supporting *young men* in the Bible school at Melbourne, besides some in America. The Lord blesses this noble, unselfish woman. Her work is about double when compared with the patronage of the other dentists in Napier.” Manuscript 22, 1893

There is a difference between a ministerial license and a ministerial credential. As far as I have been able to determine the only woman in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church from 1860 till 1915 to receive a ministerial credential was Ellen G. White. On March 5, 1899 Pastor D. W. Reavis asked the following question of the chair of the General Conference Ministerial Credentials and Licenses Committee: “I have wanted to know for some time what is the difference between ministerial credentials and ministerial license.” Here is the Chair’s answer: “Ministerial credentials are granted to ordained ministers in good standing, and engaged in active labor. Ministerial licenses are granted to licentiates—those who are engaged in preaching, but who have *not yet been ordained* to the gospel ministry.” Minutes of the March 5, 1899 General Conference Daily Bulletin, 147.50

Complementarians are not opposed to women serving in various capacities in the church. In fact, we encourage women to use their God-given gifts within the parameters that He has established. For example, as I was writing this paper a woman was elected treasurer of the conference where I serve as a pastor. Did I object to this appointment? Far from it! When I heard that she was elected, I had no doubt in my mind that she was the best qualified for the job and I warmly congratulated her and wished her the best in her new post. But the president of the conference (which would be equivalent to regional elders such as Timothy and Titus in the apostolic church) in harmony with the Bible and denominational policy is the 'husband of one wife'.

For many years my wife managed the finances of our household. Our salaries were deposited in the bank and she made sure that the bills were paid on time. This was a great relief to me. I felt somewhat like Potiphar who delegated the administrative responsibility to Joseph and therefore did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate (Genesis 39:9). Did this make Joseph the head of Potiphar's household? Of course not! I am sure that when important administrative issues surfaced which were beyond Joseph's realm of authority to resolve, he consulted with Potiphar. Likewise my wife did not act independently of my counsel. When a decision requiring a large and unusual expenditure was needed, my wife always consulted with me to ask for guidance on what she should do. Was my wife the head of the household because she was the treasurer? Of course not!

Reflections on Ellen White's 1895 Statement

In an attempt to prove that women should be ordained as elders/overseers, some women's ordination advocates have misused the following statement by Ellen White:

"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. Place the burdens upon men and women of the church that they may grow by reason of the exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness."⁹⁵

A careful reading of this statement clearly indicates that Ellen White was not describing the work of an elder/overseer but rather the basic duties of what today we call a deaconess.

⁹⁵ Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, July 9, 1895

In his penetrating book that is based on his doctoral dissertation, The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting on the Biblical Model, Vincent E. White Jr. rebukes those who misuse this Ellen White quotation:

“And to add insult to injury, proponents for the ordination of female elders and female pastors are *misusing* Ellen G. White’s statement, made in 1895 in favor of the ordination of deaconesses, to support their position.”⁹⁶

The White Estate adds its testimony:

“There is no documentary evidence that EGW was calling for the ordination of women to gospel ministry in the RH article. The immediate internal context (‘visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor’) may suggest she had in mind the work of a *deaconess*. The opinion of EGW’s personal secretary, Clarence C. Crisler, writing within one year of Mrs. White’s death, was to the effect that EGW was referring to *ordination of deaconesses* rather than gospel ministers.”⁹⁷

Setting deaconesses apart by the laying on of hands no more qualifies them to be ordained as elders/overseers than the laying on of hands upon the Levites qualified them to be priests. Ellen White also advocated laying hands on physicians.⁹⁸ Does this mean that they were entitled to serve as elders/overseers in the church? Though the act of laying on of hands in these cases is the same, the office to which they are set apart is different.

I could find only one statement on the Ellen White CD Rom where she used the word ‘deaconess’. Ellen White did not understand the roles of deacons and deaconesses to be identical and interchangeable. Though it is true that in some ways the roles of deacons and deaconesses overlap yet in other ways their roles are different. There are clearly some roles for deaconesses that cannot be filled by male deacons or even elders and vice-versa.⁹⁹

An example of this distinction between an ordained minister and a deaconess can be seen in an episode that involved one of our pioneers. It seems like A. T. Jones was for some time counseling women in the church that came to him with their problems. This led Ellen White to write him the following rebuke:

“You are not to set such an example that women will feel at liberty to tell you the grievances of their home life, and to draw upon your sympathies. When a woman comes to you with her troubles, tell her plainly to go to her sisters, to tell her troubles to the *deaconesses of the church*. Tell her that she is out of place in opening her troubles to any

⁹⁶ Vincent E. White Jr. The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting on the Biblical Model, p. 31

⁹⁷ Quoted in, Vincent E. White Jr. The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting on the Biblical Model, p. 33

⁹⁸ Ellen G. White, Counsels on Health, p. 540

⁹⁹ It should be noted that there is evidence in Adventist history that women were ordained to the office of ‘deaconess’. Ellen White’s 1895 statement, along with the precedents in Adventist history is no doubt what led the 59th General Conference Session to approve the ordination of deaconesses.

man, for men are easily beguiled and tempted. Tell the one who has thrown her case upon you that God has not placed this burden upon any man. You are not wise to take these burdens upon yourself. It is not your appointed work.”¹⁰⁰

The noted Bible commentator, Adam Clarke, described the distinction between the roles of male deacons and female deaconesses in the early church in similar terms to Ellen White:

“There were deaconesses in the primitive church, whose business it was to attend the *female* converts at baptism; to instruct the catechumens, or persons who were candidates for baptism: to visit the sick, and those who were in prison; and, in short, perform those religious offices, for the *female part* of the church, which could *not with propriety be performed by men*. They were chosen in general out of the most experienced of the church; and were ordinarily widows, who had borne children. Some ancient constitutions required them to be forty, others fifty, and others sixty years of age. It is evident that they were ordained to their office, by the imposition of the hands of the bishop; and the form of prayer used on the occasion is extant in the Apostolical Constitution.”¹⁰¹

What shall we say then about the 1895 statement? The simple answer is that it has nothing to do with women being set apart as elders/overseers. Several facts emerge from a careful reading of the statement:

- The title of the original article is ‘*The Duty of the Minister and the People*’ thus clearly establishing a distinction between the pastor and the laity in the church.
- Every individual in the church, whether male or female, should be involved *in ministry*. All should be involved in enlightening those who sit in darkness.
- The women referenced by Ellen White worked *part time* and their ministry was *not one of leadership* in the church. The job description of visiting the sick, looking after the young, and ministering to the necessities of the poor is what we today call a ‘deaconess’.
- Ellen White did affirm that women who were engaged in this part time work should be set apart by the laying on of hands for *this particular work*. This is in line with the vote of the 59th General Conference session that approved the ordination of deaconesses. But it would be a gigantic leap of logic to state that because a woman is set apart by the laying on of hands to be a deaconess, she can serve as an elder which is an entirely different function!
- It is clear that these women were *not ministers or officers* of the church because we are told that they might need to *counsel with* the church officers or the minister.

¹⁰⁰ Ellen G. White, [Manuscript Releases](#), volume 21, pp. 97, 98

¹⁰¹ Adam Clarke’s [Electronic Database Commentary](#), Romans 16:1

The very same year that Ellen White's 1895 statement appeared in The Review and Herald, another article appeared in Signs of the Times where the editor stated categorically that women should *not* be ordained as elders. A reader asked the following question of the editor:

"Should women be elected to offices in the church when there are enough brethren?"

Here is the editor's response:

"If by this is meant the office of *elder*, we should say at once, *No*. But there are offices in the church which women can fill acceptably, and oftentimes there are found sisters in the church who are better qualified for this than brethren, such offices, for instance as church clerk, treasurer, librarian of the tract society, etc., as well as the office of deaconess, assisting the deacons in looking after the poor, and in doing such other duties as would naturally fall to their lot. The qualifications for church elder are set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:7-9. *We do not believe that it is in God's plan to give to women the ordained offices of the church.* By this we do not mean to depreciate their labors, service, or devotion. The sphere of woman is *equal* [italics in the original] to that of man. She was made a help meet, or fit, for man, but that does *not* [italics in original] mean that her sphere [or role] is *identical* [italics in original] to that of man's. The interests of the church and the world generally would be better served if the *distinctions given in God's word* were regarded."¹⁰²

Several things stand out in this answer:

- There are some positions in the church for which women are *better qualified* than men.
- Those positions do *not include* the office of ordained elders.
- Women are disqualified to be elders because they fail to meet the *Scripture qualifications* in 1 Timothy and Titus.
- The editors openly admitted that although women and men are *equal* in the sight of God their roles in the church are *different*. This is precisely what Seventh-day Adventist complementarians have believed all along.

There was no outcry for the editor to resign because of his 'sexist' remarks. There is no evidence that there was any negative reaction on the part of the readers. Furthermore, if Ellen White believed that women should be ordained as elders/overseers, why didn't she

¹⁰² Signs of the Times, "Question Corner # 176: Who Should Be Church Officers?" January, 1895

take the opportunity to correct the editor's remarks when she wrote her article just a few months later?¹⁰³

Phoebe and Huldah

As I have studied the literature on women's ordination, I have found that Adventist egalitarians frequently make sweeping generalizations to impress the reader with the idea that in New Testament times it was commonplace for women to occupy positions of pastoral leadership. Oftentimes general statements are made, and only Scripture *references* are given, and readers are left with the impression that women served in *every* leadership position conceivable in the Apostolic Church.

For example, after providing the usual New Testament references (but no quotations) in favor of women in positions of pastoral leadership, the North Pacific Union Women in Leadership Ad Hoc Committee released the following statement:

"We see no teaching that prohibits the church from appointing women to *any* position of ministry or leadership and much that suggests such actions to be entirely appropriate." John McVay, Al Reimche and Sue Smith, "Reflections on the Theology and Practice of Ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church," draft dated 10/3/2012, p. 6

It is significant that the seven page document does not make any reference whatsoever to 1Timothy 3:1-7 or Titus 1:5-9. The reason is obvious. If the authors had included these passages in the document, their thesis that *all* positions of leadership are open to women would have been instantly overthrown because both of these passages restrict the office of elder/overseer to men who are husbands of one wife and manage their homes wisely.

Women in Ministry

In an attempt to prove that we should ordain women to pastoral leadership, a well-known and highly respected Adventist scholar provided a list of leadership positions that were *presumably* filled by women in the New Testament Church. After admitting that, "women did not immediately receive full and equal participation with men in the ministry of the church" the author goes on to confidently state with great certainty:

"However, Phoebe is mentioned as a 'deacon' (Rom. 16:1); Junia was a female apostle (Rom. 16:7), and leaders of the church at Philippi were women (Phil. 4:2, 3). Priscilla

¹⁰³ In a Signs of the Times editorial for December 19, 1878, J. H. Waggoner had already stated: "The divine arrangement, even from the beginning, is this, that the man is the head of the woman. Every relation is disregarded or abused in this lawless age. But the Scriptures always maintain this order in the family relation. 'For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church' Ephesians. 5:23. Man is entitled to certain privileges which are not given to woman; and he is subjected to some duties and burdens from which the woman is exempt. A woman may pray, prophesy, exhort, and comfort the church, but she cannot occupy the position of a pastor or ruling elder. This would be looked upon as usurping authority over the man, which is here [1 Timothy 2:12] prohibited."

assumed an authoritative teaching role *over* men (Acts 18), and the 'Elect Lady' (2 John) may well have been a prominent church *leader with a congregation under her care.*" Richard Davidson, Pacific Union Recorder "Yes: The Bible Supports the Ordination/Commissioning of Women Pastors," Special Constituency Edition (August 2012), pp. 45, 47.

Women on the Scholar's List

But there are problems with our scholar's sweeping generalizations. Scripture is clear that Phoebe did minister in and to the church of Cenchrea. But there is no clear evidence in the text to suggest that she was ever ordained or that she was a deacon in the sense of a *church office*. The fact that scholars are divided on Phoebe's role and status in the church of Cenchrea should lead us to be cautious about making definitive statements. We will come back to Phoebe a little later in this article.

What about the other women who are mentioned by our respected scholar? As I have shown in a previous article (Secrets Unsealed Ministry Update, "Reflections on Junia", First Quarter (2014), the evidence is inconclusive that Junias was an apostle or even a female for that matter. Philippians 4:2, 3 nowhere says that the women at the church of Philippi were *leaders* but rather that they were fellow-laborers with Paul. My wife is a fellow-laborer with me in ministry but this does not mean that she is an ordained elder/overseer in the church or the head of our household!

Furthermore, nowhere in Acts 18 are we told that Priscilla assumed an *authoritative* teaching role *over* men. Rather the text clearly explains that Priscilla and Aquila *both* taught Apollos the word of God more accurately (Acts 18:26), not in a public worship setting but rather on a one-to-one basis *in private*! It was *after* Apollos had taught *publicly* in the synagogue that both Priscilla and Aquila took him *aside privately* and explained the Scriptures to him. That Priscilla participated with her husband in teaching Apollos proves nothing of substance for Adventist egalitarians because there is nothing in Scripture that would forbid women from serving as Bible instructors along with their husbands! There have been many successful husband and wife ministry teams in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

And finally, with regards to the Elect Lady of 2 John 2, there is not the slightest hint in the text to indicate that she was an apostle, an elder/overseer or even a deaconess. Nor is there any evidence that she was ordained and was the leader of a specific local church. Ellen White identifies this woman as "a *helper* in the gospel work, a woman of good repute and wide influence" (AA, p. 554). There were many women in the apostolic church who could fit this description who were never ordained or served as elders/overseers of churches, women such as Lydia, Dorcas and Priscilla.

Women in Adventist History

Some Adventist egalitarians such as Bert Haloviak, have carefully documented that in our denominational history from 1872 to 1915 women were *licensed* to preach, several served as very successful evangelists, some were Conference treasurers and others served as conference departmental directors. What is most frequently deemphasized is the fact that none of these women were ever *ordained* to positions of pastoral leadership on a local, regional, or global level. None of them received a ministerial *credential* or served as pastors or elders of churches or as Conference, Union or General Conference presidents. And none of them were ever addressed with the title of 'Elder' or 'Pastor'.

Dr. Margaret Caro

Some egalitarian Adventists have suggested that there was at least one other woman besides Ellen White who received a ministerial credential. Ellen White wrote about Dr. Margaret Caro, a prominent New Zealand Adventist *dentist*:

"Sister Caro is a superior dentist. She has all the work she can do. She is a tall stately woman, but sociable and companionable. You would love her if you should see her. She does not hoard her means; she puts it into bags which wax not old. She handles an immense amount of money, and she uses the money to educate *young men* to become laborers for the Master. I am greatly attached to her. She holds her diploma as dentist and her *credentials as minister*. She speaks to the church *when there is no minister*, so you see that she is a very capable woman. Her husband is a physician and surgeon." Letter 33, 1893 quoted in 9MR, p. 25

Thus it would appear, by Ellen White's own testimony, that Dr. Caro was a *credentialed* minister, and some Adventist egalitarians have argued that *if* she was credentialed then she must have been ordained. But was she a credentialed minister? According to The Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook of 1894 (one year after Ellen White wrote!) Dr. Caro received a Ministerial *License*, not a Ministerial Credential and Ellen White herself recognized this fact when she stated:

"She [Sister Caro] is a queenly woman, tall, and every way proportioned. Sister Caro not only does her business, but she has a *ministerial license* and bears many burdens in their church at Napier [New Zealand]. She speaks to the people, is intelligent and every way capable. She supports her three sons--two in Battle Creek, and one in England who is studying law. . . . Dr. Caro supports the home. Sister Caro takes in a great deal of money, but nothing is expended in luxuries. She is supporting *young men* in the Bible school at Melbourne, besides some in America. The Lord blesses this noble, unselfish woman. Her work is about double when compared with the patronage of the other dentists in Napier." Manuscript 22, 1893

Ministerial License and Ministerial Credential

In the times of Ellen White (as well as today) there was a clear difference between a Ministerial License and a Ministerial Credential. While a good number of women in the history of our church have received Ministerial Licenses, my research has indicated that the only woman who ever received a Ministerial Credential in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church from its inception until recent times was Ellen G. White. And I have shown in a recent article [[Secrets Unsealed Ministry Update](#), “Reflections on Deborah and Huldah”, Third Quarter (2013)] that Ellen G. White was never ordained, she was never referred to as ‘Elder White’ or ‘Pastor White,’ never pastored a church, never occupied a position of leadership at any level of our denominational structure and strongly denied that she was the leader of the denomination.

On March 5, 1899 Pastor D. W. Reavis asked the chair of the General Conference Ministerial Credentials and Licenses Committee to clarify the difference between a Ministerial License and a Ministerial Credential. In his own words:

“I have wanted to know for some time what is the difference between ministerial credentials and ministerial license”

The Chair answered:

“Ministerial *credentials* are granted to *ordained ministers* in good standing, and engaged in active labor. Ministerial *licenses* are granted to *licentiates*—those who are engaged in preaching, but who have *not yet been ordained* to the gospel ministry.” Minutes of the March 5, 1899 [General Conference Daily Bulletin](#), 147.50

Not Opposed to Women in Ministry

Contrary to what many Adventist egalitarians would have us believe, Adventist complementarians are not opposed to women serving in various ministries in the church. In fact, Adventist complementarians strongly encourage women to use their Spirit-given gifts, but within the clear biblical parameters that God has established in 1Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

As I was writing this article, a woman was elected treasurer of the Central California Conference where I serve as a pastor. Did I disagree theologically with this appointment? Not at all! When I heard that she had been chosen, there was no doubt in my mind that she was the best qualified person for the job and I warmly congratulated her and wished her the best in her new responsibility. But it bears noting that our conference president, (whose position is equivalent to regional overseeing elders such as Timothy and Titus in the apostolic church) in harmony with the Bible criteria and denominational policy, is the ‘husband of one wife’.

For several years in the past my wife managed the finances of our household. Our salaries were deposited in the bank and she made sure the bills were paid on time. This lifted a great burden from my shoulders. Although my wife managed our household finances, she never made unilateral decisions. When a decision requiring a large and unusual expenditure was needed, my wife always consulted with me to ask for guidance as to what she should do. Was my wife the head of our household because she managed our finances? Of course not!

Actually, during that time I felt somewhat like Potiphar who delegated the administrative responsibilities of his house to Joseph and therefore did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate (cf. Genesis 39:9). Did Joseph's position as the 'Chief Financial and Operating Officer' of Potiphar's goods make him the *head* of Potiphar's household? Of course not! Although Potiphar remained the head of the household, Ellen White assures us that he treated Joseph as a son rather than a servant and Joseph became his "confidant and companion" (YI March 11, 1897; CC 366). Did Joseph usurp Potiphar's position as head of the household? The evidence indicates otherwise! I am sure that when important administrative issues surfaced which were beyond Joseph's realm of authority to resolve, he consulted with Potiphar, the head of the household.

J. H. Waggoner Editorial

As early as December 19, 1878 an editorial appeared in Signs of the Times where J. H. Waggoner clearly stated the view of the church of that time on the issue of women's ordination to the church office of 'elder':

"The divine arrangement, even from the beginning, is this, that the man is the head of the woman. Every relation is disregarded or abused in this lawless age. But the Scriptures always maintain this order in the family relation. 'For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.' Eph. 5:23. Man is entitled to certain privileges which are not given to woman; and he is subjected to some duties and burdens from which the woman is exempt. A woman may pray, prophesy, exhort, and comfort the church, but she cannot occupy the position of a pastor or ruling elder. This would be looked upon as usurping authority over the man, which is here [1 Timothy 2:12] prohibited."

Signs of the Times

Some seventeen years later, the church still held to the same view. In the Question Corner of the January 24, 1895 issue of Signs of the Times a reader asked the editors the following question:

"Should women be elected to offices in the church when there are enough brethren?"

The response of the editors was unequivocal:

“If by this is meant the office of *elder*, we should say at once, *No*. But there are offices in the church which women can fill acceptably, and oftentimes there are found sisters in the church who are better qualified for this than brethren, such offices, for instance as church clerk, treasurer, librarian of the tract society, etc., as well as the office of deaconess, *assisting the deacons* in looking after the poor, and in doing such other duties as would naturally fall to their lot. The qualifications for church elder are set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:7-9. *We do not believe that it is in God’s plan* to give to women the *ordained offices* of the church. By this we do not mean to depreciate their labors, service, or devotion. The sphere of woman is *equal* [italics in the original] to that of man. She was made a help meet, or fit, for man, but that does *not* [italics in original] mean that her sphere [or role] is *identical* [italics in original] to that of man’s. The interests of the church and the world generally would be better served if the *distinctions given in God’s word* were regarded.” Signs of the Times, “Question Corner # 176: Who Should Be Church Officers?” January 24, 1895

Several things stand out in this answer:

- There are some positions in the church for which women are *better qualified* than men.
- Those positions do *not include* the office of ordained elders.
- Women are disqualified to be elders because they fail to meet the *Scripture qualifications* in 1 Timothy and Titus.
- Deaconesses are *assistants* to the male deacons in the church.
- The editors openly admitted that although women and men are *equal* in the sight of God their functions in the church are *different*.
- Things in the church and the world would be better served if the *distinctions* given in *God’s word* were regarded.

In spite of the fact that at the time there was in society a great cultural push in favor of women’s ordination, there was no outcry for the editor to resign because of his ‘sexist’ remarks and there is no evidence that there was any negative reaction on the part of the readers. It is also interesting that on the very same page there was an article on obedience written by Ellen G. White. If she did not agree with the editor’s response to the question, why didn’t she take the opportunity to correct him?

Ellen White's 1895 Statement

In an attempt to prove that women should be ordained as pastors and elders/overseers, some women's ordination advocates have misused an Ellen G. White statement which was published in the Review and Herald on July 9, 1895, just six months after the editors of Signs of the Times had stated that women should not be ordained as elders. Here is the statement:

"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. Place the burdens upon *men and women of the church* that they may grow by reason of the exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness."

This quote leaves no doubt that Ellen White approved of some type of ordination or setting apart for women. Yet a careful reading indicates that Ellen White was not describing the work of a pastor or elder/overseer but rather the basic duties of what today we call a 'deaconess'.

In his penetrating book which is based on his doctoral dissertation, The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting on the Biblical Model, Vincent E. White Jr. rebukes those who misuse this Ellen White quotation. After lamenting that the church for over one hundred years has discontinued the practice of ordaining deaconesses, White explains:

"And to add insult to injury, proponents for the ordination of female elders and female pastors are *misusing* Ellen G. White's statement, made in 1895 in favor of the ordination of deaconesses, to support their position." Vincent E. White Jr. The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting on the Biblical Model, p. 31

The White Estate added its testimony regarding the 1895 statement:

"There is no documentary evidence that EGW was calling for the ordination of women to gospel ministry in the RH article. The immediate internal context ('visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor') may suggest she had in mind the work of a *deaconess*. The opinion of EGW's personal secretary, Clarence C. Crisler, writing within one year of Mrs. White's death, was to the effect that EGW was referring to

ordination of deaconesses rather than gospel ministers.” Quoted in, Vincent E. White Jr. *The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting on the Biblical Model*, p. 33

Analysis of Ellen White’s 1895 Statement

What shall we say then about Ellen White’s 1895 statement? The simple answer is that it has nothing to do with women being set apart as pastors or elders/overseers of the church. Several facts emerge from a careful exegesis of the statement:

- The title of the original article is *‘The Duty of the Minister and the People’* thus clearly establishing a distinction between the pastor and the laity in the church.
- Every individual in the church, whether male or female, should be involved *in ministry*. All should be involved in enlightening those who sit in darkness.
- The women referenced by Ellen White worked *part time* and their ministry was *not one of leadership* in the church. The job description of visiting the sick, looking after the young, and ministering to the necessities of the poor is what today we call a ‘deaconess’.
- Ellen White did affirm that women who were engaged in this part time work should be set apart by the laying on of hands for *this particular work*. This is in line with the vote of the 59th General Conference session that approved the ordination of deaconesses.
- It would be a gigantic leap of logic to state that because a woman is set apart by the laying on of hands to be a deaconess, she is entitled to serve as an elder/overseer which is an entirely different function!
- It is clear that these women were *not ministers or officers* of the church because we are told that they might need to *counsel with* the church officers or the minister.

Questions

As I stated at the beginning of this article, Adventist egalitarians, which believe that women should be ordained to pastoral leadership, have appealed to Phoebe as support for their view. Some not only see Phoebe as a female deacon but also have ascended her to the church office of *minister* on the same level with the apostle Paul. This makes it imperative to examine the evidence to see if their arguments are valid. There are three questions we will seek to answer:

- Did the *church office* of ‘female deacon’ exist in the apostolic church and was Phoebe a deacon?

- If the *office* did exist, did the female deacons belong to the same leadership group as the males?
- If the *office* did exist, did the women deacons serve in positions of pastoral leadership such as apostles and elders/overseers?

Who was Phoebe?

Let's answer our first question. The apostle Paul highly commended the *ministry* of Phoebe and recommended her without reservation to the congregations in Rome. But was she a deacon? Here are the words of the apostle Paul:

"I commend to you Phoebe our *sister*, who is a *servant* [*diakonon*] of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a *helper* of many and of myself also" (Romans 16:1, 2).

What does this text actually *say* about Phoebe and what does it *not say*? Does the text tell us that she was *ordained* to the *office* of deacon in the church? Does it say that she was an apostle or an elder/overseer? A careful study of the text clearly indicates that the answer to these questions is no! The text simply tells us that she was a *diakonon* and a *helper* of Paul and many others.

What is the meaning of the word 'helper'? The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament explains that the original meaning of the word 'helper' (*prostatis*, which is used only here in the New Testament) is one 'who looks after the legal protection of strangers and freedmen'. Kenneth Vine has further defined the meaning of the word:

"*Prostatis* ['helper'] was the title of a citizen in Athens, who had the responsibility of seeing to the *welfare* of resident aliens who were without civic rights. Among the Jews it signified a *wealthy patron* of the community." Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, 'prostatis' 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers

Other Lexicons provide similar definitions. The Louw-Nida Lexicon gives the meaning, 'a woman who is active in helping—'helper, patroness.' Thayer's Lexicon defines the word as: 'a female guardian, protectress, patroness, caring for the affairs of others and aiding them with her resources.' Arndt and Gringrich define the word as: "protectress, patroness, helper.'

The overwhelming majority of Bible versions translate the word as 'help' or 'helper'. A handful of versions use synonyms such as 'assisted', 'succourer', and 'benefactor'. The ESV renders the word, 'patron' whom the dictionary defines as 'a person who gives financial or other support to a person, organization, cause, or activity.' Synonyms in the Thesaurus are philanthropist, benefactor, supporter, advocate, defender, helper, and financier. The Contemporary English Version and Young's Literal Translation do use the word 'leader',

but this meaning is incongruous with the context. After all, are we to believe that Phoebe was the leader of many including the great apostle Paul who stated that He did not consider himself “at all inferior to the most eminent apostles?” (2 Corinthians 11:5)

Ellen White and Phoebe

Cenchrea was the eastern port of Corinth that was a metropolitan and cosmopolitan center through which people from every corner of the empire passed. The constant flux of people through the region would have made it necessary for the church to lodge and feed them. The evidence indicates that Phoebe provided this *service* or *ministry* by supplying shelter and food for those who passed through the area. And when Paul was there, she hosted him as well.

Though Ellen White had no knowledge of Biblical languages, her description of Phoebe agrees with the definitions that are provided by the lexicons. A careful reading indicates that Phoebe had the spiritual gift of *hospitality* and was foremost in providing lodging and food for those who visited the church of Cenchrea. In her own words:

“Phoebe *entertained* the apostle, and she was in a *marked manner* an *entertainer* of *strangers* who *needed care*. Her example should be followed by the churches of today.”
Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, volume 6, p. 343

This statement makes clear that Phoebe was not a simple church member. She was a *prominent* and outstanding church member! She was not a mere entertainer of strangers. She was so ***‘in a marked manner’***. But does this mean that she was an ordained deacon?

While Paul affirmed that Phoebe was a *prostatis* for *him and others*, Ellen White interprets this by saying that Phoebe was an *entertainer* of the *apostle and of strangers*. It is clear that Ellen White interpreted the word *prostatis* as ‘one who entertains.’ But what did Ellen White mean by the words ‘entertained’ and ‘entertainer’? The 1828 edition of Webster’s Dictionary defines the word ‘entertain’ in the following manner:

“To receive into the house and treat with *hospitality*, either at the *table* only, or with *lodging* also.”

Webster’s Dictionary goes on to give a Biblical example of the meaning of the word by referring to the experience of Abraham who unbeknownst, *entertained* angels:

“Be not forgetful to *entertain strangers*; for thereby some have *entertained* angels unawares.”

It is well known that Abraham entertained angels by offering them water, a place to rest and food (Hebrews 13:2; Genesis 18:3-5).

***Diakonon* in the New Testament**

The various Bible versions do not agree on the meaning of the masculine noun *diakonon*. While most render the word 'servant', others translate 'minister', 'deacon', 'deaconess', 'leader', or 'helper'. This broad range of translations should lead us to be cautious about making hasty and definitive statements about Phoebe's status in the church of Cenchrea.

Clearly, the combination of the word *prostatis* ['entertainer'] with *diakonon* ['servant'] in Romans 16:2 is descriptive of one who *serves* or *ministers* to the needs of others through the spiritual gift of hospitality. The apostle Paul leaves no doubt that Phoebe carried out this important *ministry* or *service* in the church of Cenchrea. No doubt, as Kenneth Vine indicates, she must have been a woman of considerable means who used her financial resources and influence to help the transients who passed through.

But the question that begs to be answered is this: Was Phoebe ordained to the church *office* of 'deacon' or is the word simply used in a more *general sense* to describe her as someone who had the spiritual gift of *hospitality* or *service*?

It is difficult to answer this question with absolute certainty from the text itself. Bible commentators and translations are divided on the issue. While some scholars and Bible versions indicate that Phoebe was a deacon or deaconess in the sense of a *church office*, others believe that the word is used in a *general sense* to describe one who served the needs of the transients who passed through the region. I believe that Joseph Fitzmeyer is correct when he remarked concerning Romans 16:1, 2:

"There is no way of being sure that there existed an 'order' of deaconesses in the church at this period." (Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, "The Letter to the Romans," The Jerome Bible Commentary, 53:136)

John Murray is even more pointed:

"Though the word for 'servant' is the same as is used for deacon in the instances cited [Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:8-13], yet the word is also used to denote the person performing any type of ministry. If Phoebe ministered to the saints, as is evident from verse 2, then she would be a servant of the church and there is neither need nor warrant to suppose that she occupied or exercised what amounted to an ecclesiastical office comparable to that of the deaconate. The services performed were similar to those devolving upon deacons. Their ministry is one of mercy to the poor, the sick, and the desolate. This is an area in which women likewise exercise their functions and graces. But there is no more warrant to posit an office than in the case of the widows who, prior to their becoming the charge of the church, must have borne the features mentioned in I Timothy 5:9, 10."

Every Believer a *Diakonon*

It must also be noted that Jesus admonished *each and every one* of His followers to be a *diakonon* in the broad sense of rendering a service or ministering to others. But this does not mean that all of those who *minister* have been called to the church *office* of deacon. Let's notice several texts where Jesus used the word *diakonon* in the general sense of service:

Jesus counseled His disciples: "But he who is greatest among you shall be your *servant* [*diakonon*]" (Matthew 23:11). In another place Jesus admonished His disciples: "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and *servant* [*diakonon*] of all." (Mark 9:35) To Andrew and Philip Jesus said: "If anyone *serves* [*diakonee*] Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My *servant* [*diakonos*] will be also. If anyone *serves* [*diakonee*] Me, him My Father will honor" (John 12:26).

It is clear that in each of these verses the word *diakonos* could have been translated with the word 'minister' just as well as 'servant'. As stated before, every follower of Jesus should be a 'servant' or 'minister'. But does this mean that every member of the church has been called to the *church office* of deacon? Further, can a gigantic leap of logic be taken that because Phoebe was a *diakonon* she was entitled to serve in the office of an apostle, pastor or elder/overseer?

A Clear Distinction

We must now say a few more things about Ellen White's previously quoted 1895 statement. While I believe that the job description that Ellen White provided strongly *suggests* that she was describing the office of 'deaconess', it must be admitted that she did not use the specific word. A search on the Ellen G. White CD Rom indicates that she used the actual word 'deaconess' only once.

We will take a look at this lone statement in a few moments but before we do, we must answer our second question: If the *office* of female deacon existed in the apostolic church, did the female deacons belong to the same leadership group as the males? Did Ellen White believe that male deacons and female deacons were in the identical leadership group or did she believe that they were two distinct offices?

Vincent White has conclusively shown in his doctoral dissertation, that the office of 'deacon' and 'deaconesses' are complimentary, but different. Each office is unique and distinctive. For this reason the church elects a *head* deaconess and a *head* deacon. I have yet to see a deacon who is a deaconesses or a deaconess who is a deacon! And yet some egalitarians have argued that Phoebe was a deacon right along with the males!

The distinction between male deacons and female deaconesses is made clear in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (ca. 380 AD) where female deacons ('deaconesses') are described with the masculine noun *diakonos* preceded by the feminine definite article. On the other

hand male deacons, in conformity with Greek grammar, are described with the masculine definite article.

But didn't the apostle Paul describe Phoebe with the male noun *diakonon*? Wouldn't this place her in the same group with the male deacons? Yes to the first question and no to the second.

It is important to remember that the masculine noun *diakonon* as it applies to Phoebe does not have any definite article, masculine or feminine. Though grammatically the noun is masculine, it must be interpreted as feminine because Phoebe was a woman. The question is: Why did Paul use a masculine noun to describe a female? Was it because she belonged to the same group as the male deacons? The answer is no. Paul was simply following the rules of Greek grammar! Although the female definite article was used with the masculine noun much later in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, there is not a single instance in the New Testament where the masculine noun *diakonos* was used with the feminine definite article. It appears that this incongruous grammatical practice in the *Apostolic Constitutions* simply did not exist in New Testament times so Paul, being an expert in Greek, could not have used it. The female noun *diaconissa*, from which we derive our word 'deaconess,' did not exist until long after the times of Paul so he could not have used it either. Further, Phoebe could not have been in the same group with the male deacons because the job description of deacons in 1 Timothy 3:12 requires them to be husbands of one wife. This, in itself, would disqualify Phoebe from being in the same group with the male deacons.

Ellen White's Lone Statement

Now let's examine the lone reference where Ellen White used the word 'deaconess'. Ellen White was writing a rebuke to *Elder A. T. Jones* who had taken it upon himself to counsel women in the church who came to him with their personal problems:

"You are not to set such an example that women will feel at liberty to tell you the grievances of their home life, and to draw upon your sympathies. When a woman comes to you with her troubles, tell her plainly to *go to her sisters*, to tell her troubles to the **deaconesses** of the church. Tell her that she is out of place in opening her troubles to *any man*, for men are easily beguiled and tempted. Tell the one who has thrown her case upon you that God has not placed this burden upon *any man*. You are not wise to take these burdens upon yourself. It is not your appointed work." Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, volume 21, pp. 97, 98

This statement leaves no doubt that deaconesses have *distinctive* duties toward the *female constituency* of the church, duties that cannot be carried out by males. This clearly indicates that the offices of male deacon and female deaconess, though related, are not the same office. It is to be noted that Ellen White also drew a *clear distinction* between the office of an ordained elder and the office of a female deaconess.

Ellen White's counsel squares perfectly with the prescription in the *Apostolic Constitution* which stipulates that 'deaconesses were to be ordained for the ministrations *toward women*. She was referred to as the *assistant to the deacon*, and was to be present at *all interviews* between women and the priest, bishop or deacon.' (Maurice Riley, [The Deaconess: Walking in the Newness of Life](#). Second Edition (Newark, NJ: Christian Associates Publications, 1993)

The noted Bible commentator, Adam Clarke, described the distinction between the roles of male deacons and female deaconesses in the post-apostolic church in similar terms:

"There were deaconesses in the primitive church, whose business it was to attend the *female* converts at baptism; to instruct the catechumens, or persons who were candidates for baptism: to visit the sick, and those who were in prison; and, in short, perform those religious offices, for the *female part* of the church, which could *not with propriety be performed by men*. They were chosen in general out of the most experienced of the church; and were ordinarily widows, who had borne children. Some ancient constitutions required them to be forty, others fifty, and others sixty years of age. It is evident that they *were ordained* to their office, by the imposition of the hands of *the bishop*; and the form of prayer used on the occasion is extant in the Apostolical Constitution." Adam Clarke's [Electronic Database Commentary](#), Romans 16:1

Are Bible Translations Biased?

Let's move on now to our third question: If the *office* of deaconess existed in the apostolic church, did the women deacons serve in positions of pastoral leadership such as apostle and elder/overseer? This is an important question because some egalitarians have argued that the word *diakonon* should be translated 'minister', meaning that Phoebe was a female minister in the same category as the apostle Paul.

The former Dean of the Andrews University Theological Seminary has argued that various translations of Romans 16:1, 2 have been biased in favor of men and against women in ministry:

"The KJV, NKJV, NASB and ESV consistently translate *diakonon* as 'minister' when the word is used in connection to a male person, but not so when it comes to Phoebe. I think this shows a strange bias against women in ministry. Since through the centuries the King James Version has had such an important impact on our understanding of the doctrine of the church, could it be that our modern attitudes toward women in ministry have been shaped by biased translators?"

I do agree with the Dean that it would have been more consistent for the KJV, NKJV, NASB and ESV to translate the word *diakonon* as 'minister' or 'servant' in all cases where it appears. But the Dean's statement that the variance in translation 'shows a strange bias against women in ministry' is an unsubstantiated personal assumption. I rather doubt that

a woman whose name is tucked away in the epilogue of Romans has influenced our present attitudes toward women in ministry. When I recently told several of my members that I was writing a newsletter article on Phoebe, most of them asked: “Who is she?”

Further, there is no persuasive evidence that the King James Version influenced the NASB and ESV translators. The publishers of the ESV have stated: “Each word and phrase in the ESV has been carefully weighed against the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, to ensure the fullest accuracy and clarity and to avoid under-translating or overlooking any nuance of the original text.” Similar statements could be quoted from the publishers of the NASB.

And why does the Dean mention only the NASB and ESV? Other reputable modern versions such as the NIV consistently translate the word *diakonos* as ‘servant’ for Phoebe, for Paul and for others who ministered in the church. There is no bias in these translations. Does the fact that the word *diakonos* is used for Phoebe, Paul and others mean that they were all on the same level of leadership in the church? Was Phoebe an apostle? Was Paul a deacon? No to these questions! The common word simply means that they both *ministered* to the needs of the saints within the realm of their specific calling. Phoebe ministered as a patroness to the needy and Paul ministered as a preacher of the gospel.

Broad and Narrow Meaning

It cannot be overemphasized that in the New Testament the word ‘minister’ (*diakonos*) has a broad meaning (Matthew 23:11; Mark 9:35; John 12:26) and a narrow one (1Timothy 3:8-13; Philippians 1:1). In the narrow sense, the word describes the *church office* of ‘deacon’ which was instituted when the seven deacons were set apart by the laying on of hands (Acts 6).ⁱ But in a broader sense, as we have already seen, the word describes one who ministers or serves, a quality that should characterize *all* the members of the body of Christ, be they male or female, ordained or not ordained, be they Phoebe or Paul.

There is no unquestionable evidence in the text of Romans 16:1, 2 that Phoebe was a deacon in the narrow sense of a church office or a ‘minister’ in the sense that we use the word today. It is to be noted that those who believe that Phoebe was a female deacon commonly take the *extra-biblical, post-apostolic* evidence and argue it back into Romans 16:1, 2. This can be a risky and tenuous procedure. The same method is used by Protestant and Roman Catholic scholars who attempt to prove that the expression ‘Lord’s Day’ in Revelation 1:10 is a reference to Sunday. They argue that because the early church fathers taught that the expression ‘Lord’s Day’ meant Sunday, therefore it means the same thing in Revelation 1:10. It must be borne in mind that the latter meaning of a word or expression does not always convey its earlier meaning.

As I have pointed out in my book, [Reflections on Women’s Ordination](#), there is a place for ministering women in the church! One would have to be blind not to see that women were strongly involved in ministry in New Testament times. And, as has been well documented by egalitarians, many women have been involved in ministry in the history of the Seventh-

day Adventist Church as well. But women's involvement in ministry does not mean that they were set apart by ordination to serve in pastoral leadership positions such as elders/overseers. It doesn't even necessarily mean that they were set apart in the apostolic church to the office of 'deacon'. There is a vast difference between women who are involved in ministry and women 'ministers', as we use the word in the parlance of today! All pastors, elders and deacons should minister but not all who minister are pastors, elders or deacons.

Those who support the ordination of women to pastoral leadership have done a masterful job spreading the idea that if one does not believe in women's ordination to pastoral leadership then one does not believe in women in ministry. But this is an argument that is devoid of substance, a phantom argument if you please. I do not know a single complementarian who is opposed to women ministering or serving in various capacities in the church.

Illogical Assumptions

Now let's attempt to answer our last question: If the office of female deacon did exist in the apostolic church, did the female deacons serve in positions of pastoral leadership such as apostles and elders/overseers? We have hinted at the answer to this question in the previous section but let's pursue it further.

Let's suppose, for the sake of argument, that Phoebe was an ordained deaconess in the sense of a church office. Would it really have any relevance in the discussion on whether women should be ordained to pastoral leadership? Not at all! The role of Phoebe in the church of Cenchrea is immaterial to the discussion of the ordination of women to positions of pastoral leadership. In the New Testament Church, the offices of deacon and overseer/elder are clearly distinct from one another. Being a deaconess and assistant to the deacons in the church is one function and being an apostle or an elder/overseer is quite another.

Look at the following syllogism and ask yourself if it makes logical sense:

- **Major Premise:** In the New Testament women were ordained to the office of deaconess.
- **Minor Premise:** Phoebe was a woman.
- **Conclusion:** Therefore Phoebe was ordained and served in the office of elder/overseer.

Clearly the major and minor premises in this syllogism are true but the conclusion does not logically follow. The only logical conclusion would be that Phoebe could serve as a deaconess.

On the basis of my research I believe that there might be a *sliver* of evidence in Scripture (possibly the disputed text of 1Timothy 3:11ⁱⁱ and Phoebe in Romans 16:1, 2) that there were deaconesses in the apostolic church. There is also evidence in early *post-apostolic* church history to indicate that women served in such an office. Furthermore, it has been well documented that Ellen White acknowledged the office of deaconesses and that women were ordained to this office in Adventist history (for documentation see Arthur N. Patrick, "The Ordination of Deaconesses," The Adventist Review, January 16, 1986)

But, as we have shown above, female deaconesses were distinct from male deacons. According to Acts 6, seven male deacons were elected and ordained *to help* the male apostles in the administrative matters of the church. If deaconesses did exist, the *Apostolic Constitutions* clearly indicate that their function was to serve the *female constituency* of the church under the leadership of the *male deacons* and they were to be ordained by the *male bishop*.

It is important to underline that when the Jerusalem Council met to make decisions which affected the entire church, it was the apostles and the elders who represented the church (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23). There is no mention of 'deacons' or 'deaconesses' among the leadership. Further, as I have shown elsewhere, Ellen White makes it crystal clear that all the leaders at the Jerusalem Council were men.

Summary and Conclusions

The reason for the election of deacons is clearly explained in Acts chapter 6. The text tells us that seven *males* were selected from a pool of *males* to be a *support group* for the twelve *male* apostles who were the *leaders* or officers of the church at that time (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6; 15:22, 23; 16:24; 20:17; 21:18). Later on, the church organization was further perfected and male elders were selected and ordained as leaders of local churches and regions (1Timothy 5:17; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 5:1-4). Although there is *post-apostolic* evidence that deaconesses were later nominated to *aid the deacons* in the work for the female constituency of the church, there is no clear New Testament evidence that they were ordained to the *office* of deaconess. Furthermore, the *post-apostolic* evidence clearly indicates that the female deaconesses were ordained by the bishop/overseer and were under the authority of the male deacons.

If Phoebe was a deaconess, her role was to help the apostles, elders and deacons who were the leaders of the church. The text in Romans clearly states that Phoebe was Paul's helper; not he hers. So it is illegitimate to use the name of Phoebe to argue that there were women in positions of pastoral leadership in the apostolic church. Deaconesses, perhaps! Pastors and elders/overseers, none!

Were there Female Apostles?

A question, which frequently comes up in the women's ordination debate, is this: Were there women apostles in the New Testament Church? While egalitarians answer in the affirmative, complementarians answer in the negative. The truth of the matter must be discovered in the inspired writings of the New Testament.

The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy clearly explain that Jesus chose twelve male apostles. Ellen White adds that the twelve were ordained by the laying on of hands. Egalitarians have argued that Jesus did not choose a female apostle because He did not want to 'upset the fabric of Jewish culture. (Mark 3:14). But this is mere conjecture and has no foundation in the Bible text. A careful study of Scripture clearly indicates that Jesus chose twelve males intentionally because they were to continue the legacy of the *twelve male founders* of Old Testament Israel. Ellen White makes this point clear when she states:

"As in the Old Testament the twelve patriarchs stood as representatives of Israel, so the twelve apostles stand as representatives of the gospel church."¹⁰⁴

Jesus did not choose twelve in number haphazardly. He purposely chose twelve to indicate that the New Testament Church is a continuation of the Old Testament Church. This is the reason why no digit could be added or subtracted from the number twelve. The twelve were to play a *foundational* role in the church after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:20-22).

If Jesus had wanted us to understand that under the 'new system' inclusiveness required that the founding leaders of the church should be male and female He could have chosen six men and six women as apostles—or at least one woman! But He did not! Jesus did not hesitate to question the culture of His day and on some occasions he turned it upside down. Jesus was clearly counter-cultural in many regards. Could we perhaps even call Him revolutionary?

After stating that Jesus was a revolutionary in the way that He treated women, one scholar speculates that by doing this Jesus 'pointed the way forward to women's ordination.' But are such trajectory hermeneutics so? Was the selection of twelve male apostles simply a relic passed along as a custom from a prejudiced patriarchal past to be replaced in due time? Did Jesus really point the way forward to women's ordination by the revolutionary way in which He treated women contrary to the conventions of His day? In short, did Jesus simply wish to avoid upsetting the Jewish culture of His day and thus ordained twelve *male* apostles?

The simple fact is that Jesus opposed the conventions of His day in the way that he treated *all* the marginalized of society—children, Samaritans, Gentiles, publicans, sinners, harlots, lepers, blind, lame, etc. Did the revolutionary treatment of these people by Jesus mean that

¹⁰⁴ Ellen G. White, Acts of the Apostles, p. 19

He was pointing the way forward to their ordination? To answer yes to this question would be ludicrous! The fact is that Jesus was revolutionary in the way that He treated *people*, period. It is rather doubtful that Jesus was pointing forward to gender inclusiveness in ordination practices when He treated women with the dignity and respect that they deserved!

But were there no other apostles besides the twelve? Yes there were. The book of Acts mentions apostles other than the twelve but these were not members of the *founding group* and besides, they were all *males* (see Romans 1:1; Acts 14:14; 1 Corinthians 12:28, etc.; for the case of Junias see below)

The stones on the breastplate of Aaron represented the twelve sons of Israel and through them the entirety of Israel (Exodus 28:21; Genesis 49:28) and the twelve stones on the breastplate of Jesus represent the entirety of the gospel church. As noted previously, it is certainly legitimate to *distinguish* Old Testament Israel from the New Testament Church but it is illegitimate to *dichotomize* them.

Revelation 12 clearly indicates that God has *only one church* that spans both the Old and New Testament periods. A single woman is used to represent the church before Jesus was born (Revelation 12:1, 2, 5) and after (Revelation 12:6) and the twelve stars on the woman's crown represent both the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles (Revelation 12:1; Genesis 37:24). We might say that God has one church composed of two stages and in both stages *twelve men* were chosen to be the founders.

Can there be any doubt that Jesus purposely chose twelve *male* apostles to continue the legacy of the Old Testament Church? The choice of six women and six men, or of any women for that matter, would have been incongruous and discontinuous with the Old Testament record.

Some scholars, even in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, question whether the apostles were actually ordained by Jesus by the laying on of hands. The Bible record does not explicitly say so although the Greek word *didomi* may hint in that direction. The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament explains that the word *didomi* 'is the most common expression for the procedure whereby a subject deliberately *transfers something* to someone or something so that it becomes available to the recipient.'¹⁰⁵ The context of Luke 9:1 makes clear that Jesus was transferring His own authority to the apostles so ordination is not out of the question in the text.

Ellen White does not leave us in doubt regarding the ordination of the twelve:

"When Jesus had ended His instruction to the disciples, He gathered the little band close about Him, and kneeling in the midst of them, and laying His hands upon their heads, He

¹⁰⁵ W. Popkes, The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, Electronic Database Edition, '*didomi*'

offered a prayer dedicating them to His sacred work. Thus the Lord's disciples were *ordained* to the gospel ministry.”¹⁰⁶

As mentioned before, some, even in our very midst, question whether we can trust what Ellen White says here because in the Greek we are simply told that Jesus *appointed* or *gave* power and authority to the twelve. Here is the record as it is found in the gospel of Matthew:

“And He went up on the mountain and *called to Him those He Himself wanted*. And they *came to Him*. Then He *appointed* twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might *send them out to preach*, and to *have power* to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, ‘Sons of Thunder’; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.”

The parallel story in Luke tells us that after Jesus prayed all night, He *called* and *chose* the twelve founders, *gave* (*didomi*) them power and authority and *named* them apostles (Luke 6:13). The twelve are mentioned *by name* and the *character qualities* of several of them are given in the record (Simon the pebble, James and John the sons of thunder, Simon the Zealot, Matthew the publican, Thomas the doubter, Judas the betrayer). Ellen White then adds that Jesus said a *prayer* and *laid hands* on them and the text of Mark 3:14, 15 explains that by this act Jesus indicated that they were *set apart* and authorized them to preach and empowered them to heal diseases.

The setting-apart and ordination of the twelve by Jesus is similar in many ways to Jacob naming and blessing his twelve sons on his dying bed.

In Genesis 49 we find the record that Jacob *called* the twelve to his side, then mentioned them *by name* and described *their character* and their *foundational role* for the future of the twelve tribes. He then *blessed each* of them individually. We are not explicitly told in Genesis 49 that Jacob laid his hands on them but the record does state that he *laid his hands* on the sons of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) and according to Moses these two later became part of the twelve tribes of Israel (see Numbers 1). So it would not be too much of a stretch to believe that Jacob laid hands on his twelve sons as well.

In similar fashion to Jacob, Jesus *gathered the twelve* whom He had chosen, they are *mentioned by name* and the *characteristics* of several are given and then *Jesus prayed* and *laid hands* on them in ordination to be the founders of the New Testament church. Jesus fully understood the significance and importance of the Bible stories. He had inspired Jacob as Jacob gave his sons his blessing. It is certainly possible that the story of Jacob formed the backdrop for Christ’s ordination and blessing of the twelve.

¹⁰⁶ Ellen G. White, [The Desire of Ages](#), p. 296

As the twelve sons of Jacob then multiplied and formed the twelve tribes of Israel—the Old Testament Church—the twelve founders of New Testament Israel also multiplied through their preaching and became a great nation—the New Testament Church (I Peter 2:9 and 10; Matthew 21:43; James 1:1). The role of the founders of the Christian Church and their growth can be seen in John 17:20 where we are told that Jesus not only prayed for the twelve but also for all who would believe *through their preaching*.

The women's ordination advocates argue that if the male gender of the apostles requires that the rulers of the church be male, then the fact that they were Jewish must mean that the rulers of the church must also be Jewish. This argument appears logical until one realizes that the ministry of Jesus *to the Jews* did not end until the stoning of Stephen (at the conclusion of the 70 week prophecy) three and a half years after Pentecost and even then the first Gentiles were not gathered in until several years later when Peter was given the vision of the unclean creatures (Acts 10, 11)!

How then could Jesus have chosen a Gentile apostle? He could not have because He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and probation had not yet closed for them (Matthew 15:24; 10:5, 6). Bottom line: Jesus could not have chosen Gentiles at this point because there were none to choose from. Even at Pentecost all of the believers who were present were Jews from the Diaspora (Acts 2:5).

But there were plenty of Jewish women who could have been chosen as apostles but they were not. Why not choose His mother or Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, or Salome or one of the other prominent women who ministered to Him? Jesus did not have to wait for the apostles to be male but he did have to wait until the door of the Jewish theocracy closed before He could include Gentiles. Simply put, there were no Gentile men available when Jesus chose the twelve but there were plenty of women available.

Successor of Judas

When Judas betrayed Christ and committed suicide, Peter suggested that a successor be named from among the 120 who were gathered in the upper room. Peter addressed them in Acts 1:16 with the gender specific 'men' (*aner*) and 'brethren' (*adelphos*) and in verse 21 he once again used the gender specific 'men' (*aner*).

"Therefore, of these men (*aner*) who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these *must* become a witness with us of His resurrection." (Acts 1:21, 22)

The gender specific nouns in verses 16, 21, 22 leave no doubt that the two finalists were chosen from a larger *pool of men* who were present in the Upper Room.

This occasion would have provided a golden opportunity for the apostles to be inclusive and choose a woman as a member of the council of the twelve. After all, Mary the mother of Jesus was present there along with other influential women:

“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and *Mary* the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” (Acts 1:14)

Wouldn't Mary the mother of Jesus have been the logical choice? After all, she brought Jesus into the world, was instrumental in the formation of his character and was an eyewitness of the Christ event from the days of John the Baptist till His resurrection and ascension, which was one of the requirements!

Was it the bias of the disciples against women that led them to select the successor of Judas from a pool of men? No. The simple fact is that the apostles did not choose the successor of Judas, the Holy Spirit did:

"Two men were selected, who, in the careful judgment of the believers, were best qualified for the place. But the disciples, distrusting their ability to decide the question farther, referred it to One that knew all hearts. They sought the Lord in prayer to ascertain which of the two men was more suitable for the important position of trust, as an apostle of Christ. *The Spirit of God selected Matthias for the office.*" Spirit of Prophecy, volume 3, p. 264

Concerning the process that was followed in the selection of Matthias and the lessons we can learn for today, Ellen White explained:

“From these scriptures we learn that the Lord has certain *men* to fill *certain positions*. God will teach His people to move carefully and to make wise choice of *men* who will not betray sacred trusts. If in Christ's day the believers needed to be guarded in their choice of *men* for positions of responsibility, we who are living in this time certainly need to move with great discretion. We are to present every case before God and in earnest prayer ask Him to choose for us. The Lord God of heaven *has chosen experienced men* to bear responsibilities in His cause. *These men* are to have special influence. If all are accorded the power given to these *chosen men*, a halt will have to be called.”¹⁰⁷

Were hands laid on Matthias by the other apostles? The text does not say, but are we to interpret this silence to mean that it did not happen? Didn't the apostles remember that they had been set apart by the laying on of hands? Would they not have followed the same practice with Matthias?

Even today when a minister is ordained, he does not necessarily have to inform people that he was set apart by the laying on of hands. It is understood that hands are laid upon an ordinand and therefore it is not necessary to even mention it. When I tell people about my ordination in 1980 I don't tell them: “I was set apart by the laying on of hands in October of

¹⁰⁷ Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, volume 9, p. 264

1980.” I simply say: “I was set apart or ordained to the gospel ministry in October 1980.” The practice of laying on hands was an accepted practice in the world of the New Testament.

Although Matthias was elected to the office of apostle (verse 25), two other words are used to describe his functions: *Minister* (verse 25), and *overseer* (verse 20).¹⁰⁸ In other words, he was an apostle who was to minister and oversee. Later on in the book of Acts deacons were elected to aid the apostles in the work of ministry and elders were set apart to oversee the work in local churches and in regions.

What about Junias?

Those who believe that women have been called by God to pastoral leadership frequently argue that there were female apostles in the earliest church, and as the lone piece of Scriptural evidence they bring up the name of *Iounian*,¹⁰⁹ who is mentioned only once **in the New Testament** in the middle of a long list of salutations by the apostle Paul:

“Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.” (Romans 16:7, NKJV)

Doesn't this text clearly indicate that *Iounian* was a notable female apostle on an equal footing with the twelve males? Doesn't the mention of *Iounian* by Paul prove that the governing council of the apostles in Jerusalem was composed of women as well as men? Those who presently favor the ordination of women to pastoral leadership answer in the affirmative, but their claim must be examined carefully **in the light of the totality of Scripture** to ascertain if it is so.¹¹⁰

From the start we need to ask the question: What do we know for certain about Andronicus and *Iounian*? Let's separate fact from conjecture. The text assures us that they were both well-known and respected members in the Church of Rome. We know that they shared a common Jewish ancestry with the apostle Paul. We can be certain that they were baptized and became Christians before the conversion of the apostle Paul. It is also clear that they spent time in prison with the apostle and that their names are coupled together in the same verse because they shared something in common with one another.

But it must be noted that there are some things about *Iounian* that pro-ordination advocates take for granted which are not quite as certain.

¹⁰⁸ In verse 25 the word 'ministry' is *diakonia* and in verse 21 the word for office is *episkopeen*

¹⁰⁹ I have purposely transliterated the Greek name into English without any accent.

¹¹⁰ For a helpful discussion of the two opposing views of *Iounian* see P. Gerard Damsteegt, Prove all Things, "Shapes of Ministry in the New Testament," pp. 132-135; Samuel Koranteng Pipim, Prove all Things, "Are These Things So?" Part 1, pp. 90, 91; Wayne Grudem, Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth, pp. 224-227; Nancy Vyhmeister, "Junia the Apostle," Ministry Magazine, July, 2013, pp. 6-9.

First, although it is true that the weight of the *post-apostolic extra-biblical* evidence seems to indicate that *Iounian* was the name of a woman, the female gender of the name is by no means an absolute certainty within the New Testament text itself.

Second, the meaning of the phrase 'of note among the apostles,' is an open question. The expression could be interpreted as *exclusive* to the effect that Andronicus and *Iounian* were well known *by* the apostles or it could be seen as *inclusive* to the effect that they were *themselves* well known apostles.

Third, if we assume that Andronicus and *Iounian* were apostles, (which is far from certain) it is not possible to know from the text in what sense they were apostles. Were they called to the apostolic *office* such as the twelve or did they receive the *spiritual gift* of apostleship at the moment of their baptism?

Finally, it is uncertain why Paul linked *Iounian* and Andronicus in the same verse. Were they linked together because they were husband and wife or because they were brother and sister, fellow-prisoners or fellow-compatriots of Paul? The answers to these questions are elusive.

Some contemporary exegetes assume that Andronicus and *Iounian* were a husband and wife team in ministry. But the question must be asked: Is this a certainty or is it an unsubstantiated guess? Those who believe that Andronicus and *Iounian* were husband and wife are perhaps following the lead of some ancient patristic exegetes, but it must be noted that these exegetes wrote centuries after Andronicus and *Iounian* lived so their testimony is too late to be of much value.

Those who believe that Andronicus and *Iounian* were a husband and wife team argue that their names are linked by the conjunction *kai* ('and') in the same way as Priscilla and Aquila in verse 3. But such an argument cannot be determinative because in verse 12 the names of two women, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, are also joined by the conjunction *kai*. It is possible that the names of Andronicus and *Iounian* were linked together because they were brother and sister or fellow-prisoners or simply fellow-compatriots of Paul.

Much has been written about the gender of the name *Iounian*. Is the name masculine or feminine? Theologians and Bible versions disagree as do the early church fathers. The difficulty is found in the fact that in the Greek text the name *Iounian* can be understood as the accusative masculine name Junias or the accusative female name Junia. The only thing that distinguishes the masculine from the feminine is the type of accent that is used at the end of the name. If the accent is acute (´) the name is feminine and if it is circumflex (˘) it is masculine.

So, what type of accent did Paul use in Romans 16:7? The answer is that we cannot be certain because, first of all, we do not have the autographs and second, the original Greek New Testament manuscripts had no accents. In fact, accents were not added until centuries

after the New Testament was written so the problem of *Iounian's* gender cannot be resolved with absolute certainty by a mere morphological study of the name.¹¹¹

The most common modern versions assume that *Iounian* was a male referring to him as Junias. But several more recent versions understand *Iounian* as a female called Junia. The Revised Standard Version translators, however, believed that both Andronicus and *Iounian* were males¹¹²:

“Greet Androni'cus and Ju'nias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners; they are *men* of note among the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.”

What does ancient Greek literature tell us about the name? Egalitarians have underlined that there are no unambiguous references to a man named Junias in the Greek literature in the first three centuries of the Christian era while the female name Junia is well attested. However, the absence of the masculine name Junias does not necessarily mean that it did not exist. Arguments from silence can be meaningful but not necessarily foolproof.¹¹³

What does the patristic evidence reveal? Not many of the church fathers even mention the name but among those who do, the evidence is divided.¹¹⁴ Some indicate that *Iounian* was a man and others that she was a woman.¹¹⁵

Although most scholars who have studied the patristic evidence believe that *Iounian* was a woman, there remains an element of doubt.¹¹⁶ Contrary to what the majority of scholars

¹¹¹ It bears noting that miniscule Greek manuscripts began having accents in the ninth century and every single one of these manuscripts places the accent to indicate that *Iounian* was a male. See J. A. Fitzmyer, Romans. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1993, p. 738

¹¹² However, it must be noted that the translators of the New Revised Standard Version believed that the name is feminine.

¹¹³ I am reminded of an experience I had when I worked as the Pathfinder director of a certain conference in North America. I had always known the name 'Flor' to be feminine but, believe it or not, the director of one of my clubs was a male named 'Flor'! Neither before nor after that time have I ever known a man bearing that name! I also know a man whose name is Heidi, a name that is usually associated with women.

¹¹⁴ Jerome and Chrysostom understood *Iounian* to be a woman. On the other hand, Epiphanius and Origen understood the name as masculine. Egalitarians have made much of the fact that Epiphanius mistakenly identified Prisca (Priscilla) as a male. The insinuation is that if Epiphanius got Prisca's gender wrong then he was also wrong about *Iounian's* gender. But what applies to Epiphanius applies also to Jerome and Chrysostom. Could not Jerome and Chrysostom have been wrong about *Iounian's* gender just as well as Epiphanius was wrong about Prisca's? In the Latin text of Origen's *Epistolam ad Romanos Commentariorum* 10.26, 39 the nominative masculine singular of the name is used thus indicating that Origen believed that *Iounian* was a male. Further complicating matters, the Latin Vulgate has manuscripts that support both readings. Thus the patristic evidence is divided on the gender of this person.

¹¹⁵ We must be extremely cautious when we use the writings of the early church fathers. For example, we have only a small fraction of what Origen actually wrote and most of it has been handed down to us in translations whose accuracy is seriously open to question and it is well known that the writings of the fathers are full of interpolations. Even if the writings of the early church fathers had been handed down to in their pristine condition, we must recognize that even before the end of the first century heresy had begun to infiltrate the church. As is well known, it took less than a century for the fathers to begin the process of discarding the Sabbath and adopting Sunday as the new day of worship.

¹¹⁶ It bears noting that in Romans 16:7 Paul uses the word 'apostles' in the third person with the definite article 'the', strongly suggesting in this way that he was not himself a member of this select group. Paul did

have concluded, there are hints in the text itself and its context (see below) that Andronicus and *Iounian* were both men. Among the hints in the text itself is the fact that the words ‘compatriots’ and ‘fellow prisoners’ are in the masculine gender as well as the relative pronoun ‘who’ in the expression ‘*who* are of note among the apostles’.

But does it really even matter whether the name *Iounian* refers to a woman? Even more significant than the gender of the name is the fact that there is disagreement among scholars about how to properly translate the ambiguous phrase: “who are of note among the apostles” (KJV). Some Bible versions take it to be inclusive and others see it as exclusive.

The expression would be exclusive if *Iounian* and Andronicus were held in high regard *by* the apostles such as in the English Standard Version: “They are well known *to* the apostles,” or it would be inclusive if Andronicus and *Iounian* were themselves highly regarded apostles such as in the New Century Version: “They are very important apostles.”

Many modern versions don’t clearly commit to either option preferring to leave the expression perhaps purposely ambiguous such as the NKJV which states that they were ‘of note among the apostles’. We are left with the question: Is this expression inclusive or exclusive? The answer will depend on how the reader interprets the expression. Perhaps an analogy will help us understand the complexity of the problem involved.

Is the following affirmation inclusive or exclusive?

“Bill and Hillary are of note among the Hollywood actors.”

To most people it is clear that this affirmation is *exclusive* because Bill and Hillary are not Hollywood actors, but they are certainly well known *among* those who are Hollywood actors because they have hung out with them frequently.

Now take this affirmation:

“Bill and Hillary are of note among the politicians.”

This affirmation is clearly *inclusive* because *we know* that Bill and Hillary Clinton are not only of note *among* those styled politicians but they are also themselves notable *politicians*.

So how do we know the difference between these two affirmations? The answer is that we can be certain that the first affirmation is exclusive and the second inclusive because Bill

not say that Andronicus and *Iounian* were ‘of note among *those of us* who are apostles.” It is hardly believable that the notable apostle Paul was not himself a member of this group while Andronicus and *Iounian* were! In the first half of the book of Acts which describes the history of the early church from AD 31 till AD 49 (chapters 1-15) the word ‘apostles’ with the definite article ‘the’ always refers to the group of the twelve. The New Century Version translation, “*They are very important apostles*” is incorrect and misleading because it fails to translate the definite article ‘the’ which is in the original text.

and Hillary live in our time and most people know who they are. We know from multiple sources that though they are not Hollywood actors, they are noteworthy politicians.

But let's suppose that two thousand years from now someone finds the expression 'Bill and Hillary are of note among the politicians,' tucked away in only one passing reference with no further information available. How would the reader understand the expression 'of note among the politicians?' Admittedly, it would be difficult to determine if Bill and Hillary were politicians or well known to the politicians.

In that case, the gender issue would also come into play. It would be clear to the reader that Bill is a man. But the gender of 'Hillary' would be harder to determine. In modern American culture the name Hilary (with one 'l') generally applies to a man and the name 'Hillary' (with two l's) applies to a woman. But it must be noted that there are many cases (as can be seen by looking up the name 'Hillary' in Wikipedia) where the names are used interchangeably for both men and women.

The point is that we know nothing in Scripture about Andronicus and *Iounian* outside of Romans 16:7. We could only know for certain that the declaration 'of note among the apostles' is inclusive or exclusive if we had more information than the text provides. And the same applies to gender.

So, were Andronicus and *Iounian* well-known apostles or well known to the apostles? We cannot know for sure simply by reading the expression 'of note among the apostles.' If we had additional external information about them we would be able to know for certain but we have no other information in the Bible to go on and we are two thousand years removed from their existence. Because we cannot be absolutely certain whether they were well-known to the apostles or well-known apostles we must look elsewhere in Scripture to see if we can find clues for a correct interpretation.

Dr. Nancy Vyhmeister noted in a recent article that the grammatical construction *en* (among) + definite article (the) + dative case (apostles) is usually inclusive. This may well be true but there are exceptions both in Biblical and extra-biblical literature and when there are exceptions, absolute certainty is elusive. Notice the following four texts, two from the New Testament and two from extra-biblical literature:

1 Peter 2:12: The apostle Peter admonishes Christians to have their 'conduct honorable **among** (*en*) **the** (definite article) **Gentiles** (dative case).' Obviously the Christians were a distinct group from the Gentiles even though they lived among them **so the meaning here is clearly exclusive.**

Galatians 2:2: Paul preached the gospel **among** (*en*) **the** (definite article) **Gentiles** (dative case) but Paul was not one of the Gentiles to whom he preached (cf. Galatians 1:16; Romans 15:9). **Once again, the meaning is exclusive.**

In **Psalms of Solomon 2:6** we are told that ‘the Jews were famous **among** (*en*) **the** (definite article) **Gentiles**’ (dative case). It is clear that the Jews were not Gentiles although they lived among them.

Euripides, Hippolytus 103: “Yet she [Aphrodite] is revered and famous **among** (*en*) **the** (definite article) **mortals** (dative case).” The meaning here is clearly exclusive because we know from other sources that Aphrodite was not considered a mortal.

If there are cases where the preposition *en* + definite article + dative case are exclusive, then why couldn’t the expression ‘among the apostles’ in Romans 16:7 be considered exclusive as well?

Other factors must also be taken into account in determining whether the expression is inclusive or exclusive. If Andronicus and *Iounian* were notorious apostles and were converted before the apostle Paul as the text states, why are they not mentioned in the early chapters of the book of Acts or in the entire book for that matter? Their invisibility is indeed surprising!

We know that Paul was converted and baptized (Acts 22:16) shortly after the stoning of Stephen in the year 34 AD (Acts 7). This means that *Iounian* and Andronicus were converted to Christ and baptized sometime between Pentecost and Saul’s conversion. So if *Iounian* and Andronicus were prominent apostles after Pentecost and before 34 AD, why are they not mentioned even once in the early chapters of the book of Acts as belonging to the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem? In fact, why are they absent in later chapters as well?¹¹⁷

Dr. Nancy Vyhmeister has attempted to solve this problem by suggesting, along with Richard Bauckham, that Junia of Romans 16:7 is **perhaps** the same person as Ioanna of Luke 8:3 and 24:10. Vyhmeister suggests that her Roman name would be easier to pronounce, and that her relationship with Jesus would certainly put her as a Christian before Paul.¹¹⁸ Vyhmeister further speculates that Andronicus might have been either a second husband or a Roman name taken by Chuza.”

¹¹⁷ It is noteworthy that no apostle other than the twelve is mentioned in the book of Acts. The expression ‘the apostles’ that is used 29 times in the book always applies to the twelve. This is not to deny that Paul refers to himself as *an* apostle in his epistles but he did not consider himself a member of ‘*the*’ apostles.

¹¹⁸ A person is incorporated into Christ at the moment of baptism. This is denoted by the preposition ‘into’ (*eis*) which is used in several key baptismal texts. It is used three times in Romans 6:3, 4 to describe the initial incorporation of believers into Christ: “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized *into* Christ Jesus were baptized *into* His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism *into* death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” The baptismal formula uses the same preposition: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them *in* [into] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19) and 1 Corinthians 10:2 describes the baptism of Israel *into* Moses.

It is when the name of Jesus Christ is invoked at baptism that the candidate is reckoned ‘in Christ’. This means that the mere *association* of Ioanna with Christ in the gospels does not mean that she was ‘in Christ’ at that time. The first incorporation of people into Christ was at Pentecost when three thousand believers were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38, 41). Previous to this, John baptized individuals into the baptism of repentance (Acts 19:1-6). Thus when Paul affirms in Romans 16:7 that *Iounian* and Andronicus

But is there a vestige of evidence that Ioanna is the same person as *Iounian*? Is there any hard evidence that her name was changed to *Iounian* so that it could be more easily pronounced? Is there any evidence whatsoever that Andronicus was her second husband and that he took the Roman name Andronicus instead of Chuza? The answer to all of these questions is no! There is just no evidence for such assertions which are based on pure conjecture and speculation.¹¹⁹

The book of Acts describes the history of the early church from the Day of Pentecost until well into the first century. Yet there is not a single instance in the book where the word 'apostle' is applied to a woman. If apostleship was a feminine function in the early church why do we not have even one example in the church history of the book of Acts?¹²⁰ Luke mentions several notable women in the book who were not apostles among which are Dorcas, Lydia and Priscilla. The question is, if Junia was really a notable female apostle would Luke have neglected to mention her, especially in light of the fact that of all the gospel writers, he presents women in the most positive light? And why is Andronicus absent from the book as well? If he was a notable apostle along with Junia, why isn't he mentioned even once in the book of Acts either?

Ellen G. White explicitly assures us that the leadership at the Jerusalem Council in AD 49 was all male so if *Iounian* (and Andronicus for that matter) was a notable female apostle, why wasn't she mentioned among the apostolic leadership? It can hardly be believed that she was excluded simply because she was a woman when the central theme of the Council was all about inclusiveness! It is believed that Paul wrote Romans somewhere between AD 55 and 58 (certainly not before AD 49!), which would mean that Iounian and Andronicus were still alive when the Jerusalem Council transpired, and yet they are never mentioned as being there. The silence is deafening!¹²¹

were 'in Christ' before he was, their incorporation into Christ could not have happened until the day of Pentecost.

¹¹⁹ Vyhmeister, "Junia: The Apostle," *Ministry* (July 2013), p. 7. Vyhmeister also hints that Andronicus and his wife *Iounian* might have been among the 72 (was it not 70?) that Jesus sent out. Ellen White does not allow for such speculation. She makes it abundantly clear that the seventy were all males: "Calling *the twelve* about Him, Jesus bade them go out two and two through the towns and villages. None [of the twelve] were sent forth alone, but *brother* was associated with *brother*, friend with friend. Thus they could help and encourage each other, counseling and praying together, each one's strength supplementing the other's weakness. In the *same manner* He afterward sent forth the seventy." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 350

¹²¹ "The 'apostles and elders,' *men* of influence and judgment, framed and issued the decree, which was thereupon generally accepted by the Christian churches. Not all, however, were pleased with the decision; there was a faction of ambitious and self-confident brethren who disagreed with it. These men assumed to engage in the work on their own responsibility. They indulged in much murmuring and faultfinding, proposing new plans and seeking to pull down the work of the *men* whom God had ordained to teach the gospel message." *AA* 196

It bears noting that not even the great apostle Paul was a member of the apostolic leadership in Jerusalem when the Council took place. We are told that the church sent Paul and Barnabas *to* the apostles and elders in Jerusalem and after the Council rendered its decision the apostles and elders *sent* Paul and Barnabas along with Silas and Judas to the churches with the written report. Thus Paul and Barnabas *took and followed orders* from the apostolic leadership in Jerusalem! If *Iounian* was an outstanding female apostle, where was she during the Jerusalem Council?¹²²

In his review of Eldon Epp's book, John Hunwicke brings out an important point. The apostle Paul loved to use words with the prepositional prefix *sun*. So here he associated Andronicus and *Iounian* with himself as fellow-kinsmen (*suggeneis*) and fellow-prisoners (*sunai khmalotous*). If Paul believed that Andronicus and *Iounian* were noted apostles why didn't he continue his argument by saying that they were also notable fellow-apostles (*sunapostolous*) along with him?¹²³

But let's suppose, for the sake of argument—and just for the sake of argument—that *Iounian* was a notable female apostle. This would still not prove as much as egalitarians wish to prove. We still would have to determine what kind of apostle she was. Was she in the same category as the twelve? Was she in the same class as the apostle Paul to whom Jesus appeared in person on the Road to Damascus thus validating his status as an apostle? The evidence indicates that *Iounian* was not in either category so if the name does refer to a female apostle she must have received the *spiritual gift* of apostleship when she was baptized on or after the day of Pentecost. If she was a notable female apostle, it is strange indeed that she is mentioned only once in passing in the middle of a long list of people that Paul greeted.

In his review of Eldon Epp's book, John Hunwicke expresses well the dilemma that is faced by those who believe that *Iounian* was a female apostle:

“Those who, believing her to be an apostle, are concerned to *maximize* the status of Junia, appear to be on the horns of a dilemma. Either they can make her out to be a leading apostle in a *maximal* sense of that word, together with Peter, James, John, and Paul—in which case they have a major problem explaining her almost-invisibility in the records; or they can assign to her an apostleship in a *minimal* sense of that term, perhaps like that of Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25—in which case, they have not proved anything that will be of much use to them in their sociocultural agenda.”

Some who favor women's ordination have highlighted the nine women that Paul salutes for their work in ministry in Romans 16. The question is this: Was Paul extolling these women because they were elders/overseers or apostles? There is no evidence of this. He was

¹²² The apostle Paul himself makes it clear that three of the twelve were recognized as pillars among the apostles, Peter, James and John (Galatians 2:9). These three were truly of note among the apostles!

¹²³ John Hunwicke, “Junia among the Apostles: The Story behind a New Testament Saint and the Egalitarian Agenda” [Touchtone](#) (October 2008).

simply reminiscing about how these women had been fellow-laborers with him in spreading the gospel. Paul was the consummate believer in women in ministry as can be seen by the many notable women who worked side by side with him in the book of Acts, but at the same time Paul was clear that the office of elder/overseer should be occupied by 'husbands of one wife.'

Perhaps an analogy would help us understand why the apostle Paul extolled these women in Romans 16. I have been senior pastor of Fresno Central Church for close to 18 years and during that time there have been a number of women who have worked tirelessly to further the mission of the church. They have served as church treasurers, church secretaries, finance committee chairs and departmental directors. They have provided food for the hungry, clothing for the homeless and shelter for the destitute. They have given Bible studies and wisely counseled the children and youth. They have taught Sabbath School classes and preached evangelistic sermons. I admire and respect these women and I consider them my friends and fellow-laborers. If I ever accepted a call to another place and then wrote a letter of greeting to the church I would certainly mention by name these many women who helped me and were instrumental in advancing the work of the church. But does this mean that they were ordained elders/overseers or apostles? Of course not! During my tenure, Fresno Central Church has never ordained any woman to the position of elder/overseer.

So we have multiple uncertainties concerning the gender and apostleship of *Ioulian*. First, it is not absolutely certain that the name is feminine though the weight of the *post-apostolic extra-Biblical evidence* seems to indicate that it is. Second, it is uncertain whether Andronicus was her husband. Third, it is quite uncertain whether *Ioulian* was a well-known apostle or well-known to the apostles, and fourth, if the name applies to a woman and she was an apostle (which is a big if!) it is impossible to determine what type of apostle she was. Did she occupy the *apostolic office* or did she receive the *spiritual gift* of apostleship upon her baptism?¹²⁴ The simple and honest answer is that we have no definitive information one way or another!

In her recent article, Dr. Nancy Vyhmeister referred to the 1994 *Textual Commentary* to the UBS *Greek New Testament* where the scholars noted that "Some of the members [of the UBS Committee], considering it unlikely that a woman would be among those styled 'apostles,' understood the name to be masculine." Vyhmeister suggests that the minority's refusal to recognize *Ioulian* as a woman apostle was driven by the preconceived notion that women

¹²⁴ Ellen White explained that although the apostolic *office* of the twelve was unique, later God imparted the *spiritual gift* of apostleship to various members of the church (1 Corinthians 12:28). Regarding this Ellen White stated: "*Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers had been formed into churches, the organization of the church was further perfected, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained. Every member was exhorted to act well his part. Each was to make a wise use of the talents entrusted to him. Some were endowed by the Holy Spirit with special gifts--"first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues"* 1 Corinthians 12:28. But all these classes of workers were to labor in harmony." [AA](#) 91

could not be called to be apostles simply because of their gender. But is this the case? Were all the members of the committee who thought that *Iounian* could not have been a female apostle driven by ideology?¹²⁵

Is there not another possibility? What really drove the minority members of the committee to take the name *Iounian* as male? Was it bias or was it simply that they took seriously the overwhelming evidence in the rest of Scripture that apostles were always of the male gender? After all, Jesus chose twelve male apostles, two male finalists were chosen from a larger pool of men¹²⁶ to replace Judas, and all the rest of the apostles who are mentioned in the New Testament were men. That is to say, perhaps the minority on the committee simply allowed Scripture to interpret Scripture. The simple fact is that in the book of Acts (as well as the rest of the New Testament!) the word 'apostle', without exception, is always applied to men.

Should we base a woman apostolate upon one ambiguous verse whose meaning is uncertain and inconclusive? Would it not be better to take the evidence that all apostles in the New Testament were men and use this to argue that *Iounian* was either a male or if she was a female she was renowned to the apostles? Those who confidently affirm that *Iounian* was a female apostle must build a case based on *post-apostolic second hand* testimony, conjectures, calculated guesses, assumptions and personal biases.

As Adventists we have always followed the sound hermeneutical principle that ambiguous texts must be interpreted in the light of clear ones. It would be most unusual for the church to use a single text, and a disputed one at that, to prove or disprove any doctrine or practice. We cannot establish the apostleship of women based on *one* text whose meaning is inconclusive. There must be other texts to support the idea that women were apostles, and the simple fact is that there are none. The issue of *Iounian's* gender and apostleship must not be resolved by the church fathers,¹²⁷ Bible versions, the comments of Bible scholars, or textual critics. It must be resolved internally from within Scripture itself.

¹²⁵ Dr. Nancy Vyhmeister approvingly quotes the writings of openly pro-ordination scholars such as Scot McKnight, Linda Bellville, Richard Bauckham, Craig Keener and Eldon Pep. Epp, a noted New Testament higher critic, believes that 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 is an interpolation, that 1 Timothy 2:8-15 is the work of a later Paulinist and Ephesians and Colossians are deuterio-Pauline. Vyhmeister affirmed in her article that Epp, in his book, [Junia: The First Woman Apostle](#) 'made a well-documented case for Junia as a woman and one of the apostles.' Vyhmeister is actually half right. Epp did make a well-documented *post-apostolic* case for Junia as a female but he did not do quite as well in proving that Junia was an apostle. Epp dedicated 85 pages (chapters 1-10) of his book to the gender of the name and only 13 pages (chapter 11) to the meaning of the disputed phrase 'of note among the apostles'.

¹²⁶ Acts 1:16 refers to the pool of men from which the two male finalists were chosen as 'men' and 'brethren' (*andres adelfoi*)

¹²⁷ Nancy Vyhmeister refers to John of Damascus who lived in the late seventh and early eighth centuries and the *Liturgikon* that is used today in the missal of the Byzantine Church as evidence that *Iounian* was a notable female apostle. The *Liturgikon*, without a shred of Biblical evidence, also sees Mary Magdalene and Thecla as apostles. Mary Magdalene is never called an apostle in Scripture and Thecla is not even mentioned in the Bible; she is first referred to in the apocryphal book, *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. The problem with using John of Damascus and the *Liturgikon* is that these sources are far too late to prove anything of substance. As is well known, by the time of John of Damascus, the church had been infected with an epidemic of traditions that had

So how certain can we be that *Lounian* was a famous female apostle? In the light of the evidence that we have examined, the following confident assertion of J. D. G. Dunn¹²⁸ must be seriously questioned on several counts:

“We may firmly conclude, however, that one of the foundational apostles of Christianity was a woman and a wife.”

Is J. D. G. Dunn’s ‘firm’ conclusion as firm as he would lead us to believe?

First, there is no certainty that *Lounian* was an apostle.

Second, there is no evidence that *Lounian*’s role was *foundational* in the early church.

Third, there is no conclusive evidence that *Lounian* was a *woman*.

Fourth, there is no firm evidence that *Lounian* was the *wife* of Andronicus!

The lack of conclusive evidence must lead us to be cautious about making categorical statements about *Lounian*’s gender and apostleship. As Adventists we have always followed the sound hermeneutical principle that ambiguous texts must be interpreted in the light of clear ones. It would be most unusual for the church to use a single text to prove or disprove a doctrine or practice. We cannot establish the apostleship of women based on *one* text whose meaning is inconclusive. There must be other texts to support the idea that women were apostles, and the simple fact is that there are none.

Unusual Cases

It is customary for the women’s ordination advocates taking exceptional, out-of-the-ordinary cases and making them the norm to be followed in all situations. For example, as I documented in my recent book, *Reflections on Women’s Ordination*, they regularly bring up the unusual case of China where women, due to irregular political circumstances and a lack of a denominational organizational structure, have had to assume leadership positions in the church.

Deborah and Huldah

Another *out-of-the-ordinary* instance is that of Deborah, the judge and prophetess of Israel. The women’s ordination advocates argue that if such an influential woman as Deborah could be a judge and prophetess in Israel, then women should be allowed to serve as elders/overseers in the church. They also argue that Huldah, the prophetess, occupied a *prominent* leadership position in Israel and therefore women today should be ordained as

no foundation in Scripture. Some church theologians were teaching that Mary was the Mother of God, that she had ascended bodily to heaven, that she was the mother of all the faithful and that she had been conceived without original sin. Like Aristotle’s six legged spider, unreliable traditions can be handed down and accepted as gospel truth by succeeding generations when upon close examination they have no substance in reality.

¹²⁸J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1988), p. 895.

elders and gospel ministers along with men. But is such a leap of logic sound? More importantly, does it square with the biblical evidence?

Before we answer these questions, let's take a look at a statement from The Great Controversy, which addresses the simplicity of Scripture:

"The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in *doubt and darkness* by learned men, who, with a pretense of *great wisdom*, teach that the Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed. These men are *false teachers*. It was to such a class that Jesus declared: "Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God." Mark 12:24. The language of the Bible should be explained according to its *obvious meaning*, unless a symbol or figure is employed. Christ has given the promise: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine" John 7:17. If men would but take the Bible *as it reads*, if there were no false teachers to *mislead and confuse* their minds, a work would be accomplished that would make angels glad and that would *bring into the fold* of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error."¹²⁹

First of all it is important to realize that the period of the judges is *not the ideal pattern* for what James and Ellen White called 'gospel order'. The period of the judges was a somewhat unruly stage of Israel's history between the death of the elders who succeeded Joshua (ca. 1300 BC) and the Hebrew monarchy (ca. 1050 BC).

Inspiration tells us that while Moses was alive he set up an organizational system in Israel which Ellen White referred to as a '*perfect organization*'. It is clear from Scripture that this perfect organizational structure was passed along to Joshua when Moses laid hands on him shortly before he died:

"Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had *laid his hands on him*; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses." (Deuteronomy 34:9)

Apparently this ideal organizational system continued not only under the leadership of Joshua but also during the period of the elders who outlived him:

"Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord which He had done for Israel" (Joshua 24:31; Judges 1:6-9).

Ellen White is in full harmony with Scripture on this matter:

"Until the generation that had received instruction from Joshua became extinct, idolatry made little headway."¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 598, 599

¹³⁰ Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 544

But then came the period of the Judges when the organizational system under Moses, Joshua and the elders seemed to a great degree to fall apart. Scripture tells us that “another generation arose after them [the elders who succeeded Joshua] who did not know the Lord or the work *which He had done for Israel*” (Judges 2:10).

The Bible record makes it clear that during this transitional period there was no centralized authority in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6; 21:25).

The crucial question at this point is this: Should the period of the judges be the ideal model for church organization today? Would it not be better for us to focus on the organizational system that was established in the days of Moses that Ellen White described as a ‘perfect order’? The Lord’s servant explicitly affirmed that we should learn lessons from the organizational order that was established under divine guidance by Moses:¹³¹

“Has God changed from a God of order? —No, he is the same in the present dispensation as in the former. Paul says, “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.” [1 Corinthians 14:33.] He is as particular now as then. And he designs that we should learn lessons of order and organization from the perfect order instituted in the days of Moses, for the benefit of the children of Israel.”¹³²

When the elders who succeeded Joshua passed away the organizational system of Israel entered a somewhat chaotic period. During this time, a series of magistrates arose to ‘judge’ Israel among which was Deborah. It must be underlined that during this period it was highly unusual for a woman to serve as a civil magistrate. Ellen White explains that Deborah’s service was outside the norm:

“She [Deborah] was known as a *prophetess*, and in the absence of the *usual magistrates*, the people had sought to her for counsel and justice.”¹³³

Ellen White’s remark is clearly corroborated by examining the list of *seventeen judges* in Israel (including the two sons of Samuel): Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson, Eli, Samuel, Joel and Abijah.

¹³¹ The question has been asked: Was Israel’s organization a ‘perfect order’ because the leaders on all levels were males or because it was representative style of government? Is this simply a question of either/or? In Israel there were leaders of tribes, thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens and the leaders on every level were males. Besides, there was also a representative governing council of seventy from all the tribes, also composed of males. This style of government is similar to that of the Seventh-day Adventist church today where we have divisions (tribes), unions (thousands), conferences (hundreds), districts (fifties) and local churches (tens). The Seventh-day Adventist Church also has a representative governing body from all parts of world, the General Conference Executive Committee. The question is: Should not the representatives on all levels of church governance be male as well? The burden of proof otherwise is in the hands of those who wish to make all these functions gender inclusive. In the New Testament, apostles, elders, overseers and deacons were all of the male gender and the first ‘General Conference Session’ in Jerusalem was composed only of males.

¹³² Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, volume 6, p. 647

¹³³ Ellen G. White, Sons and Daughters of God, p. 37

What stands out in this list of seventeen judges is that *only one* of them was a woman! Further, all the judges from Othniel to Samuel served as military leaders, Deborah being the lone exception!

The question is, were there no men in Israel that it was necessary for Deborah to do what a man should have been doing? Of course there were! What the story of Deborah in Judges 4 and 5 teaches us is that if a male will not step forward as God intended, then God will use a woman *prophet* to encourage the male to step up to the plate and fulfill his leadership role.

As I have read the egalitarian literature on Deborah I have found that it stretches the evidence to the breaking point by referring to Deborah as one having authority over men, as being the highest leader in Israel and as one who exercised political and judicial power over the entire nation, including men. But is this the picture that Scripture really portrays?

What do we know for certain about Deborah? We know that before she was a *judge* she was a *prophetess* (Judges 4:4). That is to say, her predominant calling was that of a prophet. Because she was respected as a prophet we also know that the people retained her services as a judge (Judges 4:4). The Scripture record states that Deborah judged *private* and most likely *civil* cases of individuals who came to her under a palm tree (Judges 4:4) that is definitely a strange place for a courtroom!! Deborah did not serve as a priest, a Levite, an elder or a king.

Furthermore Deborah is called a *mother in Israel* who was chosen to deliver messages of counsel and encouragement from God to the military commander, Barak. The expression 'mother in Israel' undoubtedly refers to the fact that Deborah was a perceptive woman who provided wise prophetic counsel to the military commander, Barak. That this is the case can be seen in the only other reference to this title in 2 Samuel 20:19. There, an unnamed woman provided wise counsel to another military commander, Joab, thus sparing an entire city from destruction.

Contrary to what pro-ordination advocates claim, Deborah *did not summon* and lead Israel to battle but rather advised Barak to do so (Judges 4:6, 7, 14, 15). Ellen White explicitly affirms that God had chosen Barak to go to battle, not Deborah. According to the clear testimony of Scripture Barak was to be the leader, not Deborah:

"Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded, 'Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with *you* ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; and against *you* I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into *your* hand'? Then Deborah said to Barak: "Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into *your* hand. Has not the Lord gone out before *you*?" So *Barak went down* from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following *him*. And the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his

army with the edge of the sword *before Barak*; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot.”

Ellen White concurs with Scripture:

“Although *he had been designated* by the Lord Himself as the one chosen to deliver Israel, and had received the assurance that God would go with him and subdue their enemies, yet he was timid and distrustful.”¹³⁴

By prophetic instruction from God, Deborah told Barak to assemble the men of Israel to lead them to battle (Judges 4:6). When Barak vacillated and insisted that Deborah accompany him (Judges 4:8) she rebuked him and promised that he would lose honor because God would deliver Israel from their enemies by the hand of a woman (4:8, 9). This strongly suggests that Barak had failed to exercise his manly duty as Israel’s leader.

Contrary to what the women’s ordination lobby claims, Deborah was not the woman who delivered Israel from the hand of Sisera. Judges 4:14-16 unambiguously indicates that Sisera was delivered into the hand of Israel under the leadership of Barak and the woman who killed the commander of the enemy hosts was not Deborah but rather the woman *Jael* who drove a stake through Sisera’s head (Judges 4:21).

Why did Barak hesitate to go to battle without Deborah’s support? Contrary to what one may think, it was not because Barak was a coward. Rather, he had little confidence that Israel would pay him heed and rally for battle. As we have shown before, there was no central government that required the men of Israel to respond to Barak’s call. Inspiration tells us:

“He accepted the *message from Deborah* as the *word of God*, but he had little confidence in Israel, and feared that they would not obey his call. He refused to engage in such a doubtful undertaking unless Deborah would accompany him, and thus support his efforts by her *influence and counsel*”¹³⁵

It was because Deborah was a prophet and the people respected her judgment that the military leader Barak felt that her presence would encourage Israel to go to battle. It will be noticed that Deborah provided support for Barak’s efforts and not he hers. Further, Deborah did not help Barak by taking over military leadership but rather by her influence and counsel.

A similar example of the role of a prophet can be seen when Israel returned to Israel from Babylon after the captivity. Zerubbabel (the civil leader) and Joshua (the religious leader) spearheaded the reconstruction of the temple while the prophets Haggai and Zechariah helped them by providing guidance and encouragement. Here is the record:

¹³⁴ Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 37

¹³⁵ Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 37

“Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, *helping them*” (Ezra 2:1, 2)

At the time Zerubbabel was the civil leader in Jerusalem and Joshua, as the high priest, was the spiritual leader. Did the prophets Zechariah and Haggai usurp the leadership positions of Zerubbabel and Joshua? No. The text clearly states that the prophets helped them in their task of rebuilding the temple by encouraging them to go forward with the project. Haggai 1:12-15 clearly reveals the role that was played by God’s prophets. God called Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the leaders to build and Zerubbabel and Joshua in turn answered the challenge by encouraging the people to build. The result was that the temple was finished in just five years. Thus the prophets inspired the leaders but did not usurp their legitimate authority.

This is the role of a prophet. A prophet is a *wise counselor* that encourages leadership to go forward in faith and wisely lead God’s people. The prophet does not usurp the leadership position but encourages the leaders to fulfill their God-given duty to lead!¹³⁶

¹³⁶ This is not to say that there were not leaders who also had the prophetic gift. Moses and David were leaders as well as prophets. But the primary task of both Moses and David was to lead Israel. And it must be underlined that both of these leaders were *men*. Ellen White compared the leadership qualities of the Old Testament leaders to those of the New Testament Church:

“The same principles of piety and justice that were to guide the rulers among God’s people in the time of *Moses* and of *David* were also to be followed by those given the *oversight* [the word ‘bishop’ means ‘overseer’] of the newly organized church of God in the gospel dispensation. In the work of setting things in order in all the churches, and *ordaining suitable men to act as officers*, the apostles held to the *high standards of leadership* outlined in the Old Testament Scriptures. They maintained that *he* who is called to stand in a position of leading responsibility in the church ‘must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.’ Titus 1:7-9. AA 95

In Scripture there is not a single example of a woman who besides being a prophet was a priest, a patriarch, a king, one of the seventy, a leader of thousands, hundreds, fifties, tens, an apostle, an elder an overseer or a deacon. Not even Miriam, the sister of Moses, was a leader in this sense. Ellen White does affirm that Miriam ‘was richly endowed with the gifts of poetry and music’, that she ‘had occupied a position of high honor and *leadership* in Israel’ and that ‘in the affections of the people and the honor of Heaven she stood second only to Moses and Aaron’ (PP 382). But Ellen White also affirms that ‘in the organization of the council of elders [Aaron and Miriam] felt that their position and authority had been ignored. Miriam and Aaron had never known the weight of care and responsibility which had rested upon Moses; yet because they had been chosen to *aid him* they regarded themselves as *sharing equally* with him the burden of *leadership*, and they regarded the appointment of further assistants as uncalled for” PP 382. She states that they were ‘blinded by jealousy and ambition’ (PP 383). “Regarding themselves as *equally* favored by God, they felt that they were *entitled* to the *same position and authority*.” (PP 383) The simple fact is that Miriam was not a priest and did not belong to the council of the seventy or to any other level of leadership in Israel’s organization. Ellen White warns: “He who has placed upon *men* the heavy responsibility of *leaders* and *teachers* of His people will hold the people accountable for the manner in which they treat His servants.” (PP 386)

The Jehoshaphat Example

Another example of this *advisory role* of a prophet is found in the story of 2 Chronicles 20. As the chapter begins we see Jehoshaphat fearful because a triple alliance with a massive army was on the march against Judah. In this time of crisis, the people prayed earnestly to God for deliverance and the King himself then uttered a beautiful prayer.

In the midst of the crisis the prophetic gift fell upon one Jahaziel who encouraged the King to lead the battle not with weapons but by singing the praises of the Lord. Jehoshaphat accepted the counsel and went before the armies along with the Levites and commanded Israel to sing. To rally the troops Jehoshaphat uttered the famous words:

"Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God and you shall be established; believe His prophets and you shall prosper."

Thus the king and the people were *encouraged by the prophet* to go out to battle with the assurance of victory. The prophet did not lead the battle. The prophet simply encouraged leadership to pay heed to the counsel given by God and go to battle. The result of Jehoshaphat and Israel paying heed to the prophet was a signal victory for God's people over their enemies. Now back to the story of Deborah and Barak.

As a prophet Deborah encouraged the leader to do his duty just as Ellen White later encouraged and counseled the male leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Notably, God called two males to be His prophets before Ellen White and neither of them accepted the call so God chose the weakest of the weak as His prophet. He chose the most unlikely of candidates—a poor, sickly, young, unstudied woman and He used her powerfully!

The story of Judges 4 is absolutely clear:

- It was *Barak* who summoned Israel to battle (verse 10).
- It was *Barak* who led them into battle (verse 14).
- It was *Barak* who routed the army of Sisera and defeated it (verse 15).
- It was *Barak* who pursued the armies of Sisera until there was no one left (verse 16).
- When Sisera fled on foot it was *Barak* who pursued him (verse 22).

Nowhere in the story are we told that Deborah led the armies into battle and that she gained the victory over the enemy. Did Deborah take over the reins of military leadership when the man Barak was remiss to do so? No! She actually encouraged Barak to do it and she provided moral support!

When the victory was gained, Deborah and Barak both sang a song of praise to the Lord who had given Israel the victory (5:12). It is a significant fact that when Samuel later reminisced about this experience he named Barak as the main protagonist of the story and did not even mention Deborah:

“And the Lord sent Jerubbaal and *Barak* and Jephthah and Samuel and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety.” (1 Samuel 12:11, ESV)

Did Samuel leave out a reference to Deborah because he lived in a male dominated society? Pro-ordination lobbyists may suggest that this was the reason but they are simply reading into the text what is not there.

It bears noting that when the book of Hebrews describes the Old Testament heroes and heroines of faith, mention is made of *Barak* as the protagonist of the story and Deborah is not even mentioned:

“And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets.” (Hebrews 11:32)

Does this mean that Deborah’s role was not important? Of course not! Deborah’s role as a prophet was indispensable to encourage the leader Barak and the troops. But she did not usurp Barak’s leadership role to lead Israel into battle as is often argued by the women’s ordination lobby.

To use the story of Deborah the judge and prophetess of Israel to justify the ordination of women as elders and pastors in the church denotes a lack of sound reasoning. If Deborah had been a priestess the parallel might be justifiable but she was not. Does the following syllogism make logical sense?

- **Major premise:** In the Old Testament women served as prophets and judges.
- **Minor premise:** Deborah was a woman.
- **Conclusion:** Therefore Deborah could serve as a priest.

The facts speak for themselves. The most that can be argued from the story of Deborah is that God today might call women to be prophets and judges but there is no evidence whatsoever in this story that God calls women today to be senior pastors, elders, or Conference, Union, Division or General Conference presidents. To argue in this manner denotes a careless misuse of the biblical evidence as well as illogical thinking.

It is an undeniable fact that the Bible mentions a good number of women who served in the role of a prophet. Among these are Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), Noadiah (Nehemiah 6:14), Isaiah’s wife (Isaiah 8:3), Anna (Luke 2:36), and Philip’s four daughters (Acts 21:9). The apostle Paul even said that it was legitimate for women prophets to speak in the congregation as long as they followed the cultural custom of covering their heads as a sign of their submission to male authority (1 Corinthians 11:5). We are also told that in the last days not only sons but also daughters will prophesy (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). And who could ever forget the role of Ellen White as the prophetess of the remnant?

It is frequently argued by the women's ordination lobby that if God chose women to be prophets then we should allow women to be ordained as elders and gospel ministers. In fact, I have found that Joel 2:28 (along with Galatians 3:28) is one of the most frequently quoted texts in favor of women's ordination.

Sometime ago I was speaking with a conference president about women's ordination and he boldly stated: "I settled this issue in my mind long ago. If God called Ellen White to be a woman prophet then He can also call women to serve as pastors and elders." He seemed to suggest that the office of 'prophet' was a higher calling than that of an elder or minister and therefore women prophets should be allowed to serve in the 'lesser' office of pastor or elder. In other words, if a prophet can be a woman then certainly she can also be an elder or gospel minister, right? But is the call of a prophet really higher than that of a gospel minister? Ellen White answers this question:

"There must be no belittling of the gospel ministry. No enterprise should be so conducted as to cause the ministry of the Word to be looked upon as an inferior matter. It is not so. Those who belittle the ministry are belittling Christ. The highest of all work is ministry in its various lines, and it should be kept before the youth that there is no work more blessed of God than that of the gospel minister."¹³⁷

What did Ellen White mean by 'ministry in its various lines'? The succeeding context indicates that she was not writing about ministry in general nor was she gender inclusive. She was referring to young men entering the ministry.

"Let not our young men be deterred from entering *the* ministry. There is danger that through glowing representations some will be drawn away from the path where God bids them walk. Some have been encouraged to take a course of study in medical lines who ought to be preparing themselves to enter *the* ministry. The Lord calls for more ministers to labor in His vineyard. The words were spoken: "Strengthen the outposts; have faithful sentinels in every part of the world." God calls for you, young *men*. He calls for whole armies of young *men* who are large-hearted and large-minded, and who have a deep love for Christ and the truth."¹³⁸

So we come back to our original questions:

- Is the office of prophet higher in rank than the office of the gospel minister?
- Does the fact that God calls women to the so-called 'higher office' of prophet mean that they can also serve in the supposed 'lesser office' of pastors and elders?

Many in the women's ordination lobby would answer in the affirmative.

¹³⁷ Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, volume 6, p. 411

¹³⁸ Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, volume 6, p. 411

It is amazing to me how those who argue in this manner are not able to discern the fallacy in their reasoning! Let's analyze the argument from a logical perspective in the form of a syllogism:

- **Major Premise:** God called women to the prophetic office.
- **Minor Premise:** Ellen White was a woman.
- **Conclusion:** Therefore Ellen White was called to be a pastor or elder.

The question is: Does the conclusion logically follow the major and minor premises? Of course not! In order to be logical, the syllogism would have to look like this:

- **Major Premise:** God called women to the prophetic office.
- **Minor Premise:** Ellen White was a woman.
- **Conclusion:** Therefore God called Ellen White to the prophetic office.

The most that can be argued on the basis of women prophets is that women today can be called by God to be prophets. The gift of prophecy is a spiritual gift that is given by God without regard to gender but this gift must not be mingled with the leadership role of elder/overseer. The Bible allows for gender inclusiveness when it comes to prophets but it does not allow for this in the case of elders/overseers. In fact, there is not a single instance in Scripture of a woman prophet who was one of the twelve founders of Israel, a member of the council of the seventy, a Levite, a priest, a king, an apostle, a deacon, an elder/overseer, a pastor or a husband of one wife!

Yet many egalitarian scholars still insist that a woman's call to the prophetic office proves that they can also serve as elders/overseers. The fact that Ellen White was God's prophet to the Remnant Church has led one pro-ordination scholar to affirm:

"And if there has ever been anyone in our midst who was a leader and a person of authority, it has been Ellen White. In the context of Ephesians 4:11-14, it becomes difficult to imagine 'ordaining' those exercising other gifts/offices in the church—apostles, evangelists, pastor-teachers—without also being willing to 'ordain' those deemed to be 'prophets'."

Questions and More Questions

Several questions need to be asked about this statement: Was Ellen White actually a leader and a person of authority in the sense of being an elder, a pastor, or a Conference, Union or General Conference president? Is the role of a 'prophet' interchangeable with that of an elder/overseer? Were prophets called by God to be leaders in Israel?

Huldah

The role of the prophet in Scripture as it relates to leadership can be clearly discerned in the story of the discovery of the book of the Law in the days of King Josiah (2 Kings 22, 23).

As is well known, in the eighteenth year of his reign Josiah ordered the temple of the Lord to be repaired. In the process, Hilkiah, the high priest, found the book of the Law which somehow had been lost. When Shaphan informed the king that the high priest Hilkiah had found the book of the Law that contained the covenant blessings and curses, the king rent his robes because he knew that Judah deserved to suffer the curses because of her unfaithfulness.

The king then commanded that the Lord be consulted about this matter and messengers were sent to Huldah who was known in town as a prophetess. Huldah received the messengers and with them sent a message to Josiah prefaced with the words: "this is what the Lord God says.' She informed Josiah that the predicted disaster would come upon Judah but that it would not transpire while he was alive.

Was Huldah the Leader?

The important point to remember here is that Huldah did not take the reins of leadership in Judah. She did not take over the throne. She did not take over the priesthood to clean up the apostasy. She was merely the messenger that God used to encourage Josiah to lead out in the needed reformation. Huldah did not clean up the mess! It was Josiah, the elders and the priests as the leaders of Judah who took her message to heart and led out in the initiative to make the necessary changes.

It was the king who ordered the elders of Judah and Jerusalem, the priests, the prophets and all the people to come to the temple of the Lord to renew the covenant with Him (2 Kings 23:1-3). It was the king who then commanded Hilkiah to clean up the temple and the land from all the paraphernalia that had been used in the pagan cultus and it was the king who commanded that the unfaithful priests be slain. And it was the king who was extolled by the Lord for being a faithful leader:

"Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him." (2 Kings 23:25)

Once again it must be underlined that Huldah did not take the reins of the government or the priesthood to have all of this done. Huldah imparted to the king the message that God gave her but the designated leader chose to implement her counsel. Josiah could have ignored what the prophet said and the doom upon Judah would have come during his lifetime.

There is clear Biblical evidence that prophets served as inspired advisors and counselors to rulers and yet the rulers had the governing authority to accept or reject the counsel. That the rulers had executive power over the prophets is made clear by what the rulers frequently did to prophets who delivered politically incorrect messages. Among others, Isaiah was sawn asunder, Elijah had to flee, Jeremiah was committed to the dungeon (2

Chronicles 36:11-15), John the Baptist was beheaded, Stephen was stoned and Ellen White was shipped off to the Land Down Under.

We are told concerning the leadership of Josiah and the reformation that took place in Judah:

“And he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take a stand. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that belonged to the children of Israel, and [Josiah] made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the Lord their God. All his days they did not depart from following the Lord God of their fathers.” (2 Chronicles 34:32, 33)

The Adventist Advantage

Seventh-day Adventists have a distinct advantage when it comes to understanding the role of a prophet as it relates to leadership because we have had one in our midst. As one looks at the life and ministry of Ellen White we never find her occupying a position of leadership in the church. She was never a Conference, Union or General Conference president. She was never a pastor or an elder/overseer. She was never referred to as Elder White or Pastor Helen. She was always Sister White or Mother White. Not only did she deny that she was a leader, but when she spoke of the Seventh-day Adventist organizational system she underlined that at each level *competent men* should be elected as officers:

“No one has ever heard me claim the position of *leader* of the denomination . . . He has not provided that the burden of leadership shall rest upon a few *men*. Responsibilities are distributed among a large number of *competent men*. . . Every member of the church has a voice in choosing officers of the church. The church chooses the officers of the state conferences. Delegates chosen by the state conferences choose the officers of the union conferences, and delegates chosen by the union conferences choose the officers of the General Conference. By this arrangement every conference, every institution, every church, and every individual, either directly or through representatives, has a voice in the election of the *men* who bear the chief responsibilities in the General Conference . . . neither then [when the work was just starting] nor since the work has grown to large proportions, during which time responsibilities have been widely distributed, has anyone heard me claiming the leadership of this people.”¹³⁹

Make no mistake, God did give Ellen White counsel for the leaders of the church but she did not usurp their authority to implement or not implement the counsel she gave. She unambiguously stated:

¹³⁹ Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, volume 8, pp. 236, 237

“This is my work--to give to the people the light that the Lord gives me. I am commissioned to receive and communicate His messages. I am not to appear before the people as holding *any other position* than that of a messenger with a message.”¹⁴⁰

This is why she repeatedly referred to herself as the ‘messenger of the Lord’. When her counsel was followed the church was blessed but when her counsel was ignored or rejected the church suffered spiritual loss.

By her own witness, Ellen White took orders from church leadership when she did not have any direct light from God to the contrary. The leadership extended a call for her to go to Australia and even though she would have preferred to stay in California, she responded to the call and spent nine years with great physical pain in the Land Down Under and while there wrote some of her most deeply spiritual books. It is a sobering thought that Ellen White, the Messenger of the Lord, would follow the leadership of the brethren!

Ellen White and Credentials

For many years Ellen White did receive an ‘honorary’ ministerial credential but she was never set apart or ordained for a leadership position in the church by the laying on of human hands or any other means. An examination of the extant records indicates that she was the only person, male or female, during her lifetime who received a ministerial credential in spite of never being ordained. Other women did receive a ministerial license but none received a credential.

Some women’s ordination lobbyists have affirmed that Ellen White was ordained. But this is simply an unfounded fable. The Ellen G. White Estate has in its possession six of Ellen White’s paper ministerial credentials: 1883, 1885, 1887, 1899, 1909 and 1913.

- On the 1883 credential (issued by the Michigan Conference) the word ‘ordained’ is not crossed off .
- On the 1885 credential (issued by the General Conference) the word ‘ordained’ is neatly crossed off.
- On the 1887 credential the word ‘ordained’ is not crossed off.

This has led some women’s ordination advocates to say that she was ordained sometime between 1885 and 1887. However, this presents serious problems. Does this mean that she was ordained in 1883 when the Michigan Conference issued her a ministerial credential, she was then unordained in 1885 because the word ‘ordained’ is crossed off and then she was re-ordained in 1887? The simple fact is that she was never set apart as an ordained minister. She was ordained by God to be a prophet not a pastor an elder or a bishop!

¹⁴⁰ Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, volume 8, p. 237

Biographical Information Sheet

Further evidence that Ellen White was never ordained is found on a biographical information sheet that was filled out on her behalf by her assistant, Mary Steward. The form was filled out on March 5, 1909, as requested by the General Conference Office of Records. I quote from the Ellen G. White Estate website:

“Question 19 asked, ‘If ordained, state when, where, and by whom.’ The line was marked with an ‘x’ indicating that she had not been ordained, just as an ‘x’ was recorded for question 26, ‘If remarried, give date, and to whom.’

W. C. White Confirmation

The final line of evidence that Ellen White was never set apart by the laying on of human hands is found in a letter written by Dores E. Robinson in response to a question that had been asked of W. C. White regarding Ellen White’s ordination status. The letter is dated November 17, 1935:

"[W. C. White] tells me that Sister White was never ordained; that she never baptized, nor did she ever give the ordination charge to others."

W. C. White was Ellen White’s son. Certainly he knew Ellen White’s ordination status better than those who are attempting to rewrite history. In spite of all this evidence, the Ellen White ordination fable is passed on from mouth to mouth as gospel truth. Never mind the facts!

In Conclusion

In conclusion, we can safely conclude that Ellen White was set apart by God to be a prophet, not an elder/overseer or a pastor. To say that because Ellen White was a prophet she had the right to be an elder or pastor would be like saying that because I am an elder I have the right to be a prophet! The conclusion simply does not follow the premise!

So, the evidence is crystal clear concerning Deborah and Huldah. In neither case is there a shred of evidence that would justify the ordination of women as elders or pastors. To use these stories in this manner denotes either careless scholarship or a preconceived agenda in favor of women’s ordination. God has called women to very important roles in the church but the apostle Paul leaves no doubt that the elders, pastors/bishops of the church must be the ‘husbands of one wife’.

Summarizing the Evidence

The Biblical evidence in favor of male headship in the home and in the church is overwhelming.

First-born males as heads of household, male leaders in the home during the patriarchal period, twelve male founders of the twelve tribes, male rulers over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens in Moses' time, seventy males in the governing council of Israel, male Levites, male priests, the names of twelve males on the breastplate of Aaron, all male kings, twelve male apostles, a male successor of Judas chosen from a pool of males, male deacons, male elders, male bishops, husbands of one wife, twelve males sitting on thrones and judging the twelve tribes of Israel, twelve male names on the gates of the New Jerusalem, twelve male names on the foundations of the Holy City. How much more evidence is needed to make a Biblical case for male leadership in Israel, in the home and in the church?¹⁴¹

We have examined 1 Peter 2:9, 10 and Galatians 3:28 and have found that neither of these texts is dealing with leadership roles in the home or in the church. Both are dealing with events that occur at the beginning of the Christian walk when a believer is baptized and not with leadership roles in the church which come later. We have examined explicit statements from Paul to the effect that it is still God's plan for men to be the head in the home and in the church. We have examined the cases of Phoebe, Junias, and women prophets and have found no basis for the ordination of women to positions of leadership in the church as elders/overseers.

ⁱ Some Adventist egalitarians have questioned whether the seven who were set apart in Acts 6 were actually deacons. Ellen White leaves no room for doubt. Regarding the election of the seven she states: "This advice was followed, and by prayer and the laying on of hands, *seven* chosen *men* were solemnly set apart for their duties as *deacons*." AA, p. 89 Ellen White also explicitly mentions that Philip was one of the seven *deacons* and Stephen was 'the foremost of the seven *deacons*' (AA, pp. 106, 97). The Spirit of Prophecy makes a distinction between ministers, elders, deacons and regular church members such as in the following quotation:

"The responsibility of representing Christ to the world does not rest alone upon those who are ***ordained as ministers*** of the gospel. ***Each member*** of the church should be a living epistle, known and read of all men. A working church will be a living church. Those who are elected as ***elders and deacons*** should ever be on the alert that plans may be made and executed which will give ***every member of the church*** a share in active work for the salvation of souls. This is the only way in which the church can be preserved in a healthy, thriving condition." RH, March 24, 1891

ⁱⁱ Here is one example: "They were most likely either the wives of the deacons or a group of female deacons (cf. Phoebe, Rom 16:1). A case can be made for either of these two options, with a slim advantage falling to the first. But being dogmatic about either view is unwarranted by the exegetical data" (from Bible Knowledge Commentary/Old Testament Copyright © 1983, 2000 Cook Communications Ministries; Bible Knowledge Commentary/New Testament Copyright © 1983, 2000 Cook Communications Ministries. All rights reserved).

¹⁴¹ The scope of study in this paper was limited to headship in the New Testament but in a forthcoming book that will be published in Spanish and in English in the spring of 2014 I will broaden the scope to include the Old Testament as well.



#7 - Reply to some Women's Ordination Arguments

I would like to begin by reading a **wise quotation** from the pen of **Ellen White**:

*"It is important that in defending the doctrines which we consider fundamental articles of faith, we should never allow ourselves to employ **arguments that are not wholly sound**. These may avail to **silence an opposer**, but they do not **honor the truth**. We should present **sound arguments**, that will not only **silence our opponents**, but will bear the **closest** and most **searching** scrutiny." *CW, p. 40**

#1: The Bible **neither approves nor forbids** the ordination of women. This may be **technically** true but the **pattern of male leadership** in the Bible is broad and clear:

- **Adam** was given the leadership role at creation.
- After sin the **first born males** were given spiritual leadership in the home.
- The **twelve founders** of Israel were all males.
- The regional leaders of **thousands**, hundreds, fifties and tens in Israel were males.
- The **seventy elders** chosen by Moses were all males.
- All the **priests** of Israel were males (equivalent to the elders).
- All the **Levites** were males (equivalent to the deacons).
- The **42 kings** of Israel and Judah were all males.
- The **twelve Apostles** were all males.
- The **seventy** that Jesus chose to preach were all males.
- The successor of **Judas** was chosen from **two males** that had been chosen from a **pool** of males (*adelfoi*).
- The **seven deacons** were males.
- **Paul and Barnabas** were males.
- The Apostles and elders who attended the **Jerusalem council** were males.
- Paul's criteria for bishop and elder was '**husband of one wife**'.
- **Timothy and Titus** were both ordained.

*"Rome began by enjoining what God had not forbidden, and she ended by forbidding what He had explicitly enjoined." *GC, p. 289**

The argument that the Bible permits that which it does not forbid sends us down a very **dangerous slippery slope**. Just to take one example, the historical evidence indicates that

the early church began celebrating **sunrise services** in **commemoration of the resurrection** at first on Easter Sunday and later every Sunday. I have found **no clear Biblical evidence** that **condones or forbids** such a practice. And yet in a very **short period** of time the church that enjoined what the Bible did not forbid ended up forbidding that which the Bible clearly commands—the **observance of the Sabbath**.

Just because the **Bible does not forbid** something does not mean that **it is right**. The Bible does not forbid **women's ordination** but its **unanimous testimony** is that the practice is reserved for **qualified men**. There is **not even one example** in all the Bible of a woman who was ordained.

#2: It is argued that **Huldah** was a leader in Israel:

Huldah provided **guidance** to the king but the **king decided** whether to **follow** her instructions or not. She was **not a leader** in Israel but rather a **counselor to the leader** of Israel.

The important point to remember here is that Huldah **did not take the reins of leadership** in Judah. She did not **take over the throne** or **the priesthood** to **clean up** the apostasy. She was merely the **messenger that God** used to encourage **Josiah to lead out** in the needed reformation. **Huldah did not clean up the mess!** It was **Josiah, the elders and the priests** as the leaders of Judah who took her message to heart and led out in the initiative to make **the necessary changes**.

It was **the king** who ordered **the elders** of Judah and Jerusalem, **the priests**, the **prophets** and **all the people** to come to the temple of the Lord to **renew the covenant** with Him (**2 Kings 23:1-3**). It was **the king** who then **commanded Hilkiah** to clean up the temple and the land from all the **paraphernalia** that had been used in the pagan cultus and it was **the king** who commanded that the **unfaithful priests** be slain. And it was **the king** who was **extolled by the Lord** for being a faithful leader.

#3: It is argued that **Deborah** was a leader in Israel because she **served as a judge**

- **Deborah served in a very chaotic period** of Israel's history. The **system of judges** was not God's organizational ideal.
- She served in the absence of the **usual magistrates**.
- Did this set **a precedent** for other women judges in Israel? No!
- Did Israel from that point on elect women **judges regionally**? No!
- She judged **private and civil** cases under a tree not **at the gate** like elders normally did.
- Deborah **advised and encouraged** the king to summon and lead the troops.
- **Barak summoned** the troops.
- **Barak led** the troops.

- **Barak pursued** the enemy.
- **Samuel later** retold the story and **credited** Barak, not to Deborah, as **delivering Israel** from their enemies (1Samuel 12:11).
- The book of **Hebrews** extols Barak, not Deborah (Hebrews 11:32).
- **She did not deliver** Israel, it was **Jael**.

#4: **Junia** was certainly a **female apostle**. But this conclusion is by **no means certain**.

- It is debatable whether Junia is a **male or female** name.
- It is inconclusive whether Junia was a **well-known apostle** or a **well-known person** to the apostles.
- Adventists have always believed that **unclear texts** must be interpreted in the light of **clear ones**.
- In **every other instance** in the New Testament, apostles were **always males**. Jesus chose **twelve males** to be Apostles; the **successor** of Judas was a male, **Paul and Barnabas** were males, as well as all others who are mentioned **by name** in the New Testament.

#5: It is certain that Phoebe was a deacon in the **identical office** as the men. Once again, those who favor women's ordination affirm **what is uncertain** in the text as certain.

- True that she is called a *diakonon*, the **very word** that is used of male deacons in the New Testament.
- But the word *diakonon* in the New Testament is also translated '**servant**' when it does not refer to a **specific church office**.
- **No place** are we told that Phoebe was ordained to be a deaconess by the **laying on of hands**.
- There were deaconesses in the **early church** but they were ordained by the **bishop** and they served under the **leadership of the male deacons**.
- The deaconesses **served the women** in the congregation in functions that were not appropriate for men.

#6: Galatians 3:28: When Paul stated that there is neither male nor female he meant that both males and females could now serve as elders/overseers. If this is true, why did Paul make them gender specific in Timothy and Titus? Timothy and Titus were written long after Galatians. Did Paul change from being an **egalitarian** in Galatians 3:28 to a complementarian in 1 Timothy and Titus?

What did Paul mean when he said that there is neither male nor female. There are **four possibilities**:

First, there is no longer are no longer any **biological gender** distinctions today. Besides being physiologically untrue, this would reverse the gender distinctions that God

established **at creation**. Paul would then be **overturning the creation** order because God created a **clear distinction** between the male and female gender.

Second, there are no longer any **marital gender distinctions**. If this were true, Paul would once again be reversing the creation order because God created **heterosexual marriage** at the beginning when He stated that a man should be joined to his wife and that they should be **fruitful and multiply**.

Third, there are no longer **any role distinctions** in the man/woman relationship. Their roles are totally **interchangeable**. If this were true, Paul would once again be reversing the creation order of role distinctions because the **creation account**, as **John Peters** will clearly show, established male leadership.

The fourth option is that male and female have **equal access to salvation** at baptism and both are **equally members** of the family of God.

The context of Galatians 3:28 clearly reveals that Paul is describing the **initiation rite** into the Christian life. He is **not dealing** with church offices of elder/bishop that come **much later** in the **Christian experience** of the individual. We are clearly told that the elder/bishop cannot be a **neophyte or new believer!**

#7: It is certain that our **western culture** requires that we be absolutely egalitarian in our ordination practices. Society might consider us **sexist** if we ordain only males. So in order to **reach culture** we must be **sensitive to its desires**.

But our standard is not what society wants but rather what the **word prescribes**. Society also strongly supports **gay marriage and evolution**. Should we then **change** our views on marriage and creation to adjust to the **demands of culture**? Should we **fear the embarrassment** of being called **fundamentalists, obscurantists, and Stone Age Christians** because we still uphold traditional **marriage, a literal seven-day creation and proper leadership roles** within the home and the church? No. We must uphold the **absolute authority of Scripture** at the risk of **ridicule and even persecution**. This is no time to give in to **peer pressure** that would lower the **standard of Scripture**.

*"There are many in the church who at heart belong to the world, but God calls upon those who claim to believe the **advanced truth [elsewhere called 'present truth' and 'the truth for this time]**, to rise above the present attitude of the **popular churches** of today. Where is the self-denial, where is the cross-bearing that Christ has said should characterize His followers? The reason we have had **so little influence** upon unbelieving relatives and associates is that we have manifested **little decided difference** in our practices from those of the world. Parents need to awake, and purify their souls by practicing the truth in their home life. When we reach the standard that the Lord would have us reach, **worldlings** will regard Seventh-day Adventists as **odd, singular, strait-laced extremists**. "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." *FE*, p. 289*

#8: I Peter 2:9, 10: It is certain that all the **OT priests** were male but the priesthood of all believers **in the NT** has torn down all **gender barriers** to church office.

But the priesthood of all believers **already existed in the OT**. According to **Exodus 19:5, 6** all the Israelites were called **to be a priesthood** to share the gospel with the nations, but in the same chapter we are clearly told that **God chose males** from the House of Aaron to serve in the **specialized office** of priest to provide **spiritual leadership** in Israel! In the **same manner**, God has called **all** Christians to be a **holy priesthood** to '*proclaim the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.*' But this does not eliminate the fact that the spiritual leaders of the church must be the **husbands of one wife**.

#9: It is certain that **Ellen White** was **ordained** because she was issued several **ministerial credentials** during her lifetime.

This **myth** has been **passed along** as gospel truth by many of those **who favor** women's ordination. The evidence provided in this symposium will **clearly and irrefutably** reveal that Ellen White was **never ordained** by the laying on of hands even though she did receive an '**honorary**' ministerial credential for several years but at least on one of them the word 'ordained' is crossed off.

#10: It is claimed that the word 'head' means 'head' in **some texts** while it means '**source**' or '**origin**' in others. Yet **no Bible version** translates the word *kefale* as 'source' or 'origin' in any of the NT texts where the word is found. It is used **77 times** and is always translated 'head'. It is **feminist evangelical writers** that have attempted to give a definition of the word that is **not found anywhere in Scripture**. The word 'head' means just that, 'head'. **Once in a blue moon** the word means 'source' in extra-biblical literature but **never in Scripture**.

#11: Those who favor the ordination of women to ministerial leadership are quite certain that the expression 'husband on one wife' in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 really should be translated with the **gender inclusive phrase**, '*faithful to your spouse*'. Others are quite certain that and **even better** translation is a '*one woman man*'.

But it bears noting that the **vast majority of Bible versions** dispute these renderings. **Not a single version** translates the phrase 'one woman man' and only a **handful of less popular** versions translate 'faithful to their spouse'. The fact is that the gender specific words **aner and gune** are used in these texts—the identical words that are used in **Ephesians 5:25** where husbands [*aner*] are instructed to love their wives [*gune*].

#12: It is uncertain that Paul **was using Genesis** to argue his point that a woman should not exercise authority over the man. He was really polemicizing against a **heresy that had arisen in Ephesus** that Eve was created before Adam. Is it really necessary to impose an **extra-biblical historical context** upon Scripture? The Ephesian idea has been **strongly**

disputed by able historians. Would it not be better to simply accept the **plain reference of Paul** to the Genesis story?

#13: The idea of male headship is a **negative thing** and is not found in the book of Genesis until sin came into the world.

If male headship is **intrinsically bad**, how do we explain Paul's words in **1 Corinthians 11:3**? Is it a bad thing that the **Father is the head of Christ**? Is it a bad thing that **Christ is the head of the man**? Would this be true of the headship of **Christ over the church**?

Is it actually bad for the **physical head** to exercise **loving lordship** over the body? Do the physical head and the body have an absolutely **egalitarian relationship**? They mutually **need each other** but should the **body exercise authority** over the head or should the **body submit** to the **loving authority** of the head? **John Peters** will show persuasively that the idea of male headship in Genesis is **crystal clear** and abundant.

#14: The idea of **male headship** would mean that women are **subservient** to men to be **oppressed** by them. Would this be true of the **headship of God the Father** in relation to His Son? Would this be true of the headship of **Christ over the man**?

#15: Christ is the **only head** of the church and therefore there can be **no male leaders** who are heads in the church. To believe that there are male heads in the church would be equivalent to the **Roman Catholic heresy** that **the pope is the head** of the church.

Groups #2 and #3 of TOSC claim that Christ is the **only head** of the church. But does this **negate** the idea that Christ has established **male leaders** to fulfill a headship role in the church under His guidance?

In the Old Testament **Moses was the head** but this did not negate that **Christ was the head of Moses** and that **Moses had heads under him**.

Exodus 18:25

*"And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them **heads over** the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens."*

Ellen White remarked about this text:

*"This counsel is **for us**. It should be heeded by our responsible **men**." TM, p. 341*

Regarding **Moses**, Ellen White stated:

*"Moses was their visible **leader**, while Christ stood at the **head** of the armies of Israel, their invisible **Leader**." Confrontation, p. 25*

*“Since His ascension Christ has carried forward His work on the earth by chosen ambassadors, through whom He speaks to the children of men and ministers to their needs. The **great Head** of the church superintends His work **through** the instrumentality of **men ordained** by God to **act as His representatives**.” AA, p. 360*

*“In this case Ananias represents Christ, and also **represents Christ's ministers** upon the earth, who are appointed to act **in His stead**. **In Christ's stead** Ananias touches the eyes of Saul, that they may receive sight. **In Christ's stead** he places his hands upon him, and, as he prays in Christ's name, Saul receives the Holy Ghost. All is done in the name and **by the authority of Christ**. Christ is the fountain; the church is the **channel** of communication.” AA, p. 122*

*“While Christ is the minister in the sanctuary above, he is also, through his **delegates**, the **minister** of his church on earth. He speaks to the people through **chosen men**, and carries forward his work through them, as when, in the days of his humiliation, he moved **visibly** upon the earth. Although centuries have passed, the lapse of time has not changed his parting promise to his disciples. “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” [Matthew 28:20.] From Christ's ascension to the present day, **men ordained of God**, deriving their **authority from him**, have become teachers of the faith. Christ, the True Shepherd, **superintends** his work through the instrumentality of these **under-shepherds**. Thus the position of those who labor in word and doctrine becomes very important. **In Christ's stead** they beseech the people to be reconciled to God. The people should not regard their **ministers** as mere public speakers and orators, but as **Christ's ambassadors**, receiving their wisdom and power **from the great Head of the church**. To slight and disregard the word spoken by **Christ's representative**, is showing disrespect, not only to the **man**, but also **to the Master** who has sent him. He is **in Christ's stead**; and the voice of the Savior should be heard in **his representative**.” GW, p. 11*

So it is a **matter of semantics**. The word ‘headship’ is **disliked for no reason** because it simply is **synonymous with leadership**. Perhaps leadership is a **softer word** and therefore it is not rejected as readily.

Webster's 1828 Edition: “HEAD, To lead; to direct; to act as leader”

#16: According to the Bible many women served the Lord as **prophets**. If a woman can be a prophet, **why can't she** be an elder or pastor? Isn't the office of prophet of **higher rank** or importance than the office of pastor or elder? Doesn't **Joel 2:28** affirm that at the time of the end the Lord will call women to be prophets?

*“There must be no belittling of the gospel ministry. No enterprise should be so conducted as to cause the ministry of the Word to be looked upon as an inferior matter. It is not so. Those who belittle the ministry are belittling Christ. The **highest of all work** is ministry in its various*

lines, and it should be kept before the youth that there is no work more blessed of God than that of the **gospel minister**." **6T, p. 411**

The gift of prophecy is a **spiritual gift** that is given by God **without regard to gender** but this gift **must not be mingled** with the leadership roles of elder, bishop or minister. The Bible allows for gender inclusiveness when it comes **to prophets** but it does not allow for this in the case of elders or pastors.

#17: Ellen White was a leader of the SDA denomination so why can't women today?

Ellen White was like **Huldah and Deborah**. She **delivered messages** from God to the leaders. She **corrected leaders** when they made mistakes. She **encouraged leaders** when they were discouraged. But she **never took over the reins** of leadership at **any level** of the denomination from **pastor** to **General Conference** president!

*"**No one has ever heard me** claim the position of **leader** of the denomination. . . He has not provided that the burden of leadership shall rest upon a few **men**. Responsibilities are distributed among a large number of competent **men**. . . Every member of the church has a voice in choosing **officers** of the church. The **church** chooses the officers of the **state** conferences. Delegates chosen by the state conferences choose the officers of the **union** conferences, and delegates chosen by the union conferences choose the officers of the **General Conference**. By this arrangement every conference, every institution, every church, and every individual, either directly or through representatives, has a voice in the election of the **men** who bear the chief responsibilities in the General Conference . . . neither then **[when the work was just starting]** nor since the work has grown to large proportions, during which time responsibilities have been widely distributed, **has anyone heard me claiming the leadership of this people.**" **8T, p. 236, 237***

#18: **1 Corinthians 11:3-15** is culturally applicable **only to the times of Paul**. After all, are women required to **wear veils** in church today as a sign of their **submission** to men?

Proveamos un ejemplo Biblico que ilustra como un principio no cambia aunque las circunstancias puede cambiar. En 1 Corintios 8 el apostol Pablo trata un problema serio en Corinto. El problema era el comer carne que habia sido ofrecido a los idolos. Como hoy en dia no tenemos el mismo problema podemos decir que que el consejo de Pablo no se aplica? Claro que no. Aunque las circunstancias no son las mismas, el principio no cambia. Pablo dice que los cristianos maduros saben que hay un solo Dios y por lo tanto comer carne ofrecida a los idolos no afecta en absoluto al que come. Pero luego Pablo dice que si hay un hermano debil en la fe que se ofende por lo hace un hermano maduro, el hermano maduro debe abstenerse de hacerlo. Aunque hoy el problema no tiene que ver con carne ofrecida a los idolos, el principio de no ofender al hermano mas debil se aplica.

#19: It is certain that many **women were ordained** as pastors and elders in Adventist history.

There is **no evidence** that women were ever **ordained** or received a **ministerial credential** until recent times. Ellen White is the **only woman** who received a ministerial credential. Women received **licenses** but not credentials.

#20: The **1881** General Conference session **approved** the ordination of women

*“Resolved, That females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart **by ordination** to the work of the Christian ministry.” (Review and Herald, December 20, 1881, p. 392)*

After the resolution was read it was discussed by the delegates (of which at least eight gave their opinion) and a vote was taken **to refer the issue** to the General Conference Executive Committee where the issue died until it was resurrected at the General Conference session in 1990 at Indianapolis. The 1881 General Conference session did not vote in favor of women’s ordination but rather voted to refer the resolution to committee.

It must be noted that resolutions are commonly taken to the General Conference session where they are thoroughly discussed and then voted upon pro or con. However, on occasion, the session does not vote on the issue but rather refers it to committee.

The **North American Division** brought a resolution to allow for the ordination of women to the General Conference session in 1990 and again in 1995. The resolution or request was thoroughly **debated** and then **rejected**. But the session could have referred it to committee for further study if it had wanted to.

#21: It is quite certain that the **missionary outreach** of the Church is being negatively impacted by the **failure to ordain women** to pastoral leadership.

Actually, statistics show that the **churches** that have decided to ordain women have generally experienced a **decrease in growth**. The Church is growing **phenomenally outside** of the so-called ‘**developed**’ **countries** and they don’t ordain women. One of the TOSC members brought this forcefully out.

#22: It is certain that if a woman **feels or impressed** that **she is called** to the ordained ministry she should be ordained. We believe the **Bible provides** the qualification for ordination, not **feelings or impressions**.

*“About this time, fanaticism began to appear. Some who had professed to be zealous believers in the message, **rejected the Word of God** as the one infallible guide, and, claiming to be **led by the Spirit**, gave themselves up to the control of their own **feelings, impressions, and imaginations**. There were some who manifested a blind and bigoted zeal, denouncing all who would not sanction their course. Their fanatical ideas and exercises met with no sympathy from the great body of Adventists; yet they served to bring reproach upon the cause of truth.” GC, pp. 394, 395*

#23: It is certain that if you believe in male leadership before the fall you also believe that women are a **lesser order of humanity** or **inferior to men**. Not much needs to be said about this argument. No egalitarian believes that women are such. Furthermore, what would this say about the Son being subject to the headship of His Father? Would this make Jesus a **lesser order of Godhood**?

International Standard Encyclopedia:

*“Priority of creation may indicate **headship**, but not, as theologians have so uniformly affirmed, **superiority**. Dependence indicates **difference of function**, not inferiority. Human values are estimated in terms of the mental and spiritual. Man and woman are endowed for **equality**, and are mutually interdependent.”*

#24: It is quite certain that if you don't believe in the ordination of women as elders and pastors then you don't believe in **women in ministry**. Once again this is a straw man as large as **Nebuchadnezzar's image**. Complementarians strongly believe in women in ministry.

#25: It is certain that a parallel **cannot** be drawn between the relationship of the **Father and the Son in the Godhead** with the relationship between the **man and the woman in Genesis**. The father and son are **two individuals** but **one in substance** and the **son is subject** to the Father's will and will **forever** be.

The **image of God** in **Genesis 1:26** reflects this because Adam and Eve were two but one, they were co-substantial and Eve was to be **subject to Adam**. If subjection of Eve to Adam was a bad thing then the subjection of the Son to the Father must also be a **bad thing**.

#26: It is certain that the mutual submission of **Ephesians 5:21** indicates an **absolutely egalitarian** relationship between husband and wife.

Ephesians 5:21 cannot be understood without reading the succeeding context. In Ephesians 5:21-6:9 Paul is not only addressing the **submission of wives** to their husbands. He also writes about the **submission of children** to their parents and **bondservants to their masters**.

Are we to understand that Paul was teaching that submission is a two-way street between **parents and children** in which parents should mutually submit to the authority of their children in an egalitarian relationship? Are we to think that Paul believed that **masters and bondservants** should be mutually submissive to one another? Are the **commanding angels** in heaven mutually submissive to the angels that they command? Is there any evidence in Scripture that **God the Father and God the Son** are mutually submissive to one another in an egalitarian relationship?

The idea of mutual submission **does not agree** with the **clear words** of the text. **Verses 22, 24** explicitly state that it is **the wife who should submit** to the authority of her husband and not the other way around.

In **other places** of his own writings the apostle makes it absolutely clear that it is **wives who should be submissive** to the authority of their husbands:

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.” (Colossians 3:18, 19; cf. Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1-6)

Never, **not even once**, do we find any text in the New Testament that indicates that **husbands are to be subject** to the authority of their wives.

*“The husband is **the head of the family**, as Christ is the **head of the church**; and any course which the wife may pursue to lessen his influence and lead him to come down from that dignified, responsible position is displeasing to God. It is the **duty of the wife to yield her wishes and will** to her husband. **Both should be yielding**, but the Word of God gives **preference** to the judgment of the husband. And it will not detract from the dignity of the wife to **yield to him** whom she has chosen to be her counselor, adviser, and protector. The husband should **maintain his position** in his family with all meekness, yet with decision.” *1T*, pp. 307, 308*

The submission of the **wife to the husband** is **predicated** upon the submission of the **church to Christ** (Ephesians 5:24). Are we to understand that Christ and the church are to be **mutually submissive** to one another? The idea is preposterous. The **church** is under the authority of Christ and **receives orders** from Him as its head. **Christ is not in subjection** to the authority of the church, a concept that is taught by Roman Catholics but not by Protestants!

#27: It is certain that as **slaves were emancipated** from bondage to their masters, women should be emancipated from **bondage to men**. Is it valid to compare the emancipation of women with the emancipation of slaves? God established female submission to male leadership before the fall while **man invented** slavery after the fall.

Furthermore, ordination to the church office of **elder/minister** is **not a right** but rather a **calling** that is **not given by God** to all His creatures. **Racial and gender** equality are inalienable rights that have been granted by the **Creator to all** His creatures. But pastoral ordination is **not one of those inalienable ‘rights’** that have been granted to women by the Creator. To the contrary, God has consistently reserved pastoral ordination in the Bible for men.

Basic human rights are different than role distinctions in the church because **rights belong to all human beings** but roles in the church are according to God’s calling and do not belong to all.

#28: It is certain that the **trajectory** of the New Testament is from complementarianism to egalitarianism. As we have previously seen the opposite is true. **Galatians 3:28** was written **much earlier** than 1 Timothy and Titus. It is dangerous to go **beyond the canon** of Scripture for trajectories of truth.

#29: It is certain that spiritual gifts and Church office are interchangeable. The fact is that there is a **clear distinction** between spiritual gifts and church offices. Both males and females may have the gift of **shepherding** but this **does not mean** that women have been called by God to be ordained pastors. A woman may have the gift of evangelism but this does not mean that she has been called to be an ordained minister.

#30: It is quite certain that our **pioneers** were not opposed in principle to the ordination of women to pastoral leadership (the two editorials).

December 19, 1878 an editorial appeared in **Signs of the Times** where **J. H. Waggoner** clearly stated the view of the church of that time on the issue of women's ordination to the church office of 'elder':

"The **divine arrangement**, even **from the beginning**, is this, that the **man is the head** of the woman. Every relation is disregarded or abused in this lawless age. But **the Scriptures** always maintain this order in the family relation. 'For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.' Eph. 5:23 Man is entitled to certain privileges that are not given to woman; and he is subjected to some duties and burdens from which the woman is exempt. A woman may pray, prophesy, exhort, and comfort the church, but **she cannot occupy the position of a pastor or ruling elder**. This would be looked upon as usurping authority over the man, which is here [1 Timothy 2:12] prohibited."

A reader asked the following question of the editor of **Signs of the Times in 1895**:

"Should women be elected to offices in the church when there are enough brethren?"

Here is the **editor's response**:

"If by this is meant the office of **elder**, we should say **at once, No**. But there are offices in the church which women can fill acceptably, and oftentimes there are found sisters in the church who are better qualified for this than brethren, such offices, for instance as church clerk, treasurer, librarian of the tract society, etc., as well as the office of deaconess, **assisting the deacons** in looking after the poor, and in doing such other duties as would naturally fall to their lot. The qualifications for church elder are set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:7-9. **We do not believe that it is in God's plan** to give to women the **ordained offices** of the church. By this we do not mean to depreciate their labors, service, or devotion. The sphere of woman is **equal [italics in the original]** to that of man. She was made a help meet, or fit, for man, but that does **not [italics in original]** mean that her sphere **[or role]** is **identical [italics in original]** to that of man's. The interests of the

church and the world generally would be better served if the **distinctions given in God's word** were regarded." Signs of the Times, "Question Corner # 176: Who Should Be Church Officers?" January, 1895

#31: Male leadership in the home does not translate to male spiritual leaders in the church.

*"The qualifications of **an elder** are **plainly stated** by the apostle Paul: "If any be blameless, the **husband of one wife**, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." 5MR, p. 449*

*If a **man** does not show wisdom in the management of the **church in his own house**, how can **he** show wisdom in the management of the **larger church** outside? How can **he** bear the responsibilities which mean so much, if **he** cannot govern **his** own children? Wise discrimination is not shown in this matter. God's blessing will not rest upon **the minister** who neglects the education and training of **his** children. **He** has a sacred trust, and **he** should in no case set before church members a defective example in the management of **his** home." 5MR 449 (1901)*

#32: It is certain that Ellen White was in favor of women's ordination to pastoral leadership because she said so in an **1895 statement**.

*"Women who are willing to consecrate **[1] 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 **[2] this work by prayer and** **[3] laying on of hands**. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church **[4] 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 **[5] another means** of strengthening and building up the church." RH, July 9, 1895*

#33: The **distinction** between the laying of hands upon male **pastors/elders** and the laying on of hands **upon women** in the 1895 statement is **artificial**. But it must be borne in mind that in the writings of Ellen White the expressions '**laying on of hands**' and '**ordination**' are not interchangeable. She uses the word 'ordination' to refer only to the setting apart of gospel ministers.

- The word 'ordination' is used of the **twelve** (AA, p. 18).
- Used for the **seventy male elders** that were chosen by Moses (AA, p. 94).
- For the ordination of **Paul and Barnabas** (AA, pp. 161, 164, 166) which she refers to as 'ordination by the laying on of hands' (AA, p. 162).
- Ellen White refers to **lay workers**, "upon whom human hands have never been laid in ordination" (AA, p. 355).

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- Regarding **wives of pastors** Ellen White states: “*although the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her*” (GW, p. 452)
 - Concerning all the **young people** of the Church:

*“Dear young friends, remember that it is not necessary to be an **ordained minister** in order to serve the Lord. There are many ways of working for Christ. **Human hands may never have been laid on you in ordination**, but God can give you fitness for His service (MYP, p. 226), (WM, p. 63).*

*“Brethren and sisters, how much work have you done for God during the past year? Do you think that it is those men only who have been ordained as gospel ministers that are to work for the uplifting of humanity?--No, no! Every one who names the name of Christ is expected by God to engage in this work. The **hands of ordination may not have been laid upon you**, but you are none the less God's messengers.” (RH November 24, 1904)*

- Jesus laid hands on **children not all of them were infants**:

“Some of the children had passed beyond the years of infancy to childhood and youth.” MH, p. 41

- On **the sick** for their healing

“When Christ healed the sick, He laid His hands upon them.” COL, p. 418

- On **missionary physicians** to carry on their ministry:

*“The work of the true medical missionary is largely a spiritual work. It includes prayer and the **laying on of hands**; he therefore should be as sacredly set apart for his work **as is** the minister of the gospel. Those who are selected to act the part of missionary physicians are to be set apart **as such**. This will strengthen them against the temptations to withdraw from the sanitarium work to engage in **private practice**. No selfish motives should be allowed to draw the worker from his post of duty.” CH, p. 540*

#34: It is quite certain that the practice of ordination by the laying on of hands was embraced by the **Roman Catholic Church** from **pagan Rome** and that the Seventh-day Adventist Church view **identical** and therefore ordination should be **discarded** altogether.

Ordination is a **Biblical practice**. It was practiced in the Old Testament when **Moses laid his hands on Joshua**, when the **priests** and **Levites** were ordained, when **the 70** and the leaders of the **thousands** were ordained, when **the apostles** were ordained, when **the deacons** were ordained, and when **the elders** of the churches were ordained.

The SDA view of ordination is **not and has never been sacramental** as it is in the Roman Catholic Church. We do not believe nor have we ever believed that there is **virtue in the act itself**, or in the **words of consecration** or that the act **confers supernatural miraculous power** or that it **confers authority** above that of Scripture. This is a **straw man argument** meant to **distract** from the real issues involved in the discussion. This argument is **irrelevant** to SDA practice.

#35: *“Could it be possible that the **shameful statistics of violence**, aimed largely at women around the World, might have something to do with the **resistance to women’s ordination**?”*

If this were true, then **God would be to blame** for the abuse of women in the **Old Testament** because He established the **patriarchal system**. **Jesus** would be to **blame for electing 12** male apostles. **Paul** would be to blame for insisting that elders must be the **husbands of one wife**. This is **another Straw man argument** that awakens **strong emotions** and that is intended to **distract** from the fact that **the Bible does not approve** of the ordination of women.

#36: Even though women’s ordination is not God’s ideal plan, we should allow it as **plan B** on a regional basis to **preserve the unity** of the Church, the **integrity of its mission** and **freedom of conscience**. Israel already tried this idea when it elected a king contrary to God’s plan. This led to the **disintegration of unity**, to a **loss of its sense of mission** and to **the bondage** of the Babylonian captivity. Pastor **James Howard** will address this so-called third option.

#37: **Priscilla** assumed an **authoritative teaching role over men**, the **elect lady of 1 John** was a leader of a **local church**, the **women at Philippi** were church leaders. There is a tendency to **exaggerate the evidence** to make it state what it is not really stating.

Philippians 4:2, 3 nowhere says that the women at the **church of Philippi** were **leaders** but rather that they were fellow-laborers with Paul. My wife is a fellow-laborer with me but this does not mean that she is an elder! Nowhere are we told in Acts 18 that **Priscilla** assumed an **authoritative** teaching role **over** men. Rather the text clearly explains that Priscilla and Aquila **both** taught **Apollos** the word of God more accurately (Acts 18:26) and this was done on a one to one basis **in private** not in **congregational worship**! Further, there is nothing in Scripture that would forbid as woman from serving as a **Bible worker**!

And finally there is **no hint in the text** to indicate that the Elect Lady of 2 John was **an apostle, an elder, a bishop or a pastor**. Nor is there any evidence that she was **ordained** to be the leader of a **specific local church**. Ellen White identifies this woman as “a **helper**”

in the gospel work, a woman of good repute and wide influence,” AA 554 There were **many women** that could be described this way who were never ordained or served as leaders of churches, women such as Lydia, Dorcas and Priscilla.

#38: The **majority of the members of TOSC** were in favor of allowing **divisions and unions** to decide whether to ordain women as ministers. The vote was **62 in favor** on only **32 against**.

But the picture is more complex than **at first sight**. **54 members** agreed that male leadership was established for the **home and the church before the fall** and is God’s ideal while **40 disagreed**. Some of those in the group of 40 deny **God’s ideal of male leadership in in home**. **All reject** the idea of God’s ideal for male leadership in the church. The simple fact is that the **group of the 40** and the group **of the 22** strongly disagree on the idea of leadership. Group # 2 does not like the leadership premises of group # 3.

#39: Elder **Ted Wilson** is opposed to women’s ordination and is attempting to **impose his will** upon the world church.

*“The Western Churches that are ready to follow the Holy Spirit’s leading [in the ordination of women] will show the way to the other countries’ Churches; they [the Western Churches] will not split the Church—but if you [Ted Wilson] try to stop what the Holy Spirit is leading to be accomplished, **you will split the Church!**”*

The fact is that Elder Wilson in **all 4 meetings of TOSC** never, **even once**, expressed his **approval or disapproval** of women’s ordination. What he has emphasized is that the SDA church is a church that operates based on **policies, bylaws and constitutions**. Because the world church has **voted twice** to deny the ordination of women, he has expressed that the will of the world church **must be respected**. The decision to not ordain women has not been **passed down** from the General Conference to the world church, it has rather been **decided by the world church** and the General Conference officers are simply carrying out the **will of the world church**.

#40: According to **denominational policy** it is the **prerogative of the Unions** to approve ordinations. In our denominational structure, the unions have the right to approve ordinations that are sent to them by the conferences but they do not have the authority to establish the **criteria** for ordinations. The Unions are subject to the **will of the world church** when it comes to the **criteria**. That is to say, the unions can only approve ordinations that fit the criteria that have been established by the world body and **one of those criteria** is ‘*husband of one wife*’.



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