The Adventist ORDINATION CRISIS

Biblical Authority or Cultural Conformity

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Boldface print in Ellen White statements and other quotations has been added for emphasis.

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A Note from the Publishers

This book is the result of a careful two-year collaborative study of numerous Seventh-day Adventist leaders, including concerned pastors, university professors, conference administrators, physicians, teachers, and lay leaders—men and women alike—from around the world. Each felt the message was so important that each was willing to waive royalties in the interest of seeing this work distributed as far and wide as possible.

The "featured contributors" listed below constitute only a portion of those who contributed to this book. Some requested to not be named for various personal reasons.

God bless each writer, editor, and consultant for the thousands of combined hours they invested in the cause of disseminating these truths.

Featured contributors, listed alphabetically:

Doug Batchelor, Stephen Bohr, Allen Davis, Laurel Damsteegt, Jay Gallimore, Michael Hasel, C. Raymond Holmes, Jim Howard, Wayne Kablanow, Larry Kirkpatrick, Daniel Knapp Sr., Kent Knight, Mike Lambert, Junie Lawson, Don Mackintosh, Carissa McSherry, Phil Mills, Kevin Paulson, John Peters, Eugene Prewitt, David Read, Edwin Reynolds, Alvaro Sauza, Ingo Sorke, Mario Veloso

Foreword

"If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

—Psalm 11:3

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is now facing what could be the greatest crisis of its 150-year history. Although this particular dispute happens to center on the role of women in the church, a much larger issue is at stake: how we read and interpret the Bible.

The New Testament plainly teaches that church leadership offices are to be held by men. Like our doctrines of the Sabbath (Gen. 2:2, 3; Exod. 20:11), Creation (Gen. 1–2), and marriage (Gen. 2:20–24), the teaching on male leadership in the church is rooted in the Genesis narrative (1 Tim. 2:12–14). Our church's decision on women's ordination will either reinforce or undermine every other foundational Adventist doctrine; it will either confirm or alter how we read the Scriptures; and it will either affirm or undermine our high view of the Genesis narrative. In other words, the larger issues in the women's ordination debate are our faithfulness to the Scriptures and our humble submission to what they plainly teach.

"Male and female He created them," Genesis tells us (1:27; 5:2), and Jesus confirmed this created order (Matt. 19:4). But the Bible's clear teaching is increasingly under attack. Every institution of our society seems determined to blur traditional gender roles and even to efface all distinctions between the sexes. Jesus warned that, as we near the end of time, conditions in the world would resemble the days of Noah and Sodom (Luke 17:26–32). With same-sex "marriage," transgender bathrooms, and television programs

that celebrate homosexuality, polygamy, and transgenderism, our culture is awash in warped messages about gender, sex, and marriage. It is naive to believe that Christians could live in a culture so thoroughly saturated with false and confusing gender propaganda without some in the church being influenced by those messages.

Against the backdrop of this virtual tsunami of cultural gender confusion, the Adventist church is scheduled to once again address the issues of biblical gender role distinctions at the 2015 General Conference in San Antonio. This is a time to earnestly study and pray that our delegates will make a firm and final decision choosing Christ over culture and compromise.

Jesus said, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17). Any search for truth must be focused on Christ and His Word. In any discussion of contested points, we must look to Him and He will give us our priorities and our emphasis. Though He made His instruction deep enough to challenge the scholar, He made it plain enough to engage the understanding of the simple. And He has provided His remnant with His testimony in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy.

It is our prayer that He will speak to every reader of these pages. And He has promised that His sheep will hear His voice (John 10:27).

—The Publishers

Introduction

Hermeneutics: How Adventists Study the Bible

Before examining the relevant passages of Scripture, we must agree on how we should study the Bible to learn and understand its teachings. Historically, Adventists have followed William Miller's principles of Bible study, which were endorsed by Ellen White. These principles are:

1. All Scripture is necessary and may be understood by diligent application and study.
2. Nothing revealed in Scripture can or will be hidden from those who ask in faith.
3. To understand doctrine, bring all the Scriptures together on the subject you wish to know, then let every word have its proper influence, and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error.
4. Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself.

Please give special attention to number three. We must not interpret Scripture so as to set one text in opposition to another and then explain why we prefer to heed the one and not the other. We must form our interpretive theory "without a contradiction," meaning without reading one text as contradicting another. As you will see, this principle is crucial in resolving the confusion surrounding this issue.

In their efforts to support the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, some in the church have adopted a new Bible study method. The North American Division Theology of Ordination Study Committee calls its new approach the "principle-based, historical-cultural" method. Unfortunately, this new method clashes with the long-standing Seventh-day Adventist method described in such

places as the book *The Great Controversy*, p. 598, and reaffirmed by the 1986 General Conference "Methods of Bible Study" document.

Adventists have always held that "the Bible transcends its cultural backgrounds to serve as God's Word for all cultural, racial, and situational contexts in all ages." In contrast, the North American Division (NAD) approach asserts that the text of Scripture has only a limited reliability because it is "culturally conditioned." In contrast to Paul's statement that "*all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17, emphasis added), the NAD's approach affirms the Bible's reliability only in "salvational" issues.

The NAD report speculates about an alleged "trajectory" in the Bible, but this "principle-based method" is the same method non-Adventists employ to set aside the seventh-day Sabbath! This new approach is only one notch above the historical-critical method, and it is not compatible with the "historical-grammatical" method in longstanding use in the Adventist Church.

Section 1:
Ordination Basics

Ordination is a grant of ecclesiastical authority, "an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office and a recognition of one's authority in that office" (AA 161). After their ordination, Paul and Barnabas were "authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority" (AA 160).

Ordination to gospel ministry is the church's recognition that a man has been set apart for the office of gospel minister—devoting his life to the service of Jesus, to be near Him, to receive His instruction, and to be sent as His personal representative (Mark 8:1; Exod. 19:22).

In some respects, ordination to gospel ministry is like a professional license, serving to protect people from charlatans. It protects the flock of God from self-appointed persons who would claim to speak for the church but who are not authorized by the consensus of the church elders and overseers to do so.

Ordination is an essential element of church organization and has been important to the Adventist Church from its earliest days. Immediately upon the organization of our first conference in Michigan, James White made this motion:

> "Resolved, that our ministers' papers consist of a certificate of ordination, also credentials to be signed by the chairman and clerk of the conference, which credentials shall be renewed annually" (1BIO 455).

The English word "ordination" comes from a Latin word, *ordo* (order, class, rank), not a word from biblical Greek or Hebrew. Nevertheless, the concept of the church authorizing

someone and setting them apart for a holy purpose is found throughout Scripture. Many English translations of the Bible have used the word "ordination" because it was the best way to get across in English the concept the Bible is describing.

Ellen White and the Adventist pioneers found the term "ordain" and "ordination" useful. She describes the simple ceremony by which Jesus ordained the twelve disciples:

> "When Jesus had ended His instruction to the disciples, He gathered the little band **close about Him,** 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 296).

Probably because the word "ordination" comes from a Latin word, it has been asserted that the Adventist Church got its practice of ordination from the Roman Catholic Church. This is absurd. The Adventist pioneers developed the practice directly from the Bible. They were well aware of the Catholic perversion of ordination and rejected it. Ellen White was explicit in differentiating the early church's practice of ordination from the corruptions to ordination that crept into the church during the apostasy. She says,

> "At a later date the rite of ordination by the laying on of hands was greatly abused; unwarrantable importance was attached to the act, as if a power came at once upon those who received such ordination, which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work. But in the setting apart of these two apostles, there is no record indicating that any virtue was imparted by the mere act of laying on of hands" (AA 162).

From this we can infer that the Adventist Church flatly rejected the Catholic Church's sacramental view of ordination. Ordination does not impart magical powers, but is the church's way of authorizing, blessing, and recognizing the persons to be set apart for service to the church in a particular office.

The laying on of hands is not necessarily ordination. The laying on of hands for the sick is called "anointing." The laying on of hands for children is called "dedication." But even the laying on of hands in ceremonies that are essentially ordination, meaning authorizing for office or mission—as with the laying on of hands on deacons, deaconesses, and medical missionaries—is not usually called ordination. Ellen White, and hence much of the rest of the Adventist Church, traditionally used the term "ordination" only with regard to the headship offices of the church: elder and gospel minister.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is the distinction between ordained and un-ordained workers trivial? No. It was so important that the Holy Spirit, during a time of heart searching, fasting, and prayer, sent the Antioch church leadership instructions to ordain Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:2, 3).

2. In the Early Church, were all qualified persons ordained? No. Matthias and Joseph were similarly qualified men, but God selected Matthias for ordination (Acts 1:21–26). Paul, Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen were similarly qualified men, but God selected Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1, 2). In the Old Testament, God selected David from among his similarly qualified brothers (1 Sam. 16:5–13).

3. Since neither the Bible nor the Spirit of Prophecy explicitly forbids the ordaining of women, why should the church forbid it? First, women are forbidden from holding positions that involve authoritative teaching or authority over men (1 Tim. 2:11–15). By implication, ordaining a woman to such a position is forbidden. But let's assume, for the sake of argument, that ordaining women to headship roles is not "explicitly forbidden." It is a common error to mistake God's silence as indicating His affirmation. "These things you have done, and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you" (Ps. 50:21). Certainly Jesus' silence during His mock trial did not indicate His approval (Mark 14:60; 15:6); rather, it was the greatest rebuke He could give (DA 729). To avoid this mistake in Bible interpretation, we have been instructed "to demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' " (GC 595), so it is troubling to see the NAD introduce its official recommendation to ordain women with the statement: "The Bible does not directly address the ordination of women." This "approval by silence" is employing a method of biblical interpretation that Jesus did not use. He said, "It is written," never, "It is not written." He asked, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" (Luke 10:26, ESV), not, "What is not written in the law? What can you read into it?"

Ellen White said plainly, "In the commission to His disciples, Christ not only outlined their work, but gave them their message. Teach the people, He said, 'to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' The disciples were to teach what Christ had taught. That which He had spoken, not only in person, but through all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament, is here included. Human teaching is shut out. There is no place for tradition, for man's theories and conclusions, or for church legislation. No laws ordained by ecclesiastical authority are included in the commission. None of these are Christ's servants to teach" (DA 826). Christ's "disciples are to teach only what He commanded them" (RH 8/13/1901).

4. Why do some theologians say ordination is not in the Bible? The Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, not English or any other modern language. But most translations do use the word "ordination," at least in the New Testament. Certainly the concept is plainly taught. The Bible speaks of the ordination of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1, 2); the ordination of Timothy by other elders (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:16); and the ordination of the twelve apostles by Jesus (Mark 3:14). It tells us who should become elders (1 Tim. 3:1–6) and warns us not to ordain any man prematurely (1 Tim. 5:22). Ellen White speaks of all these events and calls them, in her native English, "ordination." Paul warned the young Timothy against those "obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions" (1 Tim. 6:4).

So, whatever we choose to call it, the Bible is clear that throughout sacred history, qualified men have been set apart for leadership in a way others have not been. This was true for the twelve apostles (Mark 3:14) and the early church (Acts 13:3; Titus 1:5). And Ellen White speaks of the hands of ordination being laid on ministers, all of whom—those described as being ordained—were men. In *The Acts of the Apostles*, Ellen White compares Moses's setting aside of the seventy elders with the setting aside of elders in the early church (AA 94, 95). Ordination is not of pagan or Roman Catholic origin, but finds its roots in Scripture:

> "God foresaw the difficulties that His servants would be called to meet, and, in order that their work should be above challenge, He instructed the church by revelation to set them apart publicly to the work of the ministry. **Their ordination was a public recognition of their divine appointment to bear to the Gentiles the glad tidings of the gospel**" (AA 160).

5. Could those who were not ordained minister in the sanctuary? No. Korah, a Levite, but not of the family of Aaron, and Dathan and Abiram, who were Reubenites, felt the call to the priesthood but were excluded from it (PP 395). "The law was very explicit that only those who had been ordained to the sacred office should minister in the sanctuary" (PP 398). However, Korah's cause resonated with the people; thus, the issue of who could be ordained was the basis for the first insurrection in Israel. God answered the question decisively. A kingdom of priests did not mean every Israelite was to be ordained to the priesthood. Paul reminds us that these stories were "written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10:11). Who could be ordained a priest remained controversial throughout the history of Israel.

Section 2:
Spiritual Gifts vs. Church Offices with Qualifications

In the New Testament there is no office of "pastor." In Ephesians 4:8–12, "pastor" is spoken of as a spiritual gift. The word "pastor" is from the Greek *poimen*, meaning "shepherd." The gift of shepherding or pastoring can be manifested by persons who work in other callings, professions, or ministries that are benefited by aspects of caring. While spiritual gifts include pastoral care, this is not equivalent to the biblical office of elder/bishop/overseer that today is often referred to as "pastor."

Spiritual gifts and church offices are not the same thing. In the New Testament we can distinguish between church offices and spiritual gifts as follows:

- Only three church offices are mentioned: apostles (Acts 1:21–25), elders/overseers (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9), and deacons (Acts 6:1–6; 1 Tim. 3:8–13). By contrast, there are many gifts (1 Cor. 12:8–11; 28-30; Rom. 12:6–8; Eph. 4:11) and every believer has received at least one of these gifts (1 Pet. 4:10).
- Those who occupy offices are ordained, appointed, or chosen based on explicit qualifications (Acts 6:3, 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9). Gifts, however, are bestowed according to the will of the Holy Spirit without any stated qualifications (Eph. 4:7; Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:11, 18, 28).
- Though every believer has at least one gift, not every believer has an office (Eph. 4:7; 1 Cor. 12:7, 11; Rom. 12:4).
- An elder "cannot be a recent convert" (1 Tim. 3:6), but gifts are bestowed without regard to age or experience.

- The offices of elder and bishop/overseer are limited to men (1 Tim. 2:11–3:7), whereas spiritual gifts are given to both men and women (Acts 21:9, 10; 1 Cor. 11:5).

We will never be able to make sense of the ordination debate if we confuse the spiritual gift of "pastoring" with the office of elder/bishop/overseer, which is equivalent to the modern Adventist Church's ordained gospel minister.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is ordination the acknowledgment of an individual's spiritual gifts? No. This is a basic confusion. Every Christian has been given gifts of the Spirit. Ordination is the church's recognition of one's call and qualifications to perform a particular office or mission. In the chapter titled, "He Ordained Twelve," Ellen White says of the disciples, "**Their office** was the most important to which human beings had ever been called. … As in the Old Testament the twelve patriarchs stand as representatives of Israel, so the twelve apostles were to stand as representatives of the gospel church" (DA 291).

2. Does the prophetic gift make ordination unnecessary or automatic? No. Consider Paul and Barnabas: They had received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and had been given spiritual gifts. Their ministry was fruitful. "God … abundantly blessed the labors of Paul and Barnabas during the year they remained with the believers in Antioch. But neither of them had as yet been formally ordained to the gospel ministry" (AA 160). This shows conclusively that ordination to the gospel ministry is not necessary to have a fruitful and effective ministry.

But spiritual gifts are not a substitute for ordination. Though Paul and Barnabas were both prophets (Acts 13:1), the gift of prophecy did not supersede their ordination, rendering it unnecessary or automatic. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:2, 3). Without ordination, Paul and Barnabas would not have had church authorization to baptize new members or organize new congregations (AA 160).

3. If the Spirit has gifted a woman to preach, who are we to stop her ordination? Preaching does not require ordination. Preaching is a spiritual gift, and no one is asking that women be forbidden to preach, either to the church or the world. It is the headship role of elder/overseer that the Bible reserves for men (1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:12, 13).

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28–30). To the extent that preaching is part evangelism and part teaching, preaching is a spiritual gift. But the spiritual gift of preaching is not a sufficient reason to ordain someone. There are other qualifications. For example, Paul explained a man who desires to be an elder "must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:7 NASB). His qualifications must be demonstrated to the congregation before the church will consider him for an office.

4. Isn't it mean and unchristian to follow the Bible's order when some women who feel called by God to ordination cannot be ordained? Was God mean when He singled out Adam as head of the original male-female relationship, calling to him first when he and his wife sought to hide from

God's presence? (Gen. 3:9). Was God unkind when He forbade any but the male descendants of Aaron to serve as priests in the sanctuary? (Ex. 28:1; Num. 3:3). (Korah and his followers certainly thought so.) Was God unkind when He struck King Uzziah with leprosy for daring to officiate in the temple as though he were a priest? (2 Chron. 26:17–20). Was the apostle Paul mean when he forbade women to hold authority over men on the basis of the original created order? (1 Tim. 2:12, 13). Isn't it unfair for God to distinguish between Sabbath-keepers and those who violate the fourth commandment—sincere as they might be? We should allow God to define a church's faith and practice.

5. Isn't it a positive evidence that women are called to be ordained when they experience success in soul-winning? No. Notice what Ellen White says about men:

> "It is not a positive evidence that men are called of God because they have some success; for angels of God are now moving upon the hearts of His honest children to enlighten their understanding as to the present truth, that they may lay hold upon it and live. And even if self-sent men put themselves where God does not put them and profess to be teachers, and souls receive the truth by hearing them talk it, this is no evidence that they are called of God. The souls who receive the truth from them receive it to be brought into trial and bondage, as they afterward find that these men were not standing in the counsel of God" (EW 97, 98).

Visible success in any line of work cannot contradict the written counsel of God regarding gender roles in ministry. It is entirely possible for an ordained woman to have an outwardly successful preaching ministry and still not be sent of God.

> "Likewise, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own heart; prophesy against them" (Ezek. 13:17).

6. If the call to pastoral leadership comes from God, who are we to deny ordination to women whom God has called? God never calls men or women to responsibilities that run contrary to His written Word. The alleged validity of any call to service in the Lord's work must be measured against the collective judgment of the inspired writings. Let us again consider Ellen White's statements regarding the harmony between the written Word's pronouncements and the Spirit's call:

> "Since it was the Spirit of God that inspired the Bible, it is impossible that the teaching of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the word. 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' " (GC vii).

7. In the Old Testament, was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit sufficient to qualify the possessor for ordination? No. King Saul was filled with the Spirit but was forbidden to offer sacrifice. "The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you. … You shall go down before me to Gilgal; and surely I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and make sacrifices of peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, till I come to you" (1 Sam. 10:6–8). Two years passed. As predicted, there was a time of crisis. The Philistines were attacking, while Saul's army was deserting.

> "Then he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. So Saul said, 'Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me'" (1 Sam. 13:8, 9).

Saul offered the burnt offering. Samuel showed up immediately after this act and told the king:

> "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue" (1 Sam. 13:13, 14).

Ignoring God's specific instructions as to who was ordained to perform the priestly functions was so serious that it brought an end to Saul's dynasty.

Section 3:
Biblical Qualifications for Elder and Bishop/Overseer

"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop 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 Tim. 3:1–7).

"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 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" (Titus 1:5–9).

These passages describe a man, using the phrase, "the husband of one wife." But those who favor the ordination of women argue that these passages should be

interpreted in a unisex way. They point out that some of the original Greek is gender neutral. For example, the Greek doesn't say, "If a man desires the position of Bishop," but, "if *anyone* (Gr. = *tis*) desires the position of Bishop" (1 Tim. 3:1), and not, "If a man is blameless," but, "if *anyone* is blameless" (Titus 1:6). They also point out that often in Scripture the male case is inclusive, meaning that it applies both to men and to women. For example, the Tenth Commandment states, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife," but we understand that it also applies to women, who should interpret it as, "You shall not covet your neighbor's husband." Likewise, proponents of female ordination argue that "husband of one wife" should be read inclusively to mean "husband of one wife or wife of one husband, as the case may be."

So how should we interpret the biblical qualifications for the office of elder/bishop/overseer? Did the apostle Paul intend to specify a man, or should we understand these qualifications to apply to either a man or a woman? How do we resolve this dilemma? As Adventists and good Protestants, we allow Scripture to be its own expositor; that is, we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture.

First, is there anything in these passages besides the phrase "husband of one wife" that gives us a clue to the gender specified? Yes, there is. The bishop is to have 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?)." In addition, all major Bible translations translate this as a male. Being male is the precondition for being an elder.

Scripture is clear in specifying the patriarchal ("rule of the fathers") model of family government. The husband is the head of the home. This is clear in the Old Testament (Gen. 3:16; 18:12) and just as clear in the New: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is

subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Eph. 5:22–25). "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them" (Col. 3:18, 19). "Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives" (1 Peter 3:1).

There is no "arc" or "trajectory" of Scripture that leads away from the patriarchal form of family government established at Creation. From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture recognizes the husband and father as the head of the home. And since the home church is the pattern for the larger church, capable leadership of the family is a prerequisite to leadership in the church (1 Tim. 3:5). Ellen White was just as clear on this point as the apostle Paul: "He who fails to direct wisely his own household is not qualified to guide the church of God" (*Signs of the Times*, Nov. 10, 1881). "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?" (*5 Manuscript Releases*, 449, 450).

Clearly, given the Bible's unchanging teaching that men are the rulers of the home, Paul's statement that if someone "does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?" is a very strong indication that an elder or bishop must be a man.

Second, we must examine the context. It is often said that "a text without context is a pretext," so let us look at the context of Paul's listing of the biblical requirements that must be met by anyone who aspires to be a bishop. Immediately before he listed those criteria, Paul said this:

> "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control" (1 Tim. 2:11–15).

If an elder or bishop must be "apt to teach," as is specified in 1 Tim. 3:2, and women must be quiet and are specifically forbidden from teaching, then obviously a woman cannot be an elder or bishop. And lest anything rest only on one text, we find a similar passage in 1 Corinthians: "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church" (1 Cor. 14:34, 35). This context limits authoritative teaching in the church to men; hence, the office of elder or bishop, which requires such teaching, is also limited to men.

Proponents of women's ordination point out that Priscilla, wife of Aquila, is found in Acts to be teaching a man, Apollos (Acts 18). But in that instance, the Greek term used, *ektithemi*, means to set out or expose and is translated as "expound." By contrast, the teaching that elders must do and that women are forbidden from doing is based on a different Greek term, *didasko*. When Paul uses the term *didasko* in 1 Tim., he is speaking of the authoritative teaching ministry of the elders; he has in view one of the functions of an office, and by limiting the performance of that function to males, he is also limiting the office to males. Interestingly, there are two other references to this Greek root in connection with women in the New Testament: First, in Titus 2:3, 4, Paul instructs the

older women to be "teachers of goodness" (*kalodidaskalos*) to the younger women, and second, in Revelation 2:20, Jesus rebukes the church of Thyatira for permitting "that woman Jezebel" to teach (*didasko*).

We should also note that the office of elder/bishop/overseer is an authoritative office. The Bible says that the elders "rule" the church. "Let the elders **who rule well** be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:17, emphasis added). "Remember those **who rule over you**, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct" (Heb. 13:7). Elders are not only to teach authoritatively (*didasko*) but also to suppress false teaching. An elder is to "hold 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. For there are many insubordinate … whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. … Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith" (Titus 1:9–13).

From these passages it is very clear that the elder's role calls for him to be in authority over men in the congregation; hence, a female elder would not be consistent with the admonition in 1 Tim. 2:12 that women are not to have authority over men. If we were to read 1 Tim. 3:1–7 and Titus 1:2–7 in a unisex way, allowing for male or female elders, we create a conflict with 1 Tim. 2:12. But according to the rules of scriptural interpretation embraced by Adventists, we must form our theory of interpretation "without a contradiction." We must read and interpret the Scriptures according to the assumption that they were all inspired by one divine mind, the Holy Spirit, and must be interpreted harmoniously, without contradiction.

So 1 Tim. 2:11–15 is the immediate context of the qualifications for elder/bishop/overseer set out in the next chapter.

Having stated explicitly that women should not serve as authoritative teachers, and should not be in authority over men, Paul obviously intended that an office that requires authoritative teaching and requires authority to be exercised over men should be limited to men. He then proceeds to spell out what kind of men are suitable for the office of elder. This is why Bible translators down through history have felt free to paraphrase, "If anyone desires the position of a bishop," as, "If a man desires the position of a bishop … " Until relatively recently, this has never been deemed a controversial translation.

Now, let us look at the wider biblical context. There is a principle in Scripture of male spiritual leadership. In the context of the church, Paul stated, "I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3).

This principle dates back all the way to the Garden of Eden. Adam was formed first from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7), while Eve was formed later from a rib in Adam's side (vs. 21, 22). It is to Adam that God gives instruction regarding the care of the garden and what to do about the two trees in its midst (vs. 15–17). It is Adam who names the animals (vs. 19, 20), and it is Adam—both before and after the Fall—who names Eve (v. 23; Gen. 3:20). Adam and Eve did not become naked until Adam sinned (Gen. 3:7). And when the two of them fled from the presence of the Lord, it was to Adam—not Eve—that the Lord called (v. 9). Hence, Adam is identified in the New Testament as the one through whom sin and death entered the world (Rom. 5:12–19; 1 Cor. 15:22), even though Eve was the first to disobey. This is why the second person of the Godhead came to earth as the Second Adam, not the Second Eve.

We can trace this principle all the way through the Scriptures. Only males are recorded in Scripture as officiating in the offering of sacrifices (Gen. 8:20; Judg. 13:19; Job 1:5; Heb. 11:4). The founders of the twelve tribes of Israel were all male

(Gen. 48:1,5; 49:1–28). Although the Lord called on the entire nation of Israel to be a kingdom of priests (Exod. 19:6), only men were appointed to offer the Passover lamb (Exod. 12:3) and, later, to serve as priests in the sanctuary (Exod. 28:1; 29:9, 10; Num. 3:3).

The genealogy of Jesus is traced through the male lineage, although four famous women are mentioned in connection with their husbands (Matt. 1:3, 5, 6). Jesus, the Messiah, becomes incarnate as a man (1 Tim. 2:5). Jesus had many female followers (Mark 15:40, 41; Luke 23:27–30), yet when it came time to choose His specially ordained disciples, He chose and ordained twelve men to lead His church on earth (Mark 3:13–19; Luke 6:12–16; DA 290–297). After the death of Judas, the remaining disciples cast lots to choose his replacement. Both of the candidates were men, although a number of prominent female followers were available (Acts 1:12–23).

There is a clear pattern of male spiritual responsibility and leadership that extends throughout Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. That is the larger biblical context for the criteria for elders and bishops/overseers. Bringing together the biblical passages that bear on this issue, we must interpret the requirements of 1 Tim. 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9 as specifying a man. Not "either a man or a woman, as the case may be," but only a man. When we bring all the Bible passages together on the subject, let every word have its proper influence, allow Scripture to be its own expositor, and form our theory without placing a text in opposition to another, this is not a close case. Instead, it is very clear that the church leadership office of elder/bishop/overseer is reserved for men. We have reason to ask: Are those who favor the ordination of women really trying to understand what Scripture is teaching us, or are they trying to somehow make Scripture fit the dominant cultural trend in the developed world?

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Was Paul, in 1 Tim. 2:12, 13, responding to a heresy that had arisen in Ephesus that taught Eve was created before Adam and Adam sinned first? A theory that has been advanced by proponents of female ordination is that when Paul wrote, "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Tim. 2:11–14), he was laying down a rule only for the church in Ephesus, where, it is asserted, some women were teaching that Eve was formed first and that Adam had eaten the forbidden fruit before Eve.

This theory has been disputed by capable scholars, but the problem is the method of interpretation itself. An extraneous, unverifiable story is told that alters the meaning of the text and limits to a given time and place a teaching that would otherwise have universal application. Is this method of Bible study consistent with Adventist hermeneutics? This type of storytelling purports to be within the "historical-grammatical" method, but it effectively redacts Scripture by using an extra-biblical teaching, so how is it really different from outright criticism? Would it not be better to simply accept the text at face value?

If we accept what is written, the counsel given is exactly the opposite of time-bound and culturally conditioned. Paul is basing his direction—that women are not to teach or have authority over men—on the history of the creation and the fall of man, history that is common to the entire human race and to everyone who has lived since. Thus, Paul is placing his apostolic teaching beyond the local cultural situation of first-century Ephesus; he is making it universal and timeless.

2. If Adam being created first signifies male headship, wouldn't the animals be superior to Adam because they were created before him? At best, this is an argument with the apostle Paul himself, since it is Paul who, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gives the order of creation as a basis for male leadership in the church. (At worst, it is an unseemly attempt to ridicule an unwanted but plain biblical teaching.) It is never wise to argue with the logic of an inspired writer. It is best to simply accept that reasoning and not dispute it with uninspired logic of our own. Humans and animals are in different categories, and God explicitly gave humanity dominion over the animals (Gen. 1:26), which nullifies any priority-of-creation argument insofar as humans and animals are concerned.

3. Does the phrase "husband of one wife" exclude single men from being elders? Considering that Paul was ordained (Acts 13:3) and yet describes himself as single in 1 Cor. 7:7, it would seem that single men can be ordained and serve as local elders and bishops/overseers of the flock.

4. Didn't Jesus choose male apostles only because of the culture of His day? No. Jesus was obedient to the word of His Father, not the culture of man. "He saw that the requirements of society and the requirements of God were in constant collision. … He could not sanction the mingling of human requirements with the divine precepts" (DA 84). Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman (John 4:4–26), Zachaeus (Luke 19:1–10), Gentiles (Luke 7:1–10; Matt. 15:21–28), and the "unclean" people He touched and healed (Mark 1:40–45) reveal that Jesus was never a slave to the cultural expectations of His time. Indeed, Jesus died because He would not compromise biblical truth to accommodate culture traditions.

5. Does Gal. 3:28 provide grounds for ordaining women to the gospel ministry? No. Galatians 3:28 is about equal access to God through Christ. It does not change the biblical requirements for the offices of elder and bishop/overseer.

> "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. 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" (Gal. 3:26–28).

Paul is saying that all are united in one family by baptism. All have the privileges of a child of God. At our baptism, God the Father's words, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased," are now said of us. Without any distinction, "**Every soul** may have free access to God" (PK 369).

Instead of doing away with God's divine order, Gal. 3:28 establishes both. The body of Christ is organized under His command. The passage does not mean all Christians have been given the same gifts or assigned the same tasks. Nor does it mean that one Christian can now demand the office that Christ has assigned to another. Neither does the passage mean there is no gender differentiation in leadership roles, because that would contradict other clear passages of Scripture (1 Cor. 11:3–16; 1 Tim. 2:12, 13; etc.). Note that the very next verse affirms biblical patriarchy, in that Christian believers are symbolically descended from the patriarch Abraham: "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

Gal. 3:28 does not represent a change in Paul's thinking about gender roles in the church. For that to be true, Galatians would need to have been written after his first letter to Timothy, but it was written well before. Moreover, if we interpret Gal. 3:28 so that it contradicts such passages as

1 Cor. 11:3–16, we have not formed our theory "without a contradiction." Rather, we are setting Scripture against Scripture, not heeding that all Scripture is inspired by one divine mind, the Holy Spirit.

6. Was "Junia" of Rom. 16:7 a female apostle? Rom. 16:7 records, "Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among [esteemed by] the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was" (NIV).

Proponents of female ordination argue that "Junia" was both a woman and an apostle, and since apostles had authority over men in the church, indeed, even over elders/bishops/overseers, Junia demonstrates that women can be ordained to gospel ministry.

First, theologians, Bible translations, and even the underlying Greek manuscripts disagree about whether Junia was a woman. The Greek construction of the name could refer to a woman or a man depending on where the accent is placed, but accents were not indicated in Greek writing until hundreds of years after Paul wrote his letter to the Romans. The church fathers were divided, with John Chrysostom (AD 359–407) believing Junia was a woman, but Origen (AD 185–254) believing Junia a man. Epiphanius of Salamis (died AD 403) uses the masculine form, Junias, and claims to have specific biographical information, writing that "Junias, of whom Paul makes mention, became bishop of Apameia of Syria." Ellen White states, "Paul in his letters to the churches makes mention of women who were laborers with him in the gospel … 'Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me' " (North Pacific Union *Gleaner,* 12/4/1907). This seems to indicate that White believed Junia a woman, but it is not definitive because she also lists several men in that passage.

Second, we do not know from the Greek, which is commonly translated as "who are of note among the apostles," whether Andronicus and Junia were "noteworthy apostles" or "well known to the apostles." It makes a big difference whether Andronicus and Junia(s) were well known to the apostles or were themselves highly regarded apostles. But if they were noteworthy apostles, why are they never noted in the book of Acts, where the acts of the apostles are recorded? Why is there no mention of them except in this brief "greeting" section at the end of Paul's letter to the Romans?

The bottom line is that we cannot be expected to believe that Junia was a female apostle when the entire teaching and context of the Bible limits leadership in the organized church to men. A female apostle is an extraordinary claim, and it would require extraordinary, clear biblical proof, which is not present here. Even granting that Junia was a woman, the better reading of this ambiguous passage is that Andronicus and Junia were well known to the apostles, not themselves apostles.

7. Should licensed or commissioned women perform the exact same functions as an ordained male minister? This would not be biblical. The work of men and women in ministry is clearly distinct in both Scripture and the writings of Ellen White, and steps need to be taken to restore this distinction in Seventh-day Adventist policy so as to reflect gender roles as inspired counsel presents them. Moreover, the current working distinctions between local elders and ordained gospel ministers in the church are not biblical—what is allowed or denied for one should be allowed or denied for the other.

8. Isn't defending gender roles from Scripture just like defending slavery from Scripture? No. Unlike slavery and social class distinctions, which are human institutions, sex

and gender roles were created by God (Gen. 5:2; Matt.19:4; Mark 10:6). God's creation was perfect! Neither slavery, racial segregation, castes, nor economic station can, therefore, be compared to gender roles. The assumption that defending gender role distinctions with the Bible is like using the Bible to defend slavery is based upon the idea that gender role distinctions are just as unjust and oppressive as slavery. But this is not a biblical notion. In the biblical worldview, God created men and women different, with different roles from the beginning, and He called this creation "very good" (Gen. 1:31).

Christianity does not seek to remake society by tackling all of its sinful institutions, but by first converting people and changing hearts and minds, one person at a time. These converted people, when they reach critical mass in a society, will eventually seek to reform their society's institutions. The early Christians did not attempt to destroy the deeply entrenched institution of slavery in Roman society; had they done so, they likely would have been quickly eliminated by the Roman authorities.

But Paul's epistle to Philemon effectively demolishes slavery's philosophical underpinnings, and replaces them with a Christian worldview that makes Onesimus the brother of Philemon, to be treated as his brother, not as his property. So it is not true that slavery can rightly be defended from Scripture, and some of history's most prominent abolitionists and anti-slavery activists, such as William Wilberforce, have been committed Christians.

9. Is violence against, and the oppression of, women a result of biblical patriarchy? If this were true, God would be to blame for the abuse of women because He established the patriarchal system. Jesus would be to blame for electing only males as His apostles. Paul would be to blame for refusing to give women ecclesiastical authority over men (1 Tim. 2:12, 13).

The biblical model is not abusive, nor does it promote violence against women; rather, men are enjoined to servant leadership, to protect women as "the weaker vessel" and treat them with respect, reflecting the sacrificial love of Christ (1 Pet. 3:7; Eph. 5:25).

One of the most noteworthy opponents of patriarchy and proponents of the postmodern feminist movement turns out to have been Hugh Hefner, creator of Playboy Magazine, who was also one of the greatest spiritual degraders of women. That's no contradiction because it is only when women are no longer under the protective authority of a loving father or husband that they can really be exploited and abused by other men.

10. Doesn't Paul's statement about "submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21) invalidate the principle of submission to heads or authorities? Obviously not, because the following verses command wives to submit to husbands (Eph. 5:22–25). Never is the husband commanded to submit to the wife. Some believe submission to one another is defined by a series of relationships that are non-reciprocal, giving credit to the error that Paul is teaching reciprocal submission. Instead, the wife should submit to the husband, the child to the parent, and the servant to the master, always in the fear of God, keeping allegiance to God supreme. We see the same in Col. 3:18–25, and in 1 Pet. 2:13–3:7 we have a similar outline, beginning with the principle of submitting to every level of authority God has established.

Paul is equally clear that this submission of wives to husbands, like that of children to parents (Eph. 6:1), is to take place only "as is fitting in the Lord" (Col. 3:18). Absolute obedience to any human authority is not possible for the believer, as the Bible is clear that "we ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Section 4:
Ellen White's Example

Even among Adventists who have a high regard for the prophetic authority of Ellen White, there exists an uninformed but strong feeling that the example of her life somehow did away with the pattern of male spiritual leadership found in Scripture. Their argument often goes something like this: "How can a church that was founded by a woman refuse to ordain female pastors to gospel ministry?"

Yes, Ellen White was tremendously influential in the founding and early development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and through her writings she remains a guiding influence. But after all is said and done, she was a prophet, a messenger of God. She was not an ordained minister of the gospel, nor a conference president, nor a church administrator. She never accepted any office in overseeing the church. Scripture specifies a model of church organization in which prophets can be men or women, but the priest/elder/bishop/overseer role is restricted to men.

Let's remember that prophesying is not a church office but a spiritual gift, and spiritual gifts are bestowed without regard to gender. Ellen White was not the first female prophet. There is nothing new about female prophets, and Scripture supplies us with several examples: Miriam (Exod. 15:20; Mic. 6:4), Deborah (Judg. 4:4), Huldah (2 Kin. 22:14), Anna (Luke 2:36), and the daughters of Phillip (Acts 21:8, 9). Scripture even makes reference to some false female prophets (Neh. 6:14; Ezek. 13:17–23). There were also women who, although not prophetesses, were inspired to make prophetic statements, including Rachel (Gen. 30:24), Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1–10), Abigail (1 Sam. 25:29–31), Elisabeth (Luke 1:41–45), and Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:46–55). God uses prophets to convey His counsel to His leaders and people.

Since there have been several female prophets, the fact that Ellen White was a female prophet is not a new thing in God's dealings with His people. It does not change how God instructed His church to be organized.

Does anyone really believe that Paul was not aware of these female prophets in Bible history when he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to limit the office of elder/bishop/overseer to men? Obviously, Paul was well aware of their existence, not only in the past but also in his own day. In the very same passage in which he sets out the principle of male spiritual headship, he also notes that women will sometimes prophesy in church:

> "I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head" (1 Cor. 11:3–5).

Again, here the principle of male spiritual headship is mentioned in the same breath with the fact that females will prophesy. Clearly the fact that there were, are, and probably will be female prophets does not change the gospel order that God has specified for His church on earth.

Some argue, "I understand all that, but Ellen White was more than a prophet; she was the leader of the church." It is true that Ellen White was instrumental in the founding of the church, but she was first and foremost a messenger of the Lord. Like the great majority of biblical prophets, Ellen White never held a formal position. She was neither a pastor nor a conference, union, or General Conference president in the church. She did not have administrative responsibilities for the day-to-day operation of the church. She did not have the power to hire and fire pastors. With the sole exception

of her serving on the board of directors of Madison College, founded on the site that she selected after having been shown it in a dream, Ellen White did not serve on governing boards or executive committees. In her own words:

> "**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 236, 237).

It has been asserted that Ellen White was ordained as a minister, but that is not true. For various reasons, it was advantageous for the church to issue ministerial credentials to her, and this was first done in 1871. Some of these say "ordained minister," but in at least one instance the word "ordained" was neatly struck through. The church had, and has, no category of credential for prophets, so it utilized what it had, giving her its highest credentials—those of an ordained minister. But no ceremony of ordination was ever performed

on Ellen White; she was not ordained. The fact that "ordained" was crossed out on at least one of her credentials highlights the awkwardness of giving credentials to a prophet. In truth, a prophet needs no human credentials, having been chosen by God to serve as His messenger. Ellen White functioned as a prophet for many years without any official credentials.[1]

She described her own role as follows:

> "I have a work of great responsibility to do—to impart by pen and voice the instruction given me, not alone to Seventh-day Adventists, but to the world. I have published many books, large and small, and some of these have been translated into several languages. This is my work—to open the Scriptures to others as God has opened them to me" (8T 236).

Some yet say, "But she exercised spiritual authority over men." In her capacity as a prophetess, she often delivered divine rebukes to both men and women, including the male leaders of the church. But she was not in direct administrative authority over them; they were free to heed her counsel or not, and in several notable cases, they did not. In fact, Ellen White herself submitted to the regularly constituted male authority of the church, as in the case of her nine-year sojourn in Australia. She did not move to Australia on her own initiative or at her own suggestion, but went pursuant to the call of male General Conference leaders.

There is nothing in the life of Ellen White that overturns God's order for His church, nor should we expect to find such a thing. Long before she was a prophet, God had chosen to speak through several other female prophets, but the

1 See William Fagal's "Did Ellen White Support the Ordination of Women?", *Ministry*, February 1989, p. 6). See also http://www.ellenwhite.org/issues/egw_credentials/egw_credentials.htm

priesthood was always reserved for men, the disciples whom Christ ordained were men, the apostles were men, and the New Testament clearly restricts the office of elder/bishop/overseer to men. Ellen White did not disrupt this pattern in any way.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Doesn't the fact that Deborah was not only a prophetess but also a judge—a leader of civil government—authorize the ordination of women? No. Deborah was a prophet and a judge, but never a priest, and, thus, does not serve as an example of female headship in normal, day-to-day church office. The biblical headship principle relevant to the issue of female ordination is spiritual headship in the church. An example of a woman holding a headship position in government does not challenge this principle.

Furthermore, as a brief aside, Scripture makes clear that it was not God's ideal for women to be leaders of civil government:

- The rulers appointed by Moses in the wilderness under God's direction—to rule over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens—were all male (Exod. 18:25).
- The seventy elders appointed by Moses under God's direction were all male (Num. 11:16).
- Only men were anointed by God to serve as kings of Israel and Judah. One woman tried to forcibly install herself as queen by killing all but one of her grandsons; she was later executed (2 Chron. 22:10–12; 23:12–21).
- "As for My people, children are their oppressors, and **women rule over them**. O My people! Those who

> lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths" (Isa. 3:12).

Deborah lived in the era of the judges, at a time when the prescribed theocratic government had broken down. Ellen White says, "She was known as a prophetess, and in the absence of the usual magistrates, the people had sought her for counsel and justice" (DG 37). She was a humble woman who judged the cases brought to her under a tree (Judges 4:5), not at the city gate where the usual magistrates presided. Deborah did what a vice president might do in the absence or incapacity of a president, or what a wife should do in the absence or incapacity of her husband: "Before leaving the house for labor, all the family should be called together; and the father, or the mother in the father's absence, should plead fervently with God to keep them through the day" (GC 519). Deborah stepped in and judged Israel, in the absence of male judges, but this was not the ideal.

In any case, the fact that in extraordinary circumstances she exercised civil authority in Israel still does not serve as an example of female headship in normal church offices, such as priest or elder/bishop/overseer.

2. Wasn't Miriam a leader of the congregation as well as a prophet? Although Miriam had a leadership role, her dispute with Moses offers clear evidence that it was not a headship role. The incident recorded in Numbers 12:1–9 makes it evident that Aaron's and Miriam's responsibilities were not on the same level as those of Moses and that God intended it that way. This order of authority is reflected in Micah 6:4, where God declared of Israel, "I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam." In Ellen White's words: "In the affection of the people and the honor of Heaven [Miriam] stood second only to Moses and Aaron" (PP 382). Miriam's role was clearly subordinate to that of her male siblings.

3. Are there any examples of Adventist women being ordained to the gospel ministry during Ellen White's lifetime? Rumors circulate to this effect, but there is no confirmed example of any woman being ordained to gospel ministry during early Adventist history.[2]

4. Besides Ellen White, were there other women who held ministerial credentials? No. Licenses, yes, but not credentials. There is widespread confusion about terminology. In the Adventist Church, un-ordained workers are issued "licenses," or "ministerial licenses," whereas ordained ministers are issued "credentials" or "ministerial credentials." There were other women workers who held ministerial licenses, but they were not ordained and, hence, did not have "credentials." The only woman in the church from 1860 till 1915 to receive a ministerial credential was Ellen White.

In 1899, Pastor D.W. Reavis asked this 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." 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" (General Conference Bulletin, March 5, 1899, p. 147).

5. Did the fact that the early Adventist Church had female preachers mean that the Adventist pioneers favored women's ordination? No. Female preachers and female ordination are not the same thing. We are not aware of a single article

2 See, David Trim, *The Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Policy and Practice*, *Up to 1972*, presented at the July, 2013 TOSC, p. 5, http://www.adventistarchives.org/the-ordination-of-women-in-seventh-day-adventist-policy-and-practice.pdf.

between 1850 and 1915 that advocated for the ordination of women to gospel ministry or as conference, union, or General Conference presidents. We are, however, aware of statements upholding male headship and barring women from the office of ruling elder. As the following statements indicate, several of our leading pioneers held to the primacy of male authority within the church and did so on biblical grounds. Consider J.H. Waggoner's view in the *Signs of the Times*:

> "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" (Dec. 19, 1878).

In a later issue of the *Signs*, a reader asked, "Should women be elected to offices in the church when there are enough brethren?" Here is the response of Milton Wilcox:

> "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* to that of man. She was made a help meet, or fit, for man, but that does *not* mean that her sphere [or role] is *identical* 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." ("Question Corner #176: Who Should Be Church Officers?", Jan. 24, 1895, italics original).

6. Didn't Adventists vote to ordain women at the 1881 General Conference session? No. It is true that a resolution to ordain women was placed on the agenda of the 1881 General Conference, but that resolution was defeated. The resolution in question read as follows:

> "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" (RH, Dec. 20, 1881, p. 392).

Resolutions are commonly taken to the General Conference session, where they are thoroughly discussed and then voted upon. However, on occasion, the session does not vote on the issue but refers it to a committee. After the above resolution was read, it was discussed by the delegates, of whom at least eight voiced an opinion. Then a vote was taken to refer the issue to the General Conference Executive Committee, which was a polite way of killing the measure. The issue was never broached again until 1990.

The General Conference session of 1990 considered a resolution to allow the ordination of women. It was voted down by 74 to 26 percent. At behest of the NAD, the 1995 session considered a measure to allow divisions to decide on their own whether to ordain women. The request was thoroughly debated and then rejected—69 to 31 percent.

Section 5:
Divine Gender Role Differences

Gender is the only distinction between human beings that Jesus created. This fact sets gender apart from any other difference we find between people, whether in history or contemporary times. The Bible doesn't say, for instance, "Slave and free He created them." Neither does it say, "Black and white He created them," nor, "Plutocrat and peasant, He created them." All of these are human constructs, products of the age of sin. Gender, by contrast, is a divine construct: "Male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). Jesus affirms this in Matt. 19:4. The Bible says it is an abomination for men and women to confuse gender roles—even by wearing garments appropriate only to the opposite sex (Deut. 22:5). According to Ellen White,

> "God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided 'an help meet for him'—a helper corresponding to him—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him" (PP 46).

From the beginning, before sin, Eve was Adam's helper and Adam was Eve's loving protector.

Although Adam and Eve were equal in value, they were different in form and function. They had different but complementary roles. Adam was the representative of the human race; Eve was Adam's helper, his able assistant. They were not created equal in height and strength, for just before

this paragraph, Ellen White says, "Eve was somewhat less in stature" (PP 45). For example, because he was taller, Adam could reach and pick fruit that Eve couldn't reach without assistance. But by working together, perhaps by bending the branch down, both could reach fruit that neither could have reached alone. By nature, Adam had less fat under the skin so his wife was softer. They were different. They were created to be different.

As a man, Adam was stronger and more muscular. Before the fall, he was the perfect husband. He did not need to be told, "Husbands, … dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel [different function], and as being heirs together of the grace of life [equal value]" (1 Peter 3:7); instead, he did this naturally. And Eve did not have to be told to be submissive. This was as natural to her as breathing. They worked together like a well-functioning team—a CEO and COO. Despite the complications of sin, good homes still function like this today.

Though equal, Adam and Eve had different experiences and expectations. Eve was mom. She, not Adam, carried the baby for nine months. She alone had breasts to feed the baby until it was weaned. Adam had no oxytocin surge during childbirth to create a chemically initiated, lifelong bond with the child. If Adam, as representative of the human race, was fulfilling his responsibilities at a heavenly counsel (Job 1:6; 2:1), Eve, as his assistant, would have had the equally important (if not more important) task of overseeing, training, and directing the children in their pleasant responsibilities to beautify the garden and home.

"The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the father and representative of the whole human family" (PP 48). God has a representative government. Adam was the earth's representative. Because Adam was married to Eve, Eve would have had a lot of input! But God would hold Adam responsible for the Sabbath being communicated to his posterity.

Adam, not Eve, held the office of vicegerent. "Satan's dominion was that wrested from Adam, but Adam was the vicegerent of the Creator. His was not an independent rule. The earth is God's, and He has committed all things to His Son. Adam was to reign subject to Christ. When Adam betrayed his sovereignty into Satan's hands, Christ still remained the rightful King" (DA 129).

God will restore Adam's vice-regency in the New Earth. We have been given a little preview of this ceremony: "The Son of God is standing with outstretched arms to receive the father of our race—the being whom He created, who sinned against his Maker, and for whose sin the marks of the crucifixion are borne upon the Savior's form. … The Son of God redeemed man's failure and fall; and now, through the work of the atonement, **Adam is reinstated in his first dominion**" (GC 647). Jesus is the head; Adam, once again, is his vicegerent. That is how it will be for eternity.

In the patriarchal system, "the father was the proper ruler of his own family as long as he lived. His authority was not to cease, even after his children were grown up and had families of their own" (PP 293). This is how it was to be, and how it will be in heaven and on earth, when the planet is restored to its Edenic beauty. Adam will rule with an authority that we will respect, honor, and obey. Though authority is inherent in God's kingdom, it is a much different authority than worldly authority. God's "authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love" (DA 759). It always has and always will. "God Himself had established the order of heaven" (GC 494). Since rejecting the order of heaven was Satan's original sin, we must be careful not to encourage rejection of God's order between men and women, husbands and wives.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What kind of leader was Adam to be? A gentle, loving, self-sacrificing, Christ-like leader. Paul described it well: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Eph. 5:25). Unfortunately, "few fathers realize their responsibility" (AH 211). Ellen White advised, "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" (AH 215).

2. Does Song of Sol. 7:10 reverse the male leadership God called for in Gen. 3:16? In this text Solomon's wife exclaims, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me." Does this reverse Gen. 3:16, where Eve is told, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you"? No. Song of Sol. is describing a husband's sensual desire for his wife; this is domestic love, not domestic leadership. The wife has given herself to her husband and is expressing joy at her husband's desire for her. It is also a spiritual illustration of the joy that comes when we give ourselves totally to Christ and are thrilled to discover that Jesus desires us. But that doesn't make us His leader. This can also be symbolic of the church belonging to Christ and saying, "I am my beloved's and His desire is toward me." But this doesn't make the church the head of Christ.

3. Does the New Testament continue the image of marriage and family to illustrate the relationship between a pastor and his congregation? Yes. Paul describes himself as a spiritual father to his converts (1 Cor. 4:15), but they are also God's children and members of the household of God (Eph. 2:19). The apostle John also refers to the believers to

whom he writes as his children (1 John 2:1), and he is equally clear they are God's children as well (1 John 3:1).

Section 6:
The Headship Principle

A. In the Godhead

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not only equal, they are all one being (Deut. 6:4; John 10:30; 12:45; 14:9). God the Son has existed from eternity (Micah 5:2; John 1:1–3). Yet God the Son has submitted to God the Father, to do His will. Christ said that He sought not to do His own will "but the will of my Father who sent Me" (John 5:30). And, "I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me" (John 8:28). Hence, the apostle Paul can say, "The head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3).

God the Son, although He was God and equal with the Father, "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:7, 8). Jesus' submission to His Father's will even extended to His death on the cross: "Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:36).

What was the Father's response to the Son's willing submission? "God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow … and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:8–11).

Moreover, Jesus' submission to the Father extends into eternity, even after the sin problem has been resolved:

> "Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and

> all authority and power. For [Christ] must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. … But when He says 'all things are put under Him,' it is evident that [the Father] who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:24–28).

Not only does the Son's submission to the Father extend into the future, it has always existed. The plan of salvation was always in the mind of God. The Son is the Lamb of God who was "slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). Ellen White notes,

> "The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of 'the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.' Rom. 16:25. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne" (GC 22).

The principles revealed by the incarnation and death of God the Son—*including the submission of the Son to the Father*, even though both are co-eternal and both are God—have always been "the foundation of God's throne." Since Adam and Eve were made in the image of God, we would expect that these principles will be revealed in their relationship as well.

B. In the Angelic Hosts

The angels are created beings that rank below the Godhead but higher than man (Heb. 2:7). There are different orders of angels as well. We know that the covering cherub is

the highest order, for "Satan was of the highest order of angels" (3SG 36). Though angels are equal in value, they are not identical in gifts. For example, some are taller (EW 168) and some are stronger (AA 154). The angels are organized with different roles and different posts of duty:

> "The very highest angels in the heavenly courts are appointed to work out the prayers which ascend to God for the advancement of the cause of God. Each angel has his particular post of duty, which he is not permitted to leave for any other place" (*Lift Him Up*, 370).

The angels are organized somewhat like an army, with ranks and orders of angels, and a chain of command. Each company of angels has "a tall commanding angel" as its leader:

> "Many companies of holy angels, each with a tall commanding angel at their head, were sent to witness the scene. … It was difficult for the angels to endure the sight [scourging of Jesus]. They would have delivered Jesus, but the commanding angels forbade them. … There was commotion among the angels [when Jesus was insulted at His trial]. They would have rescued Him instantly, but their commanding angels restrained them" (*Early Writings*, 167–170).

There is no sin among the holy angels of God; hence, there can never have been any call for force, compulsion, or punishment in the angelic host. But the angels submit to those in authority over them (the "commanding angels") out of love for each other, for God, and for God's harmonious government. The society of the angels reflects a voluntary headship and submission within the atmosphere of heaven, in a fellowship untainted by sin. It is thus perfectly logical to expect that there would be voluntary

headship and submission in the human race, even before we fell into sin.

C. In the Human Race

In God's creation of the human family, we see the same pattern of role differentiation within the context of equality. Both male and female are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). Eve was created as an *ezer kenegdo*, a helper "suitable" to Adam, meaning like him or comparable to him (Gen. 2:18). This phrase includes both equality (*kenegdo* = like him or comparable to him) and role differentiation (*ezer* = helper). A helper does not have the primary responsibility for the task he or she is helping to perform; rather, the primary responsibility remains with the person being helped.

There is also differentiation and equality indicated by the order and manner of the creation of Adam and Eve. Adam was created first from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7). That Adam was created first is apparently significant in inferring role differentiation (1 Tim. 2:13). Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden and told to tend and care for it (Gen. 2:8, 15). He was also told about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and instructed not to eat from it (Gen. 2:16, 17). Because all of this happened before Eve was created, it is clear that Adam had the primary responsibility for tending the garden and for avoiding the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; that is, avoiding sin and the temptation to sin.

Eve was not created from the dust of the ground, as Adam was, but was created from Adam's rib (Gen. 2:21, 22). This fact is significant in inferring role differentiation (1 Cor. 11:8). Eve was created for Adam, to be his helper and companion: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:18). That Eve was created for Adam also has significance in inferring role differentiation (1 Cor. 11:9). And the fact that Eve was created from Adam's

rib is significant in showing ontological, or created equality. "Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him" (PP 46). The creation narrative shows that Adam and Eve were created equal but with different yet complementary roles.

The leadership role of Adam, and the complementary submissive role of Eve, are indicated by the following facts: 1) Adam was created first; 2) Adam was given primary responsibility for the garden; 3) Adam was given primary responsibility for avoiding the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; 4) Adam was given the task of naming the animals (Gen. 2:19, 20); 5) Eve was created out of Adam; 6) Eve was created as a helper for Adam; and 7) Adam spoke first upon the creation of Eve and named her (Gen. 2:23).

Interestingly, a role reversal, in which Eve was assertive and dominant while Adam was passive and submissive, led directly to the Fall. This reversal of roles can be seen in the narrative of Genesis chapter 3. Eve left her husband's side, presuming that she had sufficient wisdom and strength on her own to discern and resist any evil (PP 53, 54). Independently of Adam, Eve entered into a dialogue with the serpent, unwisely taking it upon herself to deal with the intruder. Then Eve, without consulting Adam, took the fruit and ate it (Gen. 3:1–6). Eve further asserted herself by taking some of the forbidden fruit to Adam, urging him to eat of it (Gen. 3:6; PP 56). In passive submission to Eve's enthusiastic directive, Adam ate the forbidden fruit.

Ellen White implies that Eve overstepped her assigned sphere in those fateful actions leading up to the Fall of mankind:

> "Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband's side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she

> was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it. A similar result will be reached by all who are unwilling to take up cheerfully their life duties in accordance with God's plan" (PP 59).

But Adam bore the ultimate responsibility for allowing Eve to usurp his leadership role. Before Eve was even created, Adam had been warned of the forbidden fruit and was to avoid eating it. Thus, it was clearly Adam's responsibility to exercise leadership with regard to the tree. He knew he was not at liberty to yield to his wife on this matter. Accordingly, in pronouncing sentence upon him, God rebuked Adam for surrendering his leadership responsibility to Eve: "**Because you listened to your wife** and ate the fruit from the tree" (Gen. 3:17).

The primacy of Adam is clearly indicated by the fact that the Fall was not consummated when Eve ate the fruit—only when Adam ate it. Nothing visible even happened when Eve ate: "Eve was before him, as beautiful and apparently as innocent as before this act of disobedience. She expressed greater love for him than before. No sign of death appeared in her" (PP 57). Only after Adam ate the fruit did the pair feel the loss of their robes of light, in response to which they sewed fig leaves together to make rudimentary clothing for themselves (Gen. 3:7; PP 57).

Moreover, Ellen White indicates that God would have created a replacement wife had Adam resisted her pitch and refused to eat the fruit (PP 56). Clearly, it was Adam's sin in his headship role that plunged the race into its long nightmare of sin and degradation; Eve's sin alone would not have brought about the Fall.

This is why we are told, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this

way death came to all people, because all sinned. … Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come" (Rom. 5:12–14). Sin entered the world through one man, not one woman. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). The legacy of death comes down to us from Adam, not Eve, because Adam was the vice-regent, the representative of our race.

After the Fall, God pronounced a sentence of male "rulership," something beyond leadership or headship, and more severe: "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Gen. 3:16). But, as we've seen, this explicit decree of rulership does not mean that there was no implicit headship and submission prior to the Fall. There were roles for Adam and Eve before the Fall, roles that were part of the created order. But in the absence of sin, the role differentiation between Adam and Eve would have been like that seen in the Godhead or among the holy angels; it would have been willing, loving submission among equals, with no hint of disharmony, strife, or compulsion. Before the entrance of sin, Adam was not called upon to "rule over" Eve, but Adam was clearly called to primacy, and loving servant-leadership, as part of the divinely created order.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Doesn't the word "head" in 1 Cor. 11:3–16 mean "source" or "origin," not "leader"? No. The underlying Greek term, *kephalē,* is used more than 70 times in the New Testament, and it is always translated as "head," never as source or origin. It usually means the part of a person's anatomy that sits atop the shoulders. When used metaphorically, the term "head" means someone who holds superior rank as leader, master, ruler, or

authority figure. Some writers have attempted to substitute a definition of *kephalē* that, although rarely seen in other Greek writings, is never encountered anywhere in Scripture.

A parallel use of the term makes it clear that the term cannot be read as "source." In Eph. 5:23, Paul states, "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body." Obviously, the husband is not the "source" of the wife, so we should not translate *kephalē* as source. In Col. 1:18, Christ is called the head so that He may have preeminence: "He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." In 1 Cor. 11, Paul is saying that the same headship principle that applies in the home (Eph. 5:22–33; 1 Pet, 5:2, 3) also applies in the church.

2. Doesn't the reference to head covering indicate that 1 Cor. 11 has only a local, cultural application? No. Paul's description of the divine order of authority includes not only the relationship of men and women, but also the man's relationship to Christ and Christ's relationship to God (1 Cor. 11:3). These relationships obviously transcend local, cultural considerations; likewise, the relationship of men to women is not bound by local, cultural considerations.

The Bible often uses local, culture-specific illustrations of larger truths that are applicable to all people in all ages. The woman who lost her coin, the bridesmaids waiting for the groom, the candle under a bushel—these are all examples of local, cultural situations used to illustrate truths relevant even for us today. It would be foolish to reason that we no longer need to let our light shine (Matt. 5:16) because we no longer light our houses with candles. Likewise, it would be foolish to reason that we can ignore Scripture's counsel regarding church order just because the wearing of head coverings has become culturally optional. In the culture of First

Century Corinth, women wore a head covering in church to symbolize being under authority. The symbol was culturally specific, but the underlying principle is not.

3. Why would Eve need Adam as her "head" since both had the same perfection of character and mind? Because servant-leadership is a good thing. Headship exists within the Godhead itself (1 Cor. 11:3) and will continue to exist there after the end of sin (Matt. 20:23; 1 Cor. 15:28). Perfect beings and perfect organizations benefit from clear organizational flowcharts outlining offices and responsibilities.

Furthermore, the same question could be asked after the Fall, "Why would a modern Eve need a modern Adam as a head today since they both had the same imperfection of character and mind?" The answer is the same: because clearly defined leadership is a positive organizational arrangement.

The question is troubling because it is the essence of the question Satan raised, "Why did angelic beings created with perfection of character and mind need the Headship of Jesus?" Satan's implication was that headship for angels was unnecessary. It was the same question Korah asked in the wilderness, as he declared to Moses that "all the congregation is holy" (Num. 16:3).

4. Is headship a recent teaching in the church? No. Because it is found throughout Scripture, it has been taught from the beginning of Adventist Church history.

Headship was well known to Ellen White, as she speaks often of "those standing at the **head** of the work" (e.g., 1T 572; 5T 672; RH, May 25, 1905). She says that Stephen was "considered the most proper person **to stand at the head and have supervision** of the disbursement of the funds appropriated to the widows, orphans, and the worthy poor" (SR 260). In 1891 A.T. Jones, who was at that time in close harmony with Ellen White, wrote:

> "This word does indeed speak to man of his son, his daughter, his manservant, his maidservant, etc., not because it contemplates his duty to man, but because it contemplates his duty to God; contemplates **man as the head of the family,** and as such responsible to God for the conduct on the Sabbath day, of **those under the jurisdiction which God bestowed upon man in his headship of the family"** (AMS, June 25, 1891, p. 202).

Clearly, headship is not a recent teaching. It is as ancient as the Bible, and as such it was known to the early leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

5. Hasn't the gospel freed us from the headship principle? Salvation is available to all, regardless of ethnicity, social class, or gender (Gal. 3:28). But the very apostle who wrote Gal. 3:28 was equally clear that God's order of gender authority was still in force after Calvary. This is why Paul could write, many years after the cross, "The head of woman is man" (1 Cor. 11:3), that "the husband is the head of the wife" (Eph. 5:23). Any notion that the cross has abolished gender role distinctions is eliminated by these post-Calvary statements. Even if headship were imposed only after and because of sin (Gen. 3:16), as some argue, clearly we live in an increasingly sinful and corrupt culture, and God's plan for family and church order must remain in effect.

6. Aren't the three persons of the Godhead mutually submissive to one another? We do not read anywhere in the inspired writings about mutual submission among members of the Godhead. While Scripture describes the Father and Son as equal (John 1:1–3; Phil. 2:5–8; Col. 2:9), the submission of the Son to the Father is clear even from before the creation. The Father is declared to have created all things through His Son (John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). It is the Father

who has "chosen us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). It is the Father who has predestined us "to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). It is the Father who sends the Son into the world to make possible humanity's salvation (John 3:16, 17; 17:18).

Before returning from earth to His Father in heaven, Christ declared, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18); this power was obviously given by the Father on account of His Son's triumph over sin and death. The seating of Christ at His Father's right hand following Christ's ascension (Ps. 110:1; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55, 56; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:13; 8:1; 10:12, 13; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22) is also indicative of the Father's supreme authority. In the ancient world, to be seated at the right hand of a monarch meant that the one thus honored was second in authority. We see this clarified elsewhere in Jesus' declaration that "the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22). If this authority is committed to the Son by the Father, the ultimate authority is, in fact, the Father's. In each of the above passages, it is the Father who acts through the Son. We never read that the Son acts through the Father.

The relationship of the Holy Spirit to Christ offers further evidence of order within the Godhead. While the Son is subject to the Father, the Spirit is subject to the Son. Just as the Father sends the Son into the world (John 3:16, 17; 17:18), so the Son sends the Spirit into the world from the Father (John 14:26; 15:26). The Spirit "shall not speak of Himself" but of Christ (John 16:13). While the Son's mission was to reveal and glorify the Father (John 14:9; 17:4), the Spirit is to reveal and glorify the Son (John 15:26; 16:14).

Thus, we see from the inspired writings that among the persons of the Godhead—who are co-eternal, equal in being, and equal in personhood—there nevertheless exists an order of authority and diversity of responsibility.

7. Did headship in heaven exist before the entrance of sin? Yes. Headship was present before sin, when "peace and joy, in perfect submission to the will of Heaven, existed throughout the angelic host" (4SP 316). We don't know how long this happy state lasted, but it "existed for ages before the entrance of sin" (ibid). We do know that "Lucifer was the covering cherub, the most exalted of the heavenly created beings; he stood nearest the throne of God, and was most closely connected and identified with the administration of God's government, most richly endowed with the glory of His majesty and power" (ST, April 28, 1890).

Before the Fall, God's government was organized and structured. There was a council in which Lucifer was an honored member (GC 669). Lucifer was not a puppet. God gave him power, authority, and command. **Before sin** Lucifer gave commands and "angels delighted to execute his commands" (PP 36), obeying them with "alacrity" (1SP 18). Lucifer "began his work of rebellion with the angels under his command" (1SM 222).

Sin did not change this organization in heaven. The desertion and rebellion of a third of the angels required a reorganization of the angels who remained loyal. This was done at the very start of the war in heaven (Rev 12:7). These loyal "angels were marshaled in companies, each division with a higher commanding angel at its head" (EW 145). Though reconstituted, the structural arrangement of God's government remained the same. Despite Satan's charges, it was not defective and needed no change in its law or its organization.

8. Isn't headship just an idea of Paul, who was a chauvinistic misogynist? No. The headship principle is consistently taught throughout Scripture. Peter taught the same principle: "Likewise, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands, that, even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they

observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. … For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror" (1 Pet. 3:1, 2, 5, 6).

9. In Gen. 2:18, Eve is called Adam's "helper" (*ezer*), a word often used to describe God; does that mean that Eve was like God to Adam? No. The passage says, "The LORD God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him' " (Gen. 2:18). The Hebrew term e*zer* suggests neither superiority nor inferiority; it simply means one who comes to the aid, help, or assistance of another when help is needed. The fact that God is often our helper doesn't mean that every helper is a God to us. A helper can be in authority over the person helped, as when a father helps his son with his homework assignment, or under the authority of the person helped, as when a son helps out in his father's business.

However, the use of the term helper does indicate role differentiation, proving that Eve's role was not the same as Adam's role. A helper is not the person primarily responsible for the task. When a father helps his son with the son's homework, it remains the son's responsibility to complete his homework and turn it in; likewise, when a son helps his father in his father's business, the business remains the father's responsibility.

In the case of Adam and Eve, Eve was created to be Adam's helper, implying that the task of governing Planet Earth remained Adam's responsibility. In other words, Eve was created for Adam: "Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man" (1 Cor. 11:9).

10. In 1 Cor. 11, isn't Paul talking only about relationships between husbands and wives, and not about relationships between men and women in the church? No. 1 Cor. 11:3 appears in the context of discussing church order, not the family. The immediate issue was head-covering in church during worship, not anything pertaining to the home. Women were to cover their heads in church to signify being under authority, but men were not to cover their heads in church.

11. If Jesus is head of the church (Eph. 1:22), why discuss human headship? Because Jesus, the head of the church, works through human agency:

> "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 360).

The Chief Shepherd works through human under-shepherds:

> "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" (1 Pet. 5:1–4).

> "While Christ is the minister in the sanctuary above, he is also, through his delegates, the minister of his church on earth. He speaks … through chosen men, and carries forward his work through them, as when,

> in the days of his humiliation, he moved visibly upon the earth. … 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" (GW 11).

In the presence of Christ as the head of the church, under-shepherds are still needed:

> "To Aaron and Hur, assisted by the elders who had been granted a revelation of God's glory, was given the charge of the people in the absence of Moses. Aaron had long stood side by side with Moses, and Hur was a man who had been entrusted with weighty responsibilities. … **Today as then men of determination are needed—men who will stand stiffly for the truth at all times and under all circumstances, men who, when they see that others are becoming untrue to principle, will lift their voice in warning against the danger of apostasy**" (MS 43, 1907).[3]

12. Didn't Ellen White clearly identify Jesus as the *only* head of the church? The quote in mind is probably this one: "Christ is the only Head of the church" (21MR 274; DA 817; GC 51). The context clarifies her meaning: "He only has the right to demand of man unlimited obedience to His requirements" (21MR 274). Obviously, no mere human put "at the head of the work" has the right to demand "unlimited obedience." The Catholic Church may believe this, but it is not an Adventist belief. Nevertheless, Ellen White was very

3 From Letter 69, 1904, written to J. E. White, Feb. 9, 1904, "Exhortation to Faithfulness to Church Members and Elders," March 12, 1907; cf. 5MR 451.4

clear about the delegated authority of the human leaders of the church:

> "Jesus was given to stand at the head of humanity, by His example to teach what it means to minister. … The great Head of the church superintends His work through the instrumentality of men ordained by God to act as His representatives. … Christ's ministers are the spiritual guardians of the people entrusted to their care. Their work has been likened to that of watchmen" (AA 360).

> "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" (ST, April 7, 1890, par. 6).

One more statement in this regard should be considered: "Christ, not the minister, is the head of the church" (ST, Jan 27, 1890). The context of this statement reveals that Ellen White speaks against an unhealthy dependence on ministers, to the exclusion of personal growth and responsibility. This is not a restriction or definition of leadership, or local church headship, but a reprimand of lethargic, spiritually stunted church members. It is a warning against the all-too-common reality of ministry where the head (the pastor) works without the help of the body of laity! Here is the statement in its full context:

"The success of a church does not depend on the efforts and labor of the living preacher, but it depends upon the piety of the individual members. When the members depend upon the minister as their source of power and efficiency, they will be utterly powerless. They will imbibe his impulses, and be stimulated by his ideas, but when he leaves them, they will find themselves in a more hopeless condition than before they had his labors. I hope that none of the churches in our land will depend upon a minister for support in spiritual things; for this is dangerous. When God gives you light, you should praise him for it. If you extol the messenger, you will be left to barrenness of soul. Just as soon as the members of a church call for the labors of a certain minister, and feel that he must remain with them, it is time that he was removed to another field, that they may learn to exercise the ability which God has given them. Let the people go to work. Let them thank God for the encouragement they have received, and then make it manifest that it has wrought in them a good work. Let each member of the church be a living, active agent for God, both in the church and out of it. We must all be educated to be independent, not helpless and useless. Let it be seen that Christ, not the minister, is the head of the church. The members of the body of Christ have a part to act, and they will not be accounted faithful unless they do act their part. Let a divine work be wrought in every soul, until Christ shall behold his image reflected in his followers."

13. Why do some reject the term "headship"? The term is disliked likely because the concept is disliked. But the fact that Scripture connects male headship in the church with the leadership of Christ and the order of authority within the Godhead itself (1 Cor. 11:3) should be sufficient to establish

headship as a biblical teaching, even if, in our authority-resistant age, many resent it. We can only repeat that the biblical meaning of headship is a positive one, which neither fosters nor condones abuse in any form.

14. Doesn't "the priesthood of all believers" imply that women are now included in a headship ministry? No. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is derived from such passages as Exodus 19:6, where God speaks of Israel's call to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." But this did not mean that every Israelite was called to serve as a priest in the sanctuary, and it certainly did not mean that women could be priests. That role was reserved for the male descendants of Aaron (Exod. 28:1; Num. 3:3).

The New Testament borrows the language of Exod.19:6 in 1 Pet. 2:9, which describes the church as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." But as with ancient Israel, this designation doesn't mean every church member is qualified for every role. According to other New Testament passages, addressing both the family and the faith community, spiritual headship roles are reserved for men (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22–25; 1 Tim. 2:12, 13).

Statements about God's people functioning as kings and priests appear in the book of Revelation (1:6; 5:10; 20:6), but it is always pertaining to final salvation. The twenty-four elders in Rev. chapters 4 and 5 appear to have a priestly role, in that they are depicted holding golden incense burners, representing an intercessory function in relation to "the prayers of the saints" (5:8). But these individuals are represented as those who have received the promises of Jesus to the faithful overcomers in the churches (4:4; cf. 2:10, 26; 3:5,12,21), so they seem to represent redeemed saints who are already enjoying the blessings of the everlasting covenant.

There is nothing about the priesthood of all believers that automatically confers a headship ministry in the church to

every individual. This phrase, when viewed in the light of the biblical consensus, simply refers to the role of Christians in representing God to the world and in having no earthly priest to mediate between them and our great High Priest in heaven, Jesus Christ (Heb. 8:1).

Section 7:
What Ellen White Taught About Gender Roles

A. The Husband Is the Head and the Priest of the Home

Ellen White repeatedly affirmed that the father is the head and priest of the home. "The father, who is the priest of his household, should conduct the morning and evening worship" (CG 521). "In the beginning, the head of each family was considered ruler and priest of his own household" (1SP 53). "As you faithfully do your duty in the home, the father as a priest of the household, the mother as a home missionary" (CH 430). "We women must remember that God has placed us subject to the husband" (5MR 173). "The Scriptures are plain upon the relations and rights of men and women" (1T 421).

> "All members of the family center in the father. He is the lawmaker, illustrating in his own manly bearing the sterner virtues: energy, integrity, honesty, patience, courage, diligence, and practical usefulness. The father is in one sense the priest of the household, laying upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice. The wife and children should be encouraged to unite in this offering and also to engage in the song of praise. Morning and evening the father, as priest of the household, should confess to God the sins committed by himself and his children through the day" (AH 212).

> "**The husband is the head of the family, even 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 this 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 307, 308).

> "The father is to be the houseband of the family. This is his position, and if he is a Christian, he will maintain family government. In every respect his authority is to be recognized. In many families the father's authority is never fully acknowledged, and a series of excuses are offered for the disobedience of the children. In many families the daily life is one of variance, full of the counterworking of the father against the mother and the mother against the father. The mother thinks the father unnecessarily severe and exacting. Why?—Because the children do not acknowledge and reverence the father, who, if he is a Christian, represents the divine authority of God. … The father is to carry out the gracious designs of God, and establish his family in upright principles, that they may have virtuous and well-balanced characters" (RH, March 13, 1894).

Note that the mother performs the priestly function only in the father's absence:

> "Before leaving the house for labor, all the family should be called together; and the father, or the mother in the father's absence, should plead fervently with God to keep them through the day" (CG 519).

In addition to these passages, Ellen White wrote much against husbands abusing their wives. But the fact that there can be abuse does not rearrange the relations of the sexes. Parents can certainly abuse their authority over their children, but this doesn't mean there isn't a legitimate place for parental authority and discipline. On similar grounds, the fact that an elder or pastor can also abuse his power doesn't mean such power has no place in the governance of God's work.

B. Ministers Are to Be Men

"The primary object of our college was to afford **young men an opportunity to study for the ministry** and to prepare young persons of both sexes to become workers in the various branches of the cause" (5T 60).

"Young men must soon bear the burdens older ones have borne. We have lost time in neglecting to bring young men to the front and give them a higher, more solid education" (5T 582).

"Efforts must be made to fit young men for the work. They must come to the front, to lift burdens and responsibilities. Those who are now young must become strong men. They must be able to plan and give counsel" (5T 585).

"Ministers of other denominations spend years in obtaining an education. Our young men must obtain theirs in a short time" (5T 61).

"As young men go forth to preach the truth, you should have seasons of prayer for them" (5T 162).

"God has repeatedly shown that persons should not be encouraged into the field without unmistakable evidence that He has called them. The Lord will not entrust the burden for his flock to unqualified individuals. Those whom God calls must be men of deep experience, tried and proved, men of sound judgment, men who will dare to reprove sin in the spirit of meekness, men who understand how to feed the flock" (1T 209).

C. Women may be called to work as "pastors to the flock of God" in a shepherding and/or nurturing ministry of home visitation.

In regard to colporteuring or canvassing, Ellen White wrote,

> All who desire an opportunity for true ministry, and who will give themselves unreservedly to God, will find in the canvassing work opportunities to speak upon many things pertaining to the future, immortal life. The experience thus gained will be of the greatest value to those who are fitting themselves for the ministry. It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God. As they cherish the thought that Christ is their Companion, a holy awe, a sacred joy, will be felt by them amid all their trying experiences and all their tests. They will learn how to pray as they work. They will be educated in patience, kindness, affability, and helpfulness" (6T 322).

Often cited by proponents of female ordination is the statement that the canvassing work "prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God." What are we to make of this?

When reading both the Bible and Ellen White, the term "pastor" (*poimen,* literally, "shepherd") does not reflect a church office but a spiritual gift. Although we have taken to calling our ordained gospel ministers "pastors," in both the Bible and in Ellen White's writings pastoring is not an office like the elder and bishop/overseer. The pastor has a nurturing function in the church, a gifted role (Eph. 4:11) that can be filled by a person of either sex who has the spiritual gift of nurturing the flock of God. It is in this sense that Ellen White speaks of the canvassing work as preparing women to be "pastors to the flock of God."

In another passage, Ellen White makes a clear distinction between the work of the ordained minister and that of women working as pastors/shepherds to the flock, while affirming the importance and value of both:

> "Some matters have been presented to me in regard to the laborers who are seeking to do all in their power to win souls to Jesus Christ. … 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. Some women are now teaching young women to work successfully as visitors and Bible readers. … This is the grand and noble work that the minister and his wife may qualify themselves to do as faithful shepherds and guardians of the flock" (5MR 326-328).

Women can do the work of visiting homes and conducting Bible studies in the homes, which is a valuable pastoral ministry. Both men and women, according to the above

statements, can have pastoral responsibilities to the Lord's flock. But these responsibilities are not the same. A similar statement is found in 5 Manuscript Releases, p. 325:

> "Letters have come to me from several, asking my advice upon the question, Should ministers' wives adopt infant children? Would I advise them to do this kind of work. To some who were regarding this matter favorably, I answered, No; God would have you help your husband in his work. The Lord has not given you children of your own; His wisdom is not to be questioned. He knows what is best. Consecrate your powers to God as a Christian worker. You can help your husband in many ways. You can support him in his work by working for him, by keeping your intellect improved. By using the ability God has given you, you can be a home-keeper. And more than this, you can help to give the message. There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry. In many respects they would do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God. Husband and wife may unite in this work, and when it is possible, they should. The way is open for consecrated women. But the enemy would be pleased to have the women whom God could use to help hundreds, binding up their time and strength on one helpless little mortal, that requires constant care and attention."

Here again, the ministry that Ellen White is writing of is the pastoral/shepherding ministry of home visitation. She concludes that if God has not seen fit for children to be born to the marriage, the minister's wife should not adopt one to be the entire focus of her nurturing/shepherding instincts, but rather to shepherd the whole flock of God.

We should note that there is no obstacle to paying women for this pastoral/shepherding work. Those who do this work should be paid for their time, be they men or women:

> "Some have felt troubled because Brother and Sister [Haskell] have each been drawing wages from the conference. But it is in harmony with the instruction that has often been given to me, that women who labor with their husbands in gospel work, should be paid for their services. … Women, as well as men, are needed in the work that must be done. Those women who give themselves to the service of the Lord, who labor for the salvation of others by doing house-to-house work, which is as taxing as, and more taxing than standing before a congregation, should receive payment for their labor. If a man is worthy of his hire, so also is a woman" (1MR 263).

> "The tithe should go to those who labor in word and doctrine, be they men or women" (DG 113).

D. Women may work as deaconesses and in a (much-neglected) social welfare ministry.

A closely related ministry that Ellen White mentions women should do is the social welfare ministry of the deacon:

> "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" (RH, July 9, 1895).

It is obvious from the phrase, "they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister," that Ellen White is not here recommending that women usurp the role of the ordained gospel minister. What she is urging here is the true and original work of the deacon.

Today we think of deacons as taking up the offering, tidying up the sanctuary, etc., but the first deacons were appointed to relieve the disciples from the burden of operating the church's food distribution system so that the disciples could concentrate on teaching and preaching the word (Acts 6:1–6). In other words, the first deacons were appointed *to take care of people*—to minister to the practical needs of the poor, the widowed, the elderly—to operate the church's social welfare ministry. White believed that there was still a need for a social welfare ministry in the church and that we needed to "branch out" and meet that need.

When we consider the work of deacons, we should realize that women excel at this work and that much of it can and should be done by capable and consecrated women. There is no biblical obstacle to ordaining women as deaconesses. Paul calls Phoebe a deacon of the church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1). The concept of deaconess is found in the Bible with such examples as Dorcas (Acts 9:36), Lydia (Acts 16:14, 15), and the instruction of Paul in 1 Tim. 5:10.

Ellen White wrote this of deaconesses to A.T. Jones: "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" (21MR 97). When she was living in Australia—including in 1895, when she wrote the words quoted above—she attended services where elders, deacons, *and* deaconesses were set apart by the laying on of hands. Clearly, she had no objection to female deacons. What is forbidden by Scripture, however, is ordaining women to the headship role of elder or bishop/overseer. (1 Tim. 2:11 to 3:7)

When we read Ellen White in context, she confirms what Scripture teaches. Men are the heads and priests of their families, and while the headship roles are limited to men, women can do just as valuable and important a service in pastoral/shepherding ministry, going house to house or in the original social welfare work of the deacon. Ellen White does not contradict Scripture on the roles of the sexes in the church, but rather fleshes them out, suggesting ways that women can and should be involved in ministry. She encourages women to enter these lines of ministry and urges that they be paid for their work. But she never encouraged women to try to usurp the headship offices of the church.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Did Ellen White warn women not to rebel against the biblical gender role distinctions between men and women? Yes.

> "Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband's side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it.

A similar result will be reached by all who are unwilling to take up cheerfully their life duties in accordance with God's plan. In their efforts to reach positions for which He has not fitted them, many are leaving vacant the place where they might be a blessing. In their desire for a higher sphere, many have sacrificed true womanly dignity and nobility of character, and have left undone the very work that Heaven appointed them" (PP 59; see Titus 2:4, 5).

2. Does Ellen White teach that men and women can be involved in ministry without needing ordination? Yes.

"Those who stand as leaders in the church of God are to realize that the Savior's commission is given to all who believe in His name. God will send forth into His vineyard many who have not been dedicated to the ministry by the laying on of hands" (AA 110).

"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 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" (DG 110).

3. Ellen White once stated that men are not always better than women in church management. Does this mean that women should be ordained as local elders and pastors?

"It is not always men who are best adapted to the successful management of a church. If faithful women have more deep piety and true devotion than men, they could indeed by their prayers and their labors do

more than men who are unconsecrated in heart and in life" (10MR 70).

Just because the headship role of elder/bishop/overseer is not open to women does not mean that women are not involved in the management of church business. They are. Much of the day-to-day business of a local church is handled by very capable female church secretaries. Women also serve on local church boards, where their management abilities are very valuable in the oversight of church business. Just as with Lydia (Acts 16:14, 15) in the first century, today there are capable women who run businesses, and their practical management skills can be of value to the church.

But assuming that the phrase "successful management of a church" refers to a headship role, it is true that in exceptional situations, similar to the circumstances that called for Deborah's leadership in ancient Israel, "in the absence of the usual magistrates" (DG 37), qualified men are not available to serve as elders of the church. In such cases, women have had to step into the breach. Recognizing this reality, the *Church Manual* addresses leadership in a local congregation in the absence of a conference pastor or ordained local elder:

"Occasionally no one possesses the experience and qualifications to serve as an elder. Under such circumstances the church should elect a person to be known as 'leader.' In the absence of the pastor or a conference-assigned pastor, the leader is responsible for the services of the church, including business meetings. The leader must either conduct these or arrange for someone else to do so.

"A leader may not preside at any of the church ordinances, administer baptism, conduct the Lord's Supper, perform the marriage ceremony, or preside at

> business meetings where members are disciplined. A request should be made to the conference president for an ordained pastor to preside at such meetings" (2010 edition, pp. 75, 76).

Notice how this statement distinguishes the role of the elected "leader" from that of either an ordained pastor or an ordained local elder. As defined by the above statement, it is certainly possible that a woman could fill the position of "leader." But this exceptional situation cannot be used as license to ordain women, contrary to the clear apostolic directive, as a normal policy of the church.

4. Didn't Ellen White indicate that church structure must be adaptable to changing needs and placed at the service of the people? Yes, but not when these "adaptations" contradict biblical principles and guidelines. Otherwise, these kinds of arguments could be used to justify Cain's worship changes (Gen. 4:3), Aaron's and Jeroboam's golden calf worship with its joyful celebration (Exod. 32; 1 Kin. 12:25–33), King Ahaz's worship adaptations (2 Kin. 16:10–18), or King Saul's response to the crisis worship needs of the people (1 Sam. 15:21).

In addition, those portions of the church order and organization that should be adapted to the circumstances must be differentiated from those that are universal and must not be changed. For example, a church with ten members has different needs than a church with a thousand members. A church in a refugee camp has different needs than a church in rural North Dakota. But all should easily be recognized as Seventh-day Adventist Churches and modeled after the clear instruction in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

5. Ellen White advocates unity in diversity on some matters of biblical interpretation (e.g., 11MR 266). Does this

apply to the issue of women's ordination? The cited statement speaks of how "one man" may err in his understanding of the Scriptures and how this need not create disunity. In the present controversy, we are not dealing with the errors of a single person, but of many persons who have flirted with higher-critical approaches to Scripture and other dangerous theological notions. Such misinterpretations facilitate a general trend away from strict faithfulness to the written counsel of God. The ordination issue is but one example. It is time for the church to return to the clarity of Scripture and the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy.

6. Ellen White wrote that "circumstances alter cases." As the circumstances of Western culture have altered dramatically in recent decades, wouldn't Ellen White, were she with us today, urge that women be given roles identical to men in all areas of ministry? A careful study of the writings of Ellen White indicates that, once duplications are eliminated, there are only two clear examples of this phrase being used in a positive sense.

One of these examples involves counsel to canvassers regarding different approaches to their work being used in different situations (6T 339; see also CM 42). The other is Ellen White's famed letter to the Colorado conference president regarding her occasional use of her own tithe funds to aid needy and neglected ministers, in particular black ministers laboring in the South (2MR 100; see also Arthur L. White, *The Early Elmshaven Years, 1900-1905*, p. 395).

Neither case rises to the level of the divine order of gender authority established at creation and affirmed throughout both Testaments. Different methods of reaching different persons with the same eternal truth and the infrequent—and discreet—appropriation of an inspired prophet's tithe funds to worthy but neglected laborers in no way compares with the present culture-driven, higher-criticism goal of doing

away with gender role distinctions in the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The following use of this phrase may have more relevance to the current denominational controversies:

> "Often the professed followers of Christ are found with hearts hardened and eyes blinded, because they do not obey the truth. Selfish motives and purposes take possession of the mind. In their self-confidence they suppose that their way is the way of wisdom. They are not particular to follow the path that God has marked out. **They declare that circumstances alter cases, and where Satan tempts them to follow worldly principles, they yield**, and making crooked paths for their feet, they lead others astray. The inexperienced follow where they go, supposing that the judgment of Christians so experienced must be wise" (UL 318; see also UL 310; RH Sept. 14, 1905; 18MR 37).

Thus, circumstances do not alter cases when it comes to "the path that God has marked out" through His written counsel. And regarding the issue before us, the inspired pen has indeed marked out a clear path. We have seen that "the Scriptures are plain upon the relations and rights of men and women" (1T 421).

Evangelical scholar John Stott warns: "The danger of declaring any passage of Scripture to have only local (not universal), and only transient (not perpetual) validity is that it opens the door to a wholesale rejection of apostolic teaching, since virtually the whole of the New Testament was addressed to specific situations" (*The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*, 77).

7. Are altered versions of Ellen White's writings being circulated to make it seem she supported women's ordination? Yes. A significantly altered quotation was recently

circulated in an effort to make it appear that Ellen White supported the ordination of women. Here is the altered quote side by side with the original quote. Altered portions are in **underlined-bold**. Italics are original.)[4]

As Recently Altered By the White Estate (*Christ Triumphant*, p. 146)	**As Actually Written by Ellen White** (Unpublished Ms. 163, 1902)
Those placed in *positions of responsibility* should be *men* ***and women*** who fear God, who realize that they are **humans** only, not God. They should be ***people*** *who* ***will*** *rule under God* and for Him. Will they *give expression to the will of God for His people*? Do they allow selfishness to tarnish word and action? Do they, after obtaining the confidence of the people as **leaders** of wisdom who fear God and keep His commandments, belittle the exalted position that the people of God should occupy in these days of peril? Will they through self-confidence become false guideposts, pointing the way to friendship with the world instead of the way to heaven?	Those placed in positions of responsibility should be **men** who fear God, who realize that they are men only, not God. They should be **men** who rule under God and for Him. Will they give expression to the will of God for His people? Do they allow selfishness to tarnish word and action? Do they, after obtaining the confidence of the people as **men** of wisdom, who fear God and keep His commandments, belittle the exalted position that the people of God should occupy in these days of peril? Will they through self-confidence become false guide-posts, pointing the way to friendship with the world instead of the way to heaven?

4 The altered quotation is found in the devotional *Christ Triumphant,* which acknowledges in the introduction that Ellen White's words have been modified to make them "gender neutral." See Angel Rodriquez, *Evaluation of the Arguments Used by Those Opposing the Ordination of Women to the Ministry*, p. 66, January, 2014 TOSC, http://www.adventistarchives.org/evaluation-of-the-arguments-used-by-those-opposing-the-ordination-of-women-to-the-ministry.pdf.

While Ellen White clearly understood and taught that both men and women can occupy positions of responsibility in the church, she was not calling for identical leadership roles in the church for both males and females.

8. Are Ellen White's writings being taken out of context? Yes. Here is one example, "When women are wanted with well-balanced minds, with not a cheap style of education, but with an education fitting them for any position of trust, they are not easily found" (RH, June 21, 1887). This quote is being used to argue that Ellen White believed women should be trained for every office in the church. By implication, this would include that of pastoral ministry, including the track to ordination.

The title of the *Review* article is "Proper Education of the Young." The first paragraph of the article gives us the context:

> "Ministerial labor cannot and should not be entrusted to boys, neither should the work of giving Bible readings be entrusted to inexperienced girls, because they offer their services, and are willing to take responsible positions, but who are wanting in religious experience, without a thorough education and training."

Obviously, Ellen White contemplated a different ministry for each sex: Males would be trained for ministerial labor and females for the role of Bible workers. Elsewhere she explains what she means by the expression "any position of trust." In her words: "Faithful, earnest, and frequent prayer should be offered that these children may be fitted for any position of trust **to which God shall call them**" (ST, June 9, 1881). And God never calls contrary to His Word.

9. Does the Bible authorize women to work as evangelists and Bible workers, as Ellen White recommended? Yes. The

New Testament gives us snapshots of the important work of women in evangelistic outreach. Priscilla, with her husband Aquila, worked with Paul (Acts 18:18) and later taught Apollos the Word more accurately (Acts 18:26). There were many others, such as Euodia and Syntyche, who also served on Paul's evangelistic team (Phi. 4:2, 3). "The elect lady" spoken of by the apostle John was "a helper in the gospel work, a woman of good repute and wide influence" (AA 554).

Aquila and Priscilla were a husband and wife team of evangelists; Andronicus and Junia might have been another. It is wonderful when husbands and wives can work together in ministry.

> "When it is possible, let the minister and his wife go forth together. The wife can often labor by the side of her husband, accomplishing a noble work. She can visit the homes of the people and help the women in these families in a way that her husband cannot" (Ev. 491).

Section 8:
The Ordination Question in Today's Adventist Church

A. History of the Ordination of Women Elders

The story of how the ordination of women as local elders was approved is a story of how the Annual Council exercised authority belonging solely to the General Conference (GC) in session.

In 1984, when the Annual Council, under the influence of the North American Division (NAD), voted in action #272-84GN to allow women to be ordained as local church elders, it was not because the General Conference session had delegated that authority to the Annual Council. According to policy, an action of the Annual Council that makes a major change in church policy, theology, or practice that has a worldwide effect must be affirmed by the next GC session. This did not happen.

A report in *Ministry* magazine described what happened as follows:

> "The recommendations from the special commission on the ordination of women to the gospel ministry were also brought to the session. Although the delegates did not spend a lot of time discussing them, some of the recommendations voted were highly significant. In essence, the recommendations provide for ongoing study of this issue. The next major event in the church's consideration of women's ordination will be the 1989 Annual Council, which will review the further studies made.
>
> "Two of the recommendations are of particular significance: 'Recommended, to institute a reformation

> in the church's ordination practices for the purpose of limiting ordination only to those performing direct pastoral, evangelistic, ecclesiastical, and other clearly ministerial duties.' Clearly, it is a reform whose time has come.
>
> "While the delegates did not endorse the idea of ordaining women, they did urge 'an affirmative action plan' for the involvement of women in the work of the church to be a priority with church leadership, and to request leaders to use their executive influence to open to women all aspects of ministry in the church that do not require ordination.' "[5]

After the 1989 Annual Council recommended that women not be ordained to gospel ministry, the 1990 GC session overwhelming affirmed that recommendation. The 1995 GC session rejected the request from the NAD to be permitted to ordain women independently of what the rest of the world church was doing.

In short, the GC session not only never approved the ordination of women as local church elders, it specifically rejected the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry. **There is no General Conference session action approving either the ordination of women as local elders or as pastors.**

Because the GC session has not approved it, whatever action the Annual Council may have taken in 1984, it has never been validated by the world church, so it fails to qualify as legitimate church policy.

5 https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1985/12/general-conference-session

B. Two Questions About Religious Liberty

1. Should we ordain women because "in many of the Trans-European Division (TED) countries, it is or soon will be illegal to differentiate on the basis of gender"? The European Social Charter is aspirational, not operational, law. It must be implemented country by country, and most jurisdictions, when they enact implementing legislation, are providing religious exemptions. For example, in the United Kingdom, §19 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 contains an exemption to the non-discrimination law for churches that for religious reasons object to ordaining women. Thus the TED cannot legitimately appeal to the European Social Charter as a reason why the church must approve female ordination.

Quite frankly, Europe is not going to force the Roman Catholic Church to ordain female priests, nor will it force the Adventist Church to ordain women ministers. But even if the law purported to force it to ordain women, the question arises: Will the church obey God's law or man's? If we cannot stand against the culture on the issue of female ordination, will we be able to uphold the Sabbath in the face of future opposition?

Discrimination in church employment based upon religious beliefs and scriptural teachings is perfectly proper in American law. See, for example, *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*, 565 U.S. (2012).

2. Would voting for a regional option create legal problems for the church? Yes. Allowing ordination to be decided regionally would create legal problems for the church. To allow ordination regionally would be tantamount to an admission that it is not an issue of faithfulness to Scripture, not a matter of conscience, but merely a matter of cultural

preference. After such a vote, any region that did not want to ordain women would be beyond the help of a religious exception to non-discrimination legislation. It would be difficult to get religious exemption from a non-discrimination law when the church's highest governing body has effectively stated that female ordination is not a religious question but a cultural one.

In addition, the church will be opening itself up to several different kinds of lawsuits. Suppose a woman who is hired and ordained as a minister in one conference desires to pastor in another conference that does not recognize women's ordination. This could be grounds for gender discrimination allegations.

Or suppose that during an interview process, two candidates are interviewed, one being male and the other female. If the male candidate is hired, there will always be a suspicion of discrimination based on gender. Inversely, if a woman is hired and a man had applied for the same position and believes himself to be better qualified, will he sue complaining of reverse discrimination? By recognizing only males as ordination candidates, such gender-discrimination allegations are silenced.

Furthermore, all employers that hire men and women for the same position look to the relative proportion of each. If the company has not hired as many women as men, then when deciding between the two equally qualified candidates, the company will hire the female candidate just to achieve statistical balance. (This, by the way, is why some churches that have agreed to ordain women have gone fairly quickly to a nearly 50/50 distribution of male and female pastors.) Does the Seventh-day Adventist Church wish to be in the position of hiring for appearances' sake, rather than letting the Holy Spirit indicate which men should be hired to preside over the Lord's churches?

C. Church Policy, Recent Events, and the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) Meetings

1. What is current Adventist Church policy? Current Adventist Church policy is that some positions require ordination, and those positions that require ordination are limited to men.

> "The appointment of individuals to serve as Bible instructors or chaplains, or in departmental or pastoral responsibilities, shall not be limited by race or color. Neither shall these positions be limited by gender (except those requiring ordination to the gospel ministry"). See *General Conference Working Policy*, 2013–2014 edition, p. 113.

2. Did the 2014 Autumn Council affirm that women's ordination is an administrative matter rather than an issue of biblical theology? Not at all. In fact, the wording of the resolution to go to the General Conference session of 2015 clearly affirms that the decision to be made, whichever way it goes, will be based on Scripture and the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy. Here is the exact language of the resolution:

> "After your prayerful study on ordination from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the reports of the study commissions, and; After your careful consideration of what is best for the Church and the fulfillment of its mission, Is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No."

3. Was the 2013 election of a woman as president of the Southeastern California Conference in harmony with the constitution and bylaws of the Adventist Church? No. The election of this woman was in direct defiance of General Conference policy. The *Church Manual* is clear that the president of a conference is to be an ordained minister (2010 edition, p. 32). This is why the officers of the General Conference expressed open disapproval of the actions of the conference in question, in their statement, "Moving Forward Together."[6]

4. Is it true that the decisions not to go forward with women's ordination in 1990 and 1995 were due more to pragmatic than biblical reasons? While the wording of the resolutions in 1990 and 1995 did not include language-affirming Scripture as the basis of the action taken, in 1995, two presentations were made to the delegates, one for female ordination and one against. These presentations included a detailed discussion of the biblical evidence, and the anti-women's ordination side clearly carried the day—with 69 percent of the vote.

5. Is it true that the church had no gender-specific ordination requirements before the 1990 and 1995 General Conference Sessions, and none after? *Working Policy* statements prior to 1995 appear not to have included such language. This omission is similar to what we find in early editions of the *Church Manual* regarding such issues as drug trafficking, homosexual practice, and domestic violence. This doesn't mean the church's stand on such issues was ambiguous; to the contrary, it indicates that such things were so far off the church's radar screen that they needed no comment in official policy statements.

6 Adventist News, Oct. 24, 2013, http://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/2013-11-01-moving-forward-together.

Since 1995 the ordination controversy has been very much on the radar screen of the Adventist Church, which doubtless accounts for the very specific language on gender requirements for ministerial ordination now present in the *General Conference Working Policy*.

6. Shouldn't we respect the 1984 Annual Council's decision on the ordaining of women as elders, as we respect the General Conference in session? The minutes show detailed discussions, and the vote has not been challenged in six GC sessions. The authority of a global General Conference session is superior to that of the Annual Council. The difference is like that between a local church board meeting and a local church business meeting. The board meeting is analogous to the Annual Council, while the business meeting is analogous to the GC session.

Ellen White's endorsement of the authority of the General Conference refers quite clearly to the global church in session (9T 260, 261). As Elder Ted Wilson declared at the 2014 Annual Council, "The session owns this issue." It is at that level where this controversy, in all its facets, will need to be addressed and settled.

7. Is it true that at TOSC, the majority of the divisions "expressed a desire to accept a variety of practices, for the sake of the gospel moving forward around the world"? No. The majority of world divisions simply affirmed that they would follow whichever way the world church chose to move on this issue. The initial claim by the Adventist News Network that the majority of world divisions were willing to accept diversity on this issue was quickly taken down after its posting due to its inaccuracy.

8. Weren't the majority of the members of TOSC (62 to 32) in favor of allowing divisions and unions to decide

whether to ordain women as ministers? Yes, but the picture is more complex than that: 54 members agreed that male leadership is God's ideal for the home and the church, while 40 disagreed. Some of those in the group of 40 deny God's ideal of male leadership in the home. All of those 40 reject the idea of male leadership in the church. The group of 40 (pro-women's ordination faction) and the group of the 22 (the "third option" group) strongly disagree as to what Scripture and Ellen White teach. The pro-ordination group did not like the leadership premises of either Group #1 or Group #3. In short, a healthy majority of the TOSC committee upholds the biblical ideal of male leadership in the home and in the church.

9. Is Elder Ted Wilson opposed to women's ordination and attempting to impose his will upon the world church? In the four meetings of the TOSC, Elder Wilson never expressed approval or disapproval of women's ordination. What he has emphasized is that the church operates based on policies and bylaws. Because the world church has voted twice to deny the ordination of women, he has stated that the will of the world church must be respected.

Elder Wilson has also stated repeatedly that the process now in motion regarding the ordination issue is proceeding step by step, based on established and orderly denominational procedures. A motion was made at the 2010 GC session in Atlanta to establish a committee to develop a theology of ordination. This was done through the appointment and deliberations of the TOSC. This committee discussed the issue and presented three different recommendations to the General Conference officers, leaving the latter to decide what to do about them.

These recommendations were then presented to the Annual Council of 2014. A resolution from the officers referring the issue to the 2015 General Conference session in San

Antonio, Texas, was then agreed on by the council by a vote of 243 to 44.

The world church now awaits the decision of its highest governing body—the General Conference in global session. Far from imposing his will on the church, Elder Wilson has acted with restraint and respect for the process now in motion for the resolution of this issue. However, it should be noted that as the elected president, he has the right and duty to counsel the church on any matter. Moreover, he cannot "impose" his will because he only has one vote at a GC session and does not possess veto power.

10. TOSC Group #2 claims that "no entity can be directed against its will to adopt a position other than the one to which the collective conscience of its constituency points," but what is their record with regard to those who conscientiously object to female ordination? Both the history of other denominations and the current experience of many in the Adventist Church indicate quite clearly that those not favoring women's ordination are granted little if any tolerance in territories where a majority of leaders approve the practice. During the past several years, speaking invitations to individuals opposing women's ordination have been withdrawn by Adventist educational institutions that strongly favor the ordination of women, and this disagreement has been cited as cause for the invitation's withdrawal. This intolerance also extends to hiring practices by some institutions and church entities.

11. Why does ordination need to be a global practice? Ordination is never simply a regional issue. Those who are ordained represent the church worldwide; thus, they must be ordained using Bible qualifications upon which the world church agrees. It would be tragic if the church ended up in the situation as described in the book of Judges: "In those

days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25).

12. The church is already ordaining women elders and commissioning women ministers in some parts of the world and not in others, but it hasn't jeopardized the denomination's unity. In fact, the ordination of women as local church elders and the equalizing of the roles of ordained and commissioned ministers has inflicted serious disunity in those parts of the world where it has occurred. To extend this divisive policy to include ordained ministers also, making such decisions regional rather than global, would only intensify the problem. Inconsistency in church policy or practice should not be replaced with more inconsistency, but should be corrected by a consistent, Bible-based policy that applies to the entire world field.

13. Is it true that unions have authority to approve ordinations without regard to gender? No. Unions have no more right to develop their own ordination policies than local churches have the right to develop their own policies for the discipline of local members. It is true that unions are the bodies designated in the church to ultimately approve the ordination of ministerial personnel. But just as local churches are obligated to follow global church policy with regard to the discipline of local members (see *Church Manual*, 2010 edition, p. 63), so unions are obligated to follow the stipulations of the *General Conference Working Policy* (2013–2014 edition, pp. 137, 138) regarding ordination requirements (ibid, p. 113) and all other matters.

D. The Proposed "Third Way" Is Not Biblical

The so-called "third way" option appeared at the final meeting of the TOSC, held on June 2–4, 2014. The result of

the emergence of this group was that the committee, which had been grouped into two factions, was split into three factions:

- The first group held that male leadership in the church is a biblical requirement that we are not at liberty to waive.
- The second group held that there is no biblical teaching of male leadership in the church.
- The third group, the so-called "third way" option, held that there is a biblical pattern of male leadership in the church, but this divine ideal is not always attainable due to pragmatic and cultural considerations, so they would allow for regional or local ordination of women, which is also what the second group wants.

So although the third group largely agreed with the first group as to what Scripture teaches on male leadership, it agreed with the second group's preferred outcome. The "third way" group cited what they believed were Bible examples of God allowing a departure from His ideal.

1. Israel's Demand for a King

One of their examples was that Israel demanded a king contrary to God's plan of a judged theocracy, and God eventually relented, allowing Samuel to anoint Saul as king. While it is true that God allowed Israel to have a king, Bible history records the sad results. In only the fourth generation after the first king was crowned, the kingdom disintegrated, with the ten northern tribes going their own way. They were ripped away from the house of David, given over to idolatry and the effacing of their identity as God's covenant community, eventually going into captivity and completely lost to Bible history.

Is this really the example the "third way" wants the Adventist church to follow? Ellen White comments:

> "The Lord had, through His prophets, foretold that Israel would be governed by a king; but it does not follow that this form of government was best for them or according to His will. He permitted the people to follow their own choice, because they refused to be guided by His counsel. Hosea declares that God gave them a king in His anger (Hos. 13:11). **When men choose to have their own way, without seeking counsel from God, or in opposition to His revealed will, He often grants their desires, in order that, through the bitter experience that follows, they may be led to realize their folly and to repent of their sin.** Human pride and wisdom will prove a dangerous guide. **That which the heart desires contrary to the will of God will in the end be found a curse rather than a blessing**" (PP 605).

2. The Daughters of Zelophehad

The "third way" group also pointed to God's instructions through Moses regarding the five daughters of Zelophehad, that they should have an inheritance despite the fact that Zelophehad left no male heirs. Moses took their petition to the Lord, who granted it (Num. 27). Later, a clarification was sought regarding what would happen if any of these women married, and it was decided that they should marry only within the tribe of Manassah, so that their land would never go to another tribe (Num. 36). The important point is that God Himself made the law in the case of the daughters of Zelophehad. There is nothing in that story that authorizes a departure from the law of God. The daughters of Zelophehad were bound to follow the divine directive, just as the Adventist Church is today.

3. Ruth, King David, and the Moabite Restriction

God commanded that neither Moabites nor Ammonites be allowed into the congregation of Israel for ten generations (Deut. 23:3). Yet Ruth, a Moabite, became a part of Israel, marrying into the lineage of the Messiah, becoming the great grandmother of King David (Matt. 1:5). Does this prove, as supporters of the "third way" claim, that God makes circumstantial exceptions to His ideals?

If we follow biblical chronology, the time period between Moses and Ruth was approximately 300 years. If we understand a generation to be equivalent to the average age at which a man became a father, we learn from the Bible that after the Flood, men began to have children at approximately 30 years of age (Gen. 11:10–24). Using this measure, at least ten generations would have elapsed between the time of Moses and the story of Ruth.

Moreover, ethnic origin was never an issue with God; spiritual allegiance alone mattered, then as now. Those of the heathen who accepted the true God were to be welcomed into the covenant community. In the words of Isaiah:

> "Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants—everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant—even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Isa. 56:6, 7).

4. David, the Showbread, and Christ

The "third way" group argues that David's eating of the showbread (1 Sam. 21:1–9) with Christ's endorsement (Matt. 12:1–4) shows that exceptions to divine law can be made in

emergencies. Commoners were not allowed to eat the showbread (Exod. 29:32, 33; Lev. 24:5–9). Jesus confirms that David's action was "not lawful" (Matt 12:4). David's deceit in regards to the showbread led to the death of 85 priests (1 Sam. 22:6–30)—not exactly a model that we should want to follow. Ellen White concurs:

> "[David] was in constant fear of discovery, and in his extremity he resorted to deception. David told the priest that he had been sent by the king on a secret errand, one which required the utmost expedition. Here he manifested a want of faith in God, and his sin resulted in causing the death of the high priest. Had the facts been plainly stated, Ahimelech would have known what course to pursue to preserve his life. **God requires that truthfulness shall mark His people, even in the greatest peril**" (PP 655, 656).

The context of Christ's recounting of the incident was that the Pharisees had made a false accusation against Jesus and the disciples, accusing them of "doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:2). But those actions had been lawful, in accordance with Deut. 23:25: "When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain." Indeed,

> "The law of God gave the poor a right to a certain portion of the produce of the soil. When hungry, a man was at liberty to go to his neighbor's field or orchard or vineyard, and eat of the grain or fruit to satisfy his hunger. It was in accordance with this permission that the disciples of Jesus plucked and ate of the standing grain as they passed through a field upon the Sabbath day" (PP 531).

Christ's purpose in mentioning David and the showbread was not to endorse David's conduct but to point out that He was a higher King, Priest, and Prophet than David, and was therefore "blameless" like "the priests in the temple" (Matt. 12:5). He was, after all, "One greater than the temple" (Matt. 12:6). Jesus' innocence is contrasted with David's and the temple priest's guilt. Even if Christ had approved of David's conduct, it is not an example for taking an unlawful act and making it the basis of an ongoing church policy. Thus, the story cannot serve the purposes of the "third way" group.

5. John Tay and the Believers on Pitcairn Island

In 1876, James White and J.N. Loughborough, after learning that the descendants of the Bounty mutineers were living on Pitcairn Island, a remote island in the South Pacific, sent a large box of literature to the island. Ten years later, in 1886, an Adventist missionary named John Tay went to the island and taught the people the Adventist message. After five weeks, the islanders wanted to be baptized, but because he was not an ordained minister, John Tay felt he should not baptize them. Later, Ellen White told Tay that in such a remote location in the absence of an ordained minister, it was perfectly appropriate for him to baptize those believers. The promoters of the "third way" option cite this story as an example of Ellen White being flexible regarding ministry and its qualifications.

But Tay's story is hardly analogous to the present clamor for women's ordination. Ellen White said it was permissible for Tay to perform those baptisms because no ordained minister was present and it might be several years before an ordained minister could visit the remote island to baptize those precious souls. (In fact, it was another four years before an ordained minister reached Pitcairn.) By contrast, in those territories where women's ordination is being most vigorously promoted in the Adventist Church, male ministers and

candidates for ministry abound. Indeed, in many of these settings, women are being pushed into key ministerial positions simply to make an ideological point, to further the egalitarian cause in the church, not because men with equal or greater qualifications are unwilling to serve.

6. The "Third Way" Compromise Will Lead to Upheaval

What would likely happen to church unity if this "third option" were adopted, with individual divisions, unions, conferences, following opposite or customized ordination policies? It would signal a return to the days of Israel's judges, when "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25). That was not a time of national honor for Israel but disgrace.

The TOSC Consensus Statement on the theology of ordination affirms that this issue is, in fact, a biblical one. There is much biblical light on this issue, as much as the Sabbath and the state of the dead. Therefore, it must be decided upon the basis of Scripture—not by culture, nor political correctness, nor the desire for "unity." Because this is a biblical issue, a doctrinal issue, the church cannot be of two minds about it. The New Testament Greek word best describing the impact of regional ordination of women is *schisma*—meaning to split, sever, break, or divide. This is how the term is used in 1 Cor. 1:10: "I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no **divisions** among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

E. The China Card

What about China and the successful female pastors working in that territory? *(The contributor answering this question has traveled to China many times, preaching and conducting public evangelism.)*

China is a singular phenomenon that should never be held forth as a model for women's ordination. Keep in mind this is a country where families are still heavily fined for having more than one child. Because of selective abortions, 120 boys are born for every 100 girls, creating a glut of unmarried men.[7] Since the Communists have eased their restrictions against the proclamation of the gospel, virtually every Christian denomination is experiencing explosive growth in China. The Chinese government reports 25 million Christians, 18 million Protestants and 6 million Catholics. Independent estimates all agree that this is a vast underestimation. A conservative figure is closer to 60 million and growing. This means there are already more Chinese Christians worshiping weekly than in the whole of Europe. It is reported that if present trends continue, in 15 years China will be the largest Christian country in the world.[8]

Yet at the same time, all Christian churches in China have a disproportionately high number of women compared to men. The Seventh-day Adventist Church faces a unique challenge in that China requires a six-day workweek, making it very difficult for working age men to become Sabbath-keepers. This has created a vacuum of male leadership in the church. Because it is much easier for women, especially women with children, to attend worship services on Sabbath, the women have had to step into this vacuum of leadership.

Despite the fact there are as many as five women per man in a Chinese Adventist congregation, the church in China is just as divided as North America regarding women's ordination. Most of the women in China doing pastoral work are not ordained, nor are they clamoring for it. Many have refused

7 http://www.forbes.com/sites/china/2011/05/13/chinas-growing-problem-of-too-many-single-men/

8 http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/10776023/China-on-course-to-become-worlds-most-Christian-nation-within-15-years.html

ordination, leaving the baptisms, weddings, and communion services to the comparatively few ordained men.

It is equally important to keep in mind that China does not have full religious freedom. Proselytizing is only permitted in private settings or within registered houses of worship, not in public or unregistered churches. The government does not allow foreign control of religious work inside the country, so the Adventist Church in China does not have the same administrative ties to the world church that most other areas enjoy. The Chinese government does not, at the present time, officially recognize our Chinese Union Mission as the leading agency for our work in China. Church policy and leadership for our members there is largely determined by the religious department of that nation's Communist government. Much of the Adventist Church leadership is appointed and approved by the religious department of the government.

The bottom line is that while women are doing a great work in China, it is a work that has been thrust upon them due to distortions caused by the lack of religious freedom. The normal order of church organization has been a victim of that lack of freedom. In any case, as discussed above, experience never trumps or changes the Word of God. Experience must be subject to the Scriptures. Hence, no amount of female pastoral success, in China or anywhere else, can change the order that God has specified in Scripture for His church.

F. Scholars … or the Plain Meaning of Scripture?

What about all the scholars, theologians, seminary professors, prominent pastors, and university presidents who favor women's ordination?

Many wonder why the church's trained theologians are divided on this issue. Some of these do agree that the Bible teaches male-only ordination to elder/gospel ministry; some do not. But God does not want us to look to humans

for guidance. He wants us to study the Bible for ourselves. After all, it was not theologians but shepherds who attended the birth of Jesus. It was not theologians but fishermen who were called to be His disciples. While we do not denigrate the valuable contributions made by the educated among us, the fact remains that throughout sacred history, theologians and other trained scholars have generally proven to be unreliable guides. Jesus avoided the schools of the rabbis (DA 70; Ev. 55f.), and, in Ellen White's words:

> "To a large degree theology, as studied and taught, is but a record of human speculation, serving only to 'darken counsel by words without knowledge.' Job 38:2. Too often the motive in accumulating these many books is not so much a desire to obtain food for mind and soul, as it is an ambition to become acquainted with philosophers and theologians, a desire to present Christianity to the people in learned terms and propositions" (CT 380).

> "Many a portion of Scripture which learned men pronounce a mystery, or pass over as unimportant, is full of comfort and instruction to him who has been taught in the school of Christ. One reason why many theologians have no clearer understanding of God's word is, they close their eyes to truths which they do not wish to practice. An understanding of Bible truth depends not so much on the power of intellect brought to the search as on the singleness of purpose, the earnest longing after righteousness" (GC 599).

We cannot and must not base our theological conclusions on the opinions of so-called "experts." The fear of the Lord is still the beginning of wisdom (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10). As the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

> "Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him" (1 Cor. 1:26–29 NIV).

The following statement by Ellen White is most sobering on this point:

> "Those to whom the message of truth is spoken seldom ask, 'Is it true?' but, 'By whom is it advocated?' Multitudes estimate it by the numbers who accept it; and the question is still asked, 'Have any of the learned men or religious leaders believed?' Men are no more favorable to real godliness now than in the days of Christ" (DA 459).

In the end, as noted before, "God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support" (GC 595).

Section 9:
Female Ordination — Culture and Consequences

A. The Perils of "Ordination Without Regard to Gender"

Ever since the creation, God's people have consistently believed in a clear distinction of gender roles based upon God's Word. But in the last century, especially in the last couple of generations, progressive theologians have challenged the role distinctions specified in Scripture. Thirty years ago the vast majority of Seventh-day Adventist professors agreed that it was unbiblical for women to be ordained to gospel ministry. This was supported by two votes at two successive General Conference sessions, the last one 20 years ago.

Which has changed, the Bible or our culture? Obviously, Scripture has not changed, but the culture has changed radically. Those who want to keep up with the culture find themselves needing to radically re-interpret the Word of God. But we have been cautioned that "all who exalt their own opinions above divine revelation, all who would change the plain meaning of Scripture to suit their own convenience, or for the sake of conforming to the world, are taking upon themselves a fearful responsibility" (GC 268).

The call to ordain "without regard to gender" opens the door to transgenderism in the church. The term "gender" has been re-defined and no longer means only the male or female biological sex. It now stands also for subjective, self-defined sexual identity. A man may inhabit a male body with XY chromosomes, but if he identifies as a woman, then, according to the latest "civil rights" enthusiasm, he must be treated as a woman. Likewise, a woman who inhabits a female body but subjectively feels like a man will self-define her gender

as male. This is what "gender" has come to mean: not an objective biological fact but a subjective mental feeling. If the church adopts a policy of ordaining "without regard to gender," it becomes more vulnerable to this redefinition of gender concepts.

B. Women's Ordination and Homosexuality

The purported interchangeability of the sexes, which is what the push for women's ordination is based on, denigrates the created gender differences between men and women. This blurring of sex roles in the church (compounded by the push of media, government, big business, Hollywood, etc., to eradicate all gender roles in society) leads to the blurring of sex differences in more basic ways. If men and women are interchangeable, why shouldn't two women get married, or two men? If men and women are interchangeable, what is wrong with a family having two moms or two dads, instead of a mother and a father? If men and women are interchangeable, homosexuality seems a trivial matter indeed.

To allow the notion that men and women are interchangeable is to lay the philosophical groundwork for the normalization of homosexuality. The bulwark against homosexuality is not the handful of texts that condemn the act of sodomy (which, by the way, are certainly no more numerous than the texts that specify male leadership in the church), but rather the whole biblical patriarchal worldview, which holds that men and women are created as such and the differences between them are not to be eradicated. The tsunami of open homosexual conduct that the Western world has witnessed, beginning with the 1969 Stonewall riot in New York and waxing bolder with each passing decade, is largely a result of the collapse of patriarchal norms in society and the denial of created sex differences. Interestingly, Ellen White warned long ago that, "I was referred to Romans 1:18–32 as a true

description of the world previous to the second appearing of Christ" (CG 440).

The connection between the erosion of biblical patriarchy and the acceptance of homosexual conduct was recently remarked upon in in this way:

> "For many evangelicals, the marriage debate isn't really about marriage or families or sex—it is about the Bible itself. And that makes many evangelicals all the more uncompromising. The roots of the conflict are deeply theological. …
>
> "And there is another, just as fundamental, obstacle. So far no Christian tradition has been able to embrace the LGBT community without first changing its views about women. The same reasoning that concludes that homosexuality is sin is also behind the traditional evangelical view that husbands are the spiritual leaders of marriages and men are the leaders in churches. …
>
> " 'It is not an accident that the women's-liberation movement preceded the gay-liberation movement,' [Episcopal Bishop Eugene] Robinson says. 'Discriminatory attitudes and treatment of LGBT people is rooted in patriarchy, and in order to embrace and affirm gays, evangelicals will have to address their own patriarchy and sexism, not just their condemnation of LGBT people' " (Elizabeth Dias, "A Change of Heart: Inside the evangelical war over gay marriage" *Time*, Jan. 26, 2015, pp. 47-48.)

The fact that the ordination of women leads to the normalization of homosexuality is attested by the history of denominations such as the Episcopalians, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, and United Church of Christ, and the

fact that denominations such as the Methodists—which long ago accepted women's ordination to the gospel ministry—now face major internal pressure to embrace homosexual relationships as acceptable for the Christian.

It is fascinating that a proposal is now making its way through various committees of the United Methodist Church to allow a "third way" regarding the issue of homosexuality. Like the "third way" option some have proposed in Adventism regarding women's ordination, this Methodist proposal would retain affirmation in official documents of the church's historical opposition to homosexual practice, but would—if approved—permit individual clergy to perform same-sex marriages if they wish and allow local Conferences to ordain gay clergy if they so choose.[9] Whether such compromise involves women's ordination or homosexual practice, in Adventism or Methodism, the consequence would be administrative chaos, a confused spiritual witness, and one giant step toward the eventual full acceptance of practices clearly forbidden in the Word of God.

C. Female Ordination Not a Catalyst of Church Growth

Nearly all denominations that have ordained women have experienced both the collapse of biblical authority in their witness to the world and a major loss of membership and relevance to society. Mainline denominations in America, including the Episcopalians, United Methodists, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, and the United Church of Christ, bear painful testimony to this fact. A liberal member of the Anglican Synod made a telling acknowledgment:

> "I do not want the Church to vote to shrink more, and there is no doubt that the ordination of women has

9 http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/church-body-proposes-more-open-stance-on-homosexuality

> not had the entirely positive effect that was anticipated. It has not led to an increase in the membership or the effectiveness of our church, however good most women priests have been. The decline in numbers and in status and in the respect in which we are held by ordinary citizens who are not active members has become precipitous."[10]

The liberal branch of Presbyterianism in America began ordaining women to the ministry in 1956, and by 2001 there were almost as many women as men among their clergy. But during that same time, they witnessed a 40-year decline in membership. In 1968, there were more than 4 million members, or almost 2 percent of the U.S. population; today their membership hovers around 2 million, or about 0.6 percent of the U.S. population. Their membership was halved, and their percentage of the population was reduced by more than two-thirds.

Likewise, the United Methodists began ordaining women to ministry in 1956, and first ordained a female bishop in 1980. Their U.S. membership has declined every year since 1968, from around 11 million (5 percent of the then population) to 7.8 million (2.5 percent of the current population). The Episcopal Church, the American branch of Anglicanism, began ordaining female priests in 1974. Their membership has since declined from about 3.2 million to about 1.95 million.[11]

If the record of other denominations is any clue, ordaining women to the gospel ministry will not help Adventists reach more people. Because the ordination of women requires departure from strict faithfulness to Scripture, churches that

10 http://anglicanink.com/article/liberal-member-synod-explains-his-no-vote-women-bishops

11 http://advindicate.com/articles/1592?rq=the%20Adventist%20Arab%20Spring

have gone that direction have weakened their witness to the world; they have increasingly conformed to the surrounding culture and, hence, have become irrelevant. By and large, they are rapidly shrinking in absolute numbers, but even faster as a percentage of the population. Even the non-religious can see that an organization that stands for nothing ends up falling for anything.

The pattern seen in other denominations is already echoed in the Seventh-day Church. Generally speaking, the areas of the world where the Adventist Church is experiencing the most rapid growth are not promoting women's ordination. By contrast, territories where agitation for this practice is strongest—including Germany, the Netherlands, North America, and Australia—have comparatively stagnant church growth.

But even if disregarding God's instruction should greatly increase church membership, it should not be considered. The experience of Abraham teaches the foolishness of disregarding God's instruction in an effort to fulfill God's promise of growth.

As a result of taking a second wife, Abraham's family did grow. Ishmael was born. He was even circumcised. But this growth did not strengthen God's people, for Ishmael began to mock and persecute the true child of promise. Nor did the growth last, for Ishmael and his mother had to be cast out of the camp of Abraham.

D. Female Clergy a Liberalizing Force

A thoroughly studied and well-known phenomenon in secular politics is that there is a "gender gap." Women tend to vote more liberal, whereas men tend to vote more conservative. A question that has arisen in connection with the women's ordination issue is whether female ministers would be generally more theologically liberal or more theologically conservative than their male counterparts—or would there even be a difference?

What little research there is on this issue indicates that female pastors tend to be more liberal than their male counterparts. Several years ago, a study of both male and female clergy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland offered considerable evidence for the observation that women clergy tend to be more theologically liberal than their male colleagues in ministry.[12]

Based on surveys conducted in 2002, 2006, and 2010, the study found that "clergywomen are changing the Church in a clearly more liberal direction. They do it in various areas of church life; they change the perception of faith and dogma, the policies of the Church as well as daily practices in parishes. Clergymen are notably more traditional in their orientation, even young clergymen. Therefore it is especially the female clergy who serve as agents of religious change in the Church."

The surveys reported by the article note that women clergy tend to read their Bibles less than their male counterparts, are less likely than male ministers to believe in the literal existence of Satan, hell, and the literal return of Jesus to this earth, and tend to be more supportive than male clergy of accepting and formally recognizing homosexual couples within church fellowship.

In all, the data assembled in this article demonstrates that, at least in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, women in ministry tend to be less insistent on doctrinal and moral rectitude and more inclined toward a theologically indifferent, morally ambiguous spirituality than their male colleagues. The "gender gap," it turns out, exists in religion as well as in politics.

E. Will the Church Lose Young People Over This Issue?

If the church adopts women's ordination, it risks alienating its most earnest, consecrated young people committed to Jesus and to the supremacy of sound Bible teaching in the life

12 http://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/2/3/358/pdf

of the church. Many Adventist young people have seen contemporary culture up close and are grieved to see how far it has infiltrated their church. They long for something better.

Let's also keep in mind that the majority of Adventist young people are found outside of the two or three divisions whose present leadership is most keen on the ordination of women. And even within those two or three divisions, large numbers of dedicated young people have been drawn to such elements as the Generation of Youth for Christ (GYC) movement, which has led thousands of youth and young adults to a deeper commitment to Scripture, the writings of Ellen White, and the fundamental beliefs of the church. Truth ultimately draws to Jesus; error draws to trendy ideologies of convenience and self-fulfillment.

The question is never, Who will be offended by God's revealed truth? Rather, we must always ask, Who will *follow* Jesus' revealed truth? Idealistic, thoughtful young people will not be fooled by halfway solutions. The consecrated of all ages will embrace a truly biblical answer to the present dilemma. Truth will prove highly attractive to all generations and seekers of biblical fidelity.

F. "Fairness" or Faithfulness to Scripture

Some charge that the church is "discriminating" against women. But it is dangerous to use human constructs and notions of justice when addressing spiritual topics. We are not bound, as God's church, to adhere to some cultural standard of equality. Indeed, the church discriminates all the time when it hires and fires personnel on the basis of its biblical teachings and moral standards.

Both Matthias and Joseph were qualified to be apostles (Acts 1:23). But God selected only Matthias to be ordained to that position (Acts 1:26). In Antioch there were five prophets and teachers who were qualified for ordination (Acts 13:1),

but only Paul and Barnabas were selected (Acts 13:2). Joseph—and the rest of the 120 in the upper room who were also not selected—were not being snubbed. The three prophets and teachers in Antioch who were not selected—as well as the rest of the men and women in the Antioch church who also were not selected—were not being discriminated against. Ordination is not our purpose for living. It is not necessary for salvation. God promises salvation, not ordination, to all who believe (John 3:16,17; Acts 13:39).

Ordination is not God's plan for all; it is His plan for some. Christianity is marked by contentment with God's plan for our lives. A key evidence of Satan's work is discontentment and dissatisfaction with our circumstances and God's will for the church's faith and practice.

There is no right to ordination. The woman who wants to be ordained is in no worse a situation than the male ministerial candidate, who believes he is called to ministry, even obtains the necessary education, and shows some signs of being called to the ministry, but he is still not hired by a conference to be a minister. Likewise, the licensed male minister who has worked in ministry for years but is never ordained. In neither of these cases has the church violated the person's rights or freedoms. Such persons are always free to perform lay ministry in their local churches and beyond, and to thus advance the Lord's cause in many lines. It has never been the practice of our conferences to guarantee employment solely based on an individual obtaining a ministerial education or their sincerely held conviction that God has called them to the ministry. God calls people, yes, but only within the parameters of His Word.

It is said that God is not arbitrary, hence, He would not refuse ordination to well-qualified women. Was God arbitrary when He gave to men and women different roles in the beginning? Or when He called out to Adam first at the time he and Eve were attempting to hide from His presence? Was

God arbitrary to designate Adam as the one through whom sin and death entered this world, despite the fact that Eve was the first to sin? Was He arbitrary to designate men as the heads of both the family and the church (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22–25; 1 Tim. 2:12, 13; 1 Peter 3:1–7)? As subjects of God's kingdom, it is our task by His grace to conform our world-view to God's, not His to ours.

Section 10:
The Way Forward

A. Female Ordination Is Not an Irresistible or Irreversible Trend

The good news is that, despite the fact that some regions of the church have rushed ahead with female ordination, we don't have to continue down the path of erasing gender distinctions in the church. Even churches that have started down the road of female ordination have been able to check themselves and reverse course. Like other denominations, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) was following the cultural trends of the late 20th Century. On August 9, 1964, Addie Davis was ordained at Watts Street Baptist Church in Durham, North Carolina. By the year 2000, there were 1,600 ordained women serving some of the roughly 41,100 churches. But after a careful church-wide study in the year 2000, the Baptists clearly saw the connection between this issue, the authority of Scripture, and the homosexual movement. The SBC had over 1,000 women ordained to the ministry at the time and still made a course-correction. As a result the historic biblical position was officially adopted and became a part of their statement of belief.

Here is the key phrase from their statement: "While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture." Existing female pastors were allowed to remain, but no new female pastors would be ordained. After they made that statement, their church attendance dramatically increased over the next several years. The SBC is the largest Protestant denomination in America, with about 16 million members.[13]

13 Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, http://www. religioustolerance.org/femclrg13.htm; accessed November 3, 2014

One other example stands out, the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod. After an epic battle, teachers using the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation were discontinued at their primary theological seminary. Several of those teachers went on to become part of a now declining Lutheran denomination (ELCA), which ordains women and, more recently, practicing homosexuals. Missouri Synod Lutherans, however, do not practice women's ordination.

B. What should be done for women who are already in headship roles?

Those who qualify on the basis of faithfulness to inspired counsel and the church's fundamental beliefs can and should be reassigned to positions in church employment consistent with biblical gender role distinctions. The issue of local female elders can easily be solved by not ordaining more female elders and not re-nominating the existing female elders to office at the end of their current terms. A number of women elders in recent months, learning of the biblical position on gender authority, have resigned their positions and pledged to accept only church offices consistent with biblical gender identity.

C. Must women who lead worship services step aside as we return to the Bible standard?

No. Women can guide the congregation in worship and presenting a message without being ordained to the same role as the male elder. They can serve in other ministries of the church without being ordained as elders or overseers of the flock. Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, led in the worship of ancient Israel (Exod.15:20, 21). But when she and Aaron disputed God's order of authority in the Israelite community—a complaint Miriam initiated (PP 382)—the

Lord struck her with leprosy (Num. 12:10). Significantly, the objections of Miriam and Aaron to Moses' authority were couched in egalitarian tones: "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" (Num. 12:2). Like the subsequent rebellion of Korah and the original rebellion in heaven, the resistance of Moses' siblings to his God-ordained authority was a challenge to God's established order.

D. A Note on Church Unity

Jesus prayed passionately for unity among His followers (John 17:20–23). The unity He sought for His church was modeled on the unity He shared with His Father. Personal agendas must be set aside in light of this plea. Jesus' prayer calls His church to unity in speech, "that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions" (1 Cor. 1:10); unity in thought, "that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:2; 4:2; Rom. 12:16); unity in belief, theological pluralism was not endorsed in the New Testament, "Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph. 4:13; 1 Tim. 1:3, 20; 4:1, 6; 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:17; Titus 1:9–11; Rom.16:17); and unity in the diversity of spiritual gifts, "There are diversities of gifts" (1 Cor. 12:4).

It is in this context that we find the appeal "that there should be no schism in the body" (1 Cor. 12:25). Ellen White comments on the diversity among Jesus' disciples as follows:

> "In these first disciples was presented marked diversity. … In order successfully to carry forward the work to which they had been called, these men, differing in natural characteristics and in habits of life, needed to come into unity of feeling, thought, and action.

> This unity it was Christ's object to secure. To this end He sought to bring them into unity with Himself" (AA 20, 21).

To lower this standard for unity would signal a surrender to Satan and a defeat for the cause of Christ. It would plunge Jesus' church into the mire of congregationalism. The fact that the Adventist Church has 18 million members, from every culture on earth, is no reason to modify Christ's prayer. Rather, we ought to be humbled by this fact and driven to our knees, seeking the promise of revival and reformation. Again, the pen of inspiration tells us:

> "United action is essential. An army in which every part acts without reference to the other parts, has no real strength. In order to add new territory to Christ's kingdom, His soldiers must act in concert. … He calls for a united army, which moves steadily forward, not for a company composed of independent atoms" (4BC 1146).

The world church needs a solid policy, one consistently applied throughout all divisions—a policy that is Bible-based and theological in nature. Moreover, the policy needs to be based on a collaborative spirit between the various cultures so that the church finds unity not in diversity, but rather, in spite of it. This requires total surrender to what the Scriptures state, even when they appear to be in conflict with cultural traditions and norms.

Jesus' prayer for the unity of His followers was based on their sanctification through His Father's Word of truth (John 17:17–21). There is no other unity that God accepts among His people. Ellen White confirms these admonitions of our Lord in the following ways:

"Christ calls for unity. But He does not call for us to unify on wrong practices. The God of heaven draws a sharp contrast between pure, elevating, ennobling truth and false, misleading doctrines. He calls sin and impenitence by the right name. He does not gloss over wrongdoing with a coat of untempered mortar. I urge our brethren to unify upon a true, scriptural basis" (1SM 175).

"Jesus prayed that His followers might be one; but we are not to sacrifice the truth in order to secure this union; for we are to be sanctified through the truth. Here is the foundation of all true peace. Human wisdom would change all this, pronouncing this basis too narrow. Men would try to effect unity through concession to popular opinion, through compromise with the world, a sacrifice of vital godliness. But truth is God's basis for the unity of His people" (OHC 329).

"To secure peace and unity [the early Christians] were ready to make any concession consistent with fidelity to God; but they felt that even peace would be too dearly purchased at the sacrifice of principle. If unity could be secured only by the compromise of truth and righteousness, then let there be difference, and even war" (GC 45).

"We cannot purchase peace and unity by sacrificing the truth. The conflict may be long and painful, but at any cost we must hold fast to the Word of God" (HS 197).

E. Is women's ordination worth splitting the church over?

The Adventist Church must base its practice not on culture but on the teaching of the Word of God. There is one primary, authoritative revelation for all the world—the Bible, leading to one faith (Eph. 4:5). From front to back, the Holy Scriptures emphasize not diversity of belief, but the urgent necessity of biblically qualified teachers promoting sound doctrine and practice. The question of gospel order in the management of the church is one of utmost importance; it is not a distraction from the mission of the church:

> "It was the highest sin to rebel against His order and will" (EW 145).
>
> "Christ designs that heaven's order, heaven's plan of government, heaven's divine harmony shall be represented in His church on earth" (DA 680).
>
> "You have no right to manage, unless you manage in God's order" (GCB, April 3, 1901, par. 24).

What we are witnessing in the Adventist Church right now is not a split, but the business end of a long process of erosion. Through a refusal of certain segments of the church to accept the Spirit-led decisions of previous General Conference sessions, the push for women's ordination has persisted and has become entrenched. It is the refusal of some to accept the decision of the church on this matter that has created tension in our midst. The present crisis only reveals the *existing* division.

The real issue is much larger than women's ordination: How do we understand the identity of Jesus, His purpose, the mission of His church, the authority of Scripture, and

a sound approach to its interpretation? That issue is worth splitting the church over, should it come to that. Compromise would not spell Christian courtesy or community-necessitated tolerance. Compromise would threaten the very unity we seek.

If God wanted to introduce a change in the practice of the church because it was theologically problematic, why did He not do it in the early church and have the teaching recorded in the New Testament, rather than waiting 2,000 years to do so in an extra-biblical way, following the lead of secular belief systems rather than Bible precedents and theology? From a biblical perspective, one could expect that God would give the necessary instruction for His church to do the right thing from the beginning. Amos 3:7 declares, "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets."

In the absence of such instruction, the safer course is not to depart from what God has revealed, even if the world does not understand. If it were unjust, God would not have inaugurated the headship model or practiced it Himself. Submission to the divine model, practicing what Jesus Himself and the apostolic church practiced, can never be wrong nor misdirected.

We simply need to bring ourselves into right relationship with God, so we can see things as He does. Viewed from God's omniscient perspective, the model of gender role distinctions serves a larger purpose that we need to accept by faith and trust in Him. His Word should be the ultimate determiner of correct practice, not worldly notions of equality and justice.

For additional Bible-based and historical study resources, visit http://ordinationtruth.com, operated by the Council of Adventist Pastors.