

Complementarian Positions on the Ordination of Women

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The issue of the ordination of women, which is part of a modern trend in society, is currently presenting a challenge to the unity of the Seventh-day Church. Competent theologians and faithful members are found on both sides of the issue. Both sides, egalitarians and complementarians, agree that (1) Scripture is the norm by which all issues should be decided, (2) Men and women are equal in nature and value, all are created in God's image and are equally saved by the blood of Jesus (Gen 1:26, 27; Gal 3:28), (3) Both men and women have been called to soul-winning ministry, and all are encouraged to utilize their spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:4-11), and (4) Ordination does not confer any special grace or holiness upon the one ordained. Where the two sides differ is whether men and women have different, God-given functions and specifically whether women can be ordained as elders/ministers/pastor.

Issues of Hermeneutics

Before we look at the textual arguments for women's ordination, we need to consider the question of hermeneutics. Jiri Moskala, dean of the theological seminary at Andrews University, correctly noted, "the issue of the ordination of women is first of all a hermeneutical issue."¹ Seventh-day Adventists generally use the historical-grammatical method of interpretation. In 1986, the Annual Council in Rio de Janeiro approved the *Methods of Bible Study* document which outlines the components of the historical-grammatical method. It states that the student should "seek to grasp the simple, most obvious meaning of the biblical passage being studied" (4 c). It further advises: "Recognize that the Bible is its own interpreter and that the meaning of words, texts, and passages is best determined by diligently comparing scripture with scripture" (4 e).² The principles of the grammatical-historical method, enunciated in the Rio document, are not new; they have been used by Protestants since the time of the Reformation.

¹ Jiri Moskala, "Back to Creation: Toward a Consistent Adventist Creation—Fall—Re-Creation Hermeneutic," paper presented at the TOSC meeting, July 2013, 2.

² George W. Reid, ed., *Understanding Scripture* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2005), 332.

Recently, I read part of the *NAD Theology of Ordination Report*. I was surprised to see that it introduces a new method of interpreting the Bible which is described as a “principle-based, contextual, linguistic and historical-cultural” method, or for short the “Principle-based Reading” of Scripture.³ One of the principles on which this method is based is “the complete reliability and trustworthiness of the Bible in terms of its salvific message. . . .”⁴ That means, the Bible is only completely reliable when it comes to the message of salvation, in matters of history, science, or the male/female roles, it is not completely trustworthy. This method sees the Bible as culturally conditioned, at least in those texts that deal with gender issues, and in some cases it denies the plain reading of the text and abandons the Scripture-interprets-Scripture principle.

I say in some cases because the report states: “A plain and literal reading strategy would be sufficient to understand most of the Bible. Yet the committee believes that there are occasions when we should employ principle-based reading because the passage calls for an understanding of the historical and contextual setting.”⁵ According to the Rio document, whenever we interpret (exegete) a text we need to take into consideration the context and the historical circumstances. It states: “In connection with the study of the biblical text, explore the historical and cultural factors. Archaeology, anthropology, and history may contribute to understanding the meaning of the text.”⁶ Adventists generally use this method when interpreting Scripture. So, why is there a need for a new method? The differences between the two methods, in my opinion, are twofold. In contrast to the grammatical-historical method, the “Principle-based Reading” of Scripture sees the Bible as reliable and trustworthy only in matters of salvation, and there is a strong emphasis on Scripture as culturally conditioned. In regard to the ordination of women, it is clearly stated that “with the use of this approach, no conclusive evidence prohibiting the ordination of women can be found in the Bible.”⁷ In other words, with

³ *Theology of Ordination Study Committee Report* (Silver Spring, MD: North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, 2013), 25.

⁴ *Ibid.*,

⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁶ Reid, 333.

⁷ *Theology of Ordination Study Committee Report*, 25.

the help of the “Principle-based Reading” method all the texts that are used by complementarians against the ordination of women are reinterpreted and explained away.

It is unfortunate that the craze for gender-inclusiveness has reached the writings of Ellen White. This muddies the waters of our discussion. For example, in manuscript 163, 1902 Ellen White wrote, “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.” When this was published with gender-inclusiveness in Christ triumphant it was changed to, “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.” I wonder what Ellen White would say to this?

Textual Issues

We are not able to address every issue in the debate in this paper; therefore, we have selected a number of important statements made in the egalitarian papers presented to TOSC. Those who support the ordination of women as elders/ministers/pastor claim among other things that:

1. According to Genesis 1 there existed full equality between man and woman in the Garden of Eden in “resemblance/constitution, in relationship, and in representation/function.”⁸
2. Adam and Eve served as priests in the pre-fall Eden sanctuary.⁹
3. Male headship did not exist in the Garden of Eden; it is a result of the fall and applies only to the marriage relationship and not to the church.¹⁰
4. The qualification lists in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:1-11 are gender neutral; therefore they do not need to exclude women from serving in these ministries.¹¹
5. Junia in Romans 16 was a female apostle.¹²
6. Galatians 3:26-29 applies not only to salvation, but it also abolishes the subordination of “females to males.”¹³

⁸ Richard Davidson, “Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors,” TOSC paper, July 2013, 5.

⁹ Ibid., 17.

¹⁰ Ibid., 28, 29

¹¹ Teresa Reeve, “Shall the Church Ordain Women as Pastors,” TOSC paper, July 2013, 8.

¹² Ibid., 23

¹³ Jiri Moskala, “Back to Creation,” TOSC paper, July 2013, 23

7. 1 Timothy 2:12-14 applies only to a specific situation in Ephesus and does not refer to the relationship that should universally exist between men and women.¹⁴
8. The priesthood of all believers permits women to be ordained as elders/ministers.¹⁵
9. Ministry in the New Testament Church was non-hierarchical.¹⁶
10. Head in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 has the meaning of source rather than spiritual authority.¹⁷

1. According to Genesis 1, full equality between man and woman existed in the Garden of Eden in “resemblance/constitution, in relationship, and in representation/function.”

Egalitarians and complementarians agree that God created man and woman equal in nature and worth, both man and woman were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27), but complementarians deny equality in function. They believe that already in the Garden of Eden God assigned different roles or functions to man and woman, one of which was the headship of Adam. This is based on the following facts:

- a. The order and mode of creation: Man was created out of the dust of the earth before Eve was created from a rib of Adam (Gen 2:7, 22). Paul, under inspiration, uses this fact in 1 Timothy 2:12, 13 in his argument that women are not to have authority over men, whatever the specific situation he addresses may have been.

To argue that in Genesis 2 the order and mode of creation is not an argument for role distinction, including the headship of man, flies in the face of Paul’s inspired counsel in 1 Timothy 2. The context and a straightforward reading of the passage clearly indicates that Paul was giving reasons for his statement in verse 12: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.” He provides two reasons: (1) “Adam was formed first, then Eve;” and (2) “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression” (1Tim 2:13, 14).

- b. Their sexuality, male and female, indicates different functions and responsibilities (Gen 1:27, 28). However, difference in responsibility does not imply superiority or inferiority. “When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess neither

¹⁴ Carl Cosaert, “Paul, Women, and the Ephesian Church,” TOSC paper, July 2013, 36.

¹⁵ Reeve, 26-28

¹⁶ Darius Jankiewicz, “Authority of the Christian Leader,” TOSC paper, July 2013, 15

¹⁷ Reeve, 30, 31.

- inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that in all things she should be his equal.”¹⁸ Yet, Ellen White also wrote about Adam’s position before the Fall: “Under God, Adam was to stand at the head of the earthly family, to maintain the principles of the heavenly family.”¹⁹ She saw no contradiction between “being equal in all things” (no superiority or inferiority) and Adam’s headship in the Garden of Eden.
- c. Woman was created for man as a helper (Gen 2:18). Man is never said to be a helper of his wife. Whether in Genesis 2 or elsewhere, the one who gives help and the one who is helped cannot have the same level of responsibility. Craig L. Blomberg notes that “what makes an ‘ezer a ‘helper’ in each context is that he or she comes to the aid of someone else who bears the primary responsibility for the activity in question.”²⁰ “A helper suitable for him” (Gen 2:18) indicates functional differentiation. When God is the helper (‘ezer, Ps 30:11; 54:4), the functions of God and Israel are not the same. The same is true for the relationship between Adam and Eve, they had different functions. To argue that the word ‘ezer never refers to a subordinate person misses the point, the issue is functional difference. Furthermore, the argument is based on the unproven assumption that Adam and Eve were equal in function, which is the point to be proven. Hence, this is a circular argument.
 - d. God brought Eve to Adam, thereby putting her in his care (v. 22). However the text is read, it is difficult to deny that the man is central to the creation of the woman. If *he* is created first, and if *she* is created *for* him and *from* him, then the platform is already set for a role differentiation between the partners, their equality in nature and value notwithstanding.
 - e. Eve needed protection. Ellen White wrote, “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.”²¹

¹⁸ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 3:484

¹⁹ Idem, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1943), 33.

²⁰ Craig L. Blomberg, “Women in Ministry: A Complementarian Perspective,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, rev. ed., ed. Stanley N. Gundry and James R. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 129-130.

²¹ Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1952), 25.

The headship of Adam in the Garden of Eden is not just an Adventist complementarian position. Many scholars in other churches share this view. In fact, the historical-critical and feminist scholar Rosemary Radford Reuther found it necessary to abandon a high view of Scripture because she clearly identified the principle of headship as being built into the Genesis 2 record. She wrote, “Even in the original, unfallen creation, women would have been subordinate and under the domination of man.”²² A few pages further she stated, “Male-female hierarchy was not just a product of sin, it was a part of the natural order created by God.”²³

Adam’s headship in the Garden of Eden is clearly confirmed by Ellen White:

Under God, Adam was to stand at the head of the earthly family, to maintain the principles of the heavenly family. This would have brought peace and happiness. . . . When Adam sinned, man broke away from the heaven-ordained center. A demon became the central power in the world. Where God's throne should have been, Satan placed his throne.²⁴

How much clearer could she have said it? Before sin, “Adam was to stand at the head of the earthly family.” A summary of pre-Fall headship evidence from Ellen G. White may be helpful here:

1. Adam was to stand at the **head** of the earthly family (6T 236)
2. Adam [was] the **monarch** of the world (ST Apr. 29, 1875).
3. Adam was the **vicegerent** of the Creator (DA 129).
4. The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the **father and representative** of the whole human family (PP 48).
5. Adam was **crowned king** in Eden (1BC 1082).
6. [God] made Adam the **rightful sovereign** over all the works of His hands (1BC 1082).
7. [God] made him **ruler** over the earth (PP 59).
8. Adam was **lord** in his beautiful domain (FE 38).

None of these functions are applied to Eve. Yes, Eve was equal in nature and value to Adam, but she had a different function or role as demonstrated by (1) the basis of her creation (v. 18); (2) the mode of her creation (vs. 21-22); (3) her being “brought” to the man to be loved, cherished, and protected (v. 22); and (4) Adam’s declaration of appreciation for the gift of the

²² Rosemary Radford Reuther *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1983), 94.

²³ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁴ Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1943), 33.

woman from God in which he defines her in relation to himself (v. 23). Not one of these points by itself would be compelling, but all of them together, complemented by Ellen White's statements make it clear that there was a role distinction before sin and that Adam was appointed by God to stand at the head of the human family before sin entered the world. In other words, before sin, Adam and Eve had complementary, but not identical roles. Eve was to be "loved and protected" by Adam, and she was to be his "helper" and "companion."²⁵

I have wondered why God created Adam quite a bit taller and probably also physically stronger than Eve? Inspiration tells us, "Eve was not quite as tall as Adam. Her head reached a little above his shoulders."²⁶ God could have created them equal in size and strength, but he didn't; why not? Perhaps, this is meant to tell us something about Adam's position in relation to his wife? Even today, women are generally physically the weaker sex, even though they may be the stronger sex in other areas.

Conclusion: By creating man first and entrusting him with His commands (Gen 2:16, 17), God appointed Adam as leader in the Garden of Eden before creating the woman. Adam's leadership role before the Fall included providing for the woman's needs and protecting her from the snares of the devil.

2. Man and women served as priests in the pre-fall Eden sanctuary

To project the earthly sanctuary back into Eden and then declare Adam and Eve priests is a bold argument, but is it biblically justified? Ellen White wrote, Eden "was heaven in miniature,"²⁷ and "It was under the trees of Eden that the first dwellers on earth had chosen their sanctuary."²⁸ Certainly, in heaven and in the Garden of Eden God communicated directly with his creatures, and his creatures worshiped him face to face. In that sense, Eden was a reflection of the heavenly sanctuary. But to project the earthly sanctuary and its work back into Eden and make Adam and Eve priests goes far beyond the biblical evidence. If Adam and Eve were priests in Eden, by analogy this would make the angels priests in heaven.

²⁵ Idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958), 46.

²⁶ Idem, *Conflict and Courage* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1970), 5.

²⁷ Idem, *Mind, Character and Personality, 2 vols.* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1977), 2:602.

²⁸ Idem, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), 290.

By definition a priest is one who brings sacrifices, performs certain rituals and acts as mediator between man and God. In Eden Adam and Eve did none of these things, because none of it was needed. It was only after the Fall that priests were needed to be mediators between God and humanity. To argue that the words “to tend” and “to keep” (Gen 2:15 Heb. *‘abad* and *shāmar*) also appear in Numbers 3:7, 8; 8:26; and 18:3-7 describing the duties of the priests, therefore Adam and Eve were priests, is a fallacious argument.

First, Numbers 3:7, 8; 8:26 describes the duties of the Levites, only in 18:3-7 are priests mentioned. Second, the command “to tend and to keep” (Gen 2:15) was given to Adam before Eve was created. In Genesis 2 where the word Adam (Heb. *‘ādām*) appears sixteen times, with the possible exception of 2:5, it consistently refers to the man Adam; it is not a generic reference to human beings, though I do believe that Eve helped Adam in tending and keeping the Garden of Eden. Third, in Genesis 2 “to tend and keep” refers to the plants and animals in the Garden. “Adam was created in innocence, yet God gave him employment, to tend the garden.”²⁹ In the book of Numbers, the Levites and the priests were to guard (Heb. *shāmar*) the sanctuary and serve (Heb. *‘abad*) at the tabernacle.³⁰ The two contexts are quite different and cannot be equated. Fourth, in the OT the phrase “to tend and keep” (Heb. *‘abad* and *shāmar*) appears only in Genesis 2:15. The Hebrew word *‘abad* “to tend, to work” appears over 960 times and *shāmar* “to keep, to guard” over 440 times in the OT. They are common Hebrew verbs which appear in many different contexts. It is not surprising, therefore, that they should also appear in connection with the work of the Levites and priests. To argue that because they appear in Genesis 2 and in the book of Numbers, therefore Adam and Eve must have been priests, is a leap in logic that is not justified. This is a case where an assumption becomes a possibility, and the possibility is upgraded into a certainty.

Equally fallacious is the argument that because God clothed (*lābash*) Adam and Eve with “tunics [*kutonet*] of skin” (Gen 3:21) and “Moses had Aaron's sons come near and clothed [*lābash*] them with tunics [*kutonet*] (Lev 8:13 NAS), therefore Adam and Eve had to be priests.

²⁹ Idem, Spalding and Magan Collection, unpublished Testimonies of Ellen White, 83.

³⁰ In the book of Numbers the word “keep” (*shāmar*) is used 13 times in connection with the sanctuary. It applies to the Levites 9 times (1:53; 3:7, 8, 28, 32, 8:26, 18:3, 4, 31:47), to the priests 4 times (3:10, 38; 18:5, 7). The word “tend” (*‘abad*) is used 21 times in connection with the sanctuary. It applies 20 times to the Levites (3:7, 8; 4:23, 24, 26, 30, 37, 41, 47; 7:5; 8:11, 19, 22, 25, 26; 11:11; 16:19; 18:6, 21, 23), to the priests only once in 18:7.

A *kutonet* was a shirtlike or long tuniclike garment, with or without sleeves, usually of linen, worn next to the skin. It was not a specific priestly garment. Joseph's robe is called a *kutonet* (Gen 37:3), Hushai the Archite wore a *kutonet* (2 Sam 15:32), and so did Job (Job 30:18). Because it was a commonly worn garment it was also worn by priests (Exod 29:8), and by the high priest (Lev 16:4).

Women also wore a *kutonet*. Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law "had on a robe [*kutonet*] of many colors, for the king's virgin daughters wore [*lābash*] such apparel" (2 Sam 13:18). The Shulammitte in the book Song of Songs says, "I have taken off my robe [*kutonet*]; How can I put it on [*lābash*] again?" (Song 5:3). Both words, appear many times in the OT (*kutonet* 29 times and *lābash* 88 times), they are commonly used words and even used together they are not specifically priestly garments as 2 Samuel 13:18 and Song of Solomon 5:3 indicate.

Conclusion: Adam and Eve were not priests in the Garden of Eden, because the need for the work of priests did not arise until after the Fall.

3. Male headship did not exist in the Garden of Eden; it is a result of the fall and applies only to the marriage relationship and not to the church.

That the headship of Adam was already established in the Garden of Eden has been shown above. Further evidence for it is Adam's responsibility for sin. In Genesis 3:9, "the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where *are* you?'" Why did God call Adam and not Eve? Why didn't he say, "Where are you Adam and Eve?" After all, it was Eve who sinned first; she took the fruit and gave it to Adam. But God addressed Adam and said, "Where are you?" "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (Gen 3:9, 11 ESV). In Hebrew the word "you" is always a masculine singular pronoun.

In the NT Paul holds Adam not Eve responsible for the entrance of sin into the world: "Therefore, just as through one man [masculine noun] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12); "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come

(Romans 5:14); “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

It is always Adam not Eve who is made responsible for the Fall. Why? Because Adam’s God-given role was to be the spiritual head of the human family, he was to be the protector and provider for Eve, but he failed. He failed to exercise his spiritual headship function at the time of Eve’s temptation.³¹ Unfortunately, throughout history many men have failed to live up to their God-given role to love, protect and care for their wives.

Man’s headship, which God ordained before the Fall, is made crystal clear after the Fall: “Your desire [Heb. *t^eshûqāh*] shall be for your husband, and he shall rule [Heb. *māshal*] over you” (Gen 3:16 ESV). The word for desire does not refer to Eve’s sexual desire for Adam, as has been argued. There is no good reason why her sexual desire should be mentioned at this time. She had this desire even before the Fall. God created Adam and Eve with the sexual desire for each other, it was not an afterthought, as his command to them in Genesis 1:28 proves. Furthermore, men’s sexual desire for women is just as strong as women’s desire for men, if not more so.

The Hebrew word *t^eshûqāh* appears three times in the OT (Gen 3:16; 4:7; Song 7:11). In Genesis 4:7 God says to Cain, “And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire [*t^eshûqāh*] is for you, but you must rule [*māshal*] over it” (Gen 4:7 ESV). Sin will seek to rule over Cain, but Cain is encouraged to rule over it. The woman’s “desire” (*t^eshûqāh*) and man’s “rule” (*māshal*) in 3:16 occur in a similar context. But now it is the woman who desires to have mastery over the man, a path which she had taken by having the man eat of the fruit, with devastating results. Adam was rebuked for having listened to the voice of his wife (3:17). Eve is now told that although she may seek mastery over her husband, he is to rule over her. Yet, this ruling is not to be a dictatorial rule of force, but a rule of love and care for the woman. Paul seems to have understood Genesis 3:16 in this way (1 Tim 2:13, 14). There is no reason to go

³¹ “The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone” (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958], 53)

outside of the early chapters of Genesis to a much later and very different context such as the Song of Solomon for an understanding of *t^eshûqāh* when Genesis itself is so clear.

While Genesis 3:16 is directed at Eve, the same desire by some women to dominate men is seen more generally in the way they relate to male-based authority in the church (cf. 1 Tim 2:11-15), which is an extension of the family. This means that woman's desire and man's rule cannot be restricted to the marriage context alone. Moreover, there is a close parallel between the serpent-woman relationship (Gen 3:15) and the woman-man relationship (v. 16). This parallelism allows for the observation that just as the divine pronouncement upon the serpent-woman relationship holds general, universal significance for humanity, so the male headship in the man-woman relationship finds general, universal expression, among those who submit to God's will and authority over them.

That male headship is not restricted to the marriage relationship is confirmed by Paul in 1 Timothy 2:12, 13 where in the context of the worship service he says, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (ESV). Whatever the situation was that Paul was addressing, the principle Paul refers to is that a woman is not to have spiritual authority over man in the church. The context is the issue of worship. Paul is not forbidding women to speak in church because in 1 Corinthians 11 he has women praying and speaking in church. What he does forbid women is the authoritative teaching in church that belongs to the elected elder/ minister.

Why should women not have spiritual authority over men in the church? The reason is the biblical principle of the spiritual headship of man to which Paul appeals. To support his point Paul refers back to the creation order -- man was created first. Not just chronologically, but Eve came out of Adam; bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. He was her origin. Please note: Paul refers to the creation account not to the story of the Fall to support his argument. Egalitarians want to see the origin of the headship of man in the story of the Fall in Genesis 3, but Paul goes back to Genesis 2, indicating that the principle existed even before sin. No matter what the local problem was that Paul was addressing, his argument for the spiritual headship of man, given under inspiration, remains valid.

Conclusion: Male headship was instituted by God in the Garden of Eden prior to the Fall and applies not only to the marriage relationship but also to other types of relationships, particularly to the relationship between men and women in the church, which is an extension of the family.

4. The qualification lists in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:1-11 are gender neutral; therefore they do not need to exclude women from serving in these ministries.

In 1 Timothy the qualifications for the office of elder (3:1-7) are found immediately following Paul's admonition that women should not be allowed to have authority over men (2:11-15). The logical connection between the two issues should not be ignored. Having explained why women should not serve as authoritative teachers or elders of the congregation, Paul then proceeds immediately to spell out what kind of men are suitable for the office of elder.

It is truly astonishing that, given the context, the phrase "husband of one wife" can be seen as gender neutral. In both passages (Timothy and Titus), specific reference is made to "man" (*anēr*) as distinct from "woman" (*gynē*)." The text does not offer the flexibility of reading this phrase generically, as is done in the NRSV: "Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once" (v. 2). The fifty-nine occurrences of *anēr* ("man, husband") in the writings of Paul consistently refer to male subjects. Paul specifically depicts the moral integrity of a male towards his wife. An elder is to be a "one-woman man," that is, a person who is faithful to his wife and does not become involved with other women; in addition, the point is made that he is to be a married man, who rules his household well. Because the church is the spiritual home of believers (it is really an extension of the family), the headship of man extends to the relationship between men and women in the church. There are no biblical texts or Ellen White statements that would justify a change in this relationship. Otherwise you could have the anomalous situation where a man is the head of the woman in the home, but the same woman is her husband's head in the church. Nothing in Scripture or the writings of Ellen White could justify such a situation.

Quoting 1 Tim 3:1-7, Ellen White also speaks in gender-specific terms, counseling a husband to treat his wife tenderly. After quoting 1 Timothy 3:1-7 she says, "My brother, I have

an intense desire that you shall be a man after God's heart."³² Also when quoting the text in Titus 1:5-7 Ellen White speaks in gender-specific terms:

In some of our churches the work of organizing and of ordaining elders has been premature; the Bible rule has been disregarded, and consequently grievous trouble has been brought upon the church. There should not be so great haste in electing leaders as to ordain men who are in no way fitted for the responsible work—men who need to be converted, elevated, ennobled, and refined before they can serve the cause of God in any capacity.³³

In Scripture the elder or bishop has authority over the church. In the Seventh-day Adventist church we make an administrative difference between the unpaid church elder and the paid elder/minister, but as far as Scripture is concerned they are one and the same office.

It is important to remember that there is a difference between the offices in the church (apostle, bishop/elder, deacon) and the gifts of the Spirit, one of which is shepherd/pastor. This has been nicely summarized by the New Testament scholar Harold W. Hoehner.³⁴

1. Church offices mentioned in the NT appear to include only four: Apostles (Acts 1:21-25), elders/bishops (1 Tim 3:1-7), deacons (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim 3:8-13), and deaconesses (Rom 16:1). Gifts, however, are many (1 Cor 12:8-11, 28-30; Rom 12:6-8; Eph 4:11). According to 1 Peter 4:10, every believer has received at least one gift.

2. Those who hold offices are either appointed (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) or elected based on qualifications (Acts 1:26; 6:3; 1 Tim 3:1-13), whereas gifts are sovereignly bestowed directly by God (Eph 4:7; Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:11, 18, 28). Hence, there are no qualifications listed in any of the gifts passages.

3. Scripture indicates that every believer has at least one gift (Eph 4:7; 1 Cor 12:7, 11; Rom 12:4; 1 Pet 4:10), but not every believer holds an office.

4. While marital status is mentioned for the offices of elder and deacon (1 Tim 3:2, 4-5, 12; Titus 1:6), no such stipulation is mentioned for those endowed with gifts.

³² Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 21 vols. (Silver Spring, MD: E. G. White Estate, 1981-90), 21:99.

³³ Idem, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 5: 617, 618.

³⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, "Can a Woman be a Pastor-Teacher?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50/4 (Dec. 2007): 763, 764.

5. An elder “cannot be a recent convert” (1 Tim 3:6), but gifts are given regardless of age or maturity.

6. The office of elder must be held by a man (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6), whereas gifts are given to either gender (Acts 21:9-10; 1 Cor 11:5).

The present problem among Seventh-day Adventists is that we have made the *gift* of pastor an *office* on the same level as the headship role of the elder/minister. In this we have followed what other churches have done, but it is not in accordance with the biblical pattern. We would do well to go back to the biblical model.

Some believe, and they may well be right, that the “office of an apostle” is different from the “gift of an apostle” in Ephesians 4:11. The original Twelve held the *office*, which had specific qualifications (Acts 1:21-22). Paul, Barnabas, and James the Lord’s brother also seem to have held the apostolate as an *office* (Acts 14:14; Gal 1:19), even though they only partially met the qualifications of Acts 1:21-22. However, the *gifts* in Ephesians 4:11-12 are not given by election or appointment, but are bestowed directly by God (v. 7). No human qualifications are listed. If the gifts are to remain in the church until the second coming of Christ (vs. 13-16) then the *gift* of “apostle” is clearly not bound to the qualification of being an eyewitness of the incarnate Christ. It could be applied to someone who saw Jesus in vision, as did Paul, but not in the flesh. Three times in the NT, the Greek *apostolos* is translated “one sent” or a “messenger” (John 13:16; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25). Thus there is a NT basis for using the term “apostle” in the more general sense of one sent – a missionary. In this sense, a person could have the *spiritual gift* of “apostle” without holding the apostolic *office*.

Conclusion: Paul’s inspired statement that an elder or bishop must be “the husband of one wife . . . one who rules his own house well” (1Tim 3:4) indicates that an elder should be a married man, who is faithful to his wife. There is no linguistic or exegetical reason to make this text gender neutral. The pressure of culture should never be allowed to change the meaning of a biblical text.

Of course, this does not exclude single men from holding office. Paul addresses what has been throughout Christian history the common situation. Exceptions only confirm the rule.

5. Junia in Romans 16 was a female apostle.

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. (Rom 16:7)

The first thing to note is the uncertainty whether Junia was actually the name of a woman or a man. Theologians and Bible versions disagree, as do the early church fathers.

The Greek construction of the name could refer to a woman or a man depending on where the accent is placed, but the ancient Greek manuscripts did not have accents; Greek accents were not used until hundreds of years after Paul wrote his letter to the Roman church. Thus the Textus Receptus (16th century) accents the name as a feminine noun (Junia), whereas the eclectic text (20th century) usually renders the name as a male noun (*Junias*).

Assuming that Junia is indeed female, the question is what is the meaning of the phrase “of note among the apostles”? According to Greek grammar, this prepositional phrase can have an exclusive or an inclusive meaning. Thus, the expression could mean that Junia and Andronicus were held in high regard *by* the apostles (exclusive meaning) as indicated in the *English Standard Version*: “They are *well known to* the apostles,” or that Junia and Andronicus were themselves highly regarded apostles (inclusive meaning) as translated in the *New Century Version*: “Greetings to Andronicus and Junia, my relatives, who were in prison with me. *They are very important apostles.*”

If they were important and highly regarded apostles and were converted before the apostle Paul, as the text states, why are they never mentioned in the book of Acts? We know that Paul was converted shortly after the stoning of Stephen in AD 34 (Acts 6, 7). This means that Junia and Andronicus were converted to Christ sometime before this. So if Junia and Andronicus were renowned apostles along with the twelve, why are they not mentioned as belonging to the Council of the twelve in Jerusalem? No apostle other than the twelve is ever mentioned in the book of Acts before Paul and Barnabas were sent on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:1, 2).

The book of Acts describes the history of the early church from the Day of Pentecost until well into the first century. Yet there is not a single instance in the book of Acts where the word “apostle” is applied to a woman. If apostleship was a feminine function in the early church

why do we not have even one unambiguous example in the church history of the book of Acts? According to Ellen G. White, the leadership at the Jerusalem Council in AD 49 was all male: "The 'apostles and elders,' men of influence and judgment, framed and issued the decree, which was thereupon generally accepted by the Christian churches."³⁵

Paul could have expressed Andronicus' and Junia's identity with the apostles by simply rendering the phrase as an adjectival qualifier: they were "well-known apostles" (cf. Mt 27:16). Instead, he maintains two separate groups: Andronicus and Junia(s) and their reputation among the apostles.

Conclusion: Junia(s) was not an apostle. The linguistic evidence is inconclusive whether Junia(s) was male or female. The evidence from the book of Acts, the rest of the New Testament, and the writings of Ellen White support the interpretation that Paul was referring to the reputation of Andronicus and Junia(s) among the apostles.

6. Galatians 3:26-29 applies not only to salvation, but it also abolishes the subordination of females to males.

If Galatians 3:28 abolished male headship and the subordination of women in the church, why did Paul, ten years later, write in 1 Timothy 2:12 "And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man"?

Galatians 3:26-29 addresses the relationship between God and his people. Every verse focusses on this vertical connection:

- 3:26 "For you are all **sons of God** through faith in Christ Jesus"
- 3:27 "For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ"
- 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave or free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all **one in Christ Jesus.**"
- 3:29 "And **if you are Christ's**, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The consequence of this vertical relationship between God and the believers is the equality before God within the covenant community. When persons of different gender, social status and ethnic background are *baptized* they are all "in Christ" and therefore are legitimate and equal members of the church. There can be no sense of superiority because of ethnic,

³⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 196.

social or gender distinctions. On Sabbath, for example, the millionaire sits next to the laborer, the teacher next to the student, the doctor next to the patient, children next to their parents, and black members next to white members; all are one in Christ praising the Lord for their salvation. Yet these ethnic and social distinctions are not abolished because they all worship God together. Similarly, “being in Christ” does not abolish the God-given functions for men and women.

It is important to underline that Paul does not write that in Christ “man is no longer the head of the woman” or that “males and females can now serve as elders/overseers in the church.” Such statements would conflict with his own testimony in 1 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 5:22-33, First Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Paul’s point is clear, neither ethnicity, economics, nor gender grant one person a privileged status before God over another.

Furthermore, the cross did not erase the functional distinctions that God established before sin. Man is still to fulfill the role of the father and husband and woman the role of the mother. The wife must still submit to the loving headship of her husband “in the Lord” and husbands must still love their wives (Eph 5:22-25). There is not even the faintest hint in Galatians 3:28 or its context to indicate that Paul was addressing roles in the home or in the church.

Ellen White clearly understood Galatians 3:28 to refer to the issue of salvation and not to social status:

No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and *all are one through redemption*. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that *every soul may have free access to God*. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan's circle the poor souls who have been deluded by his deceptions. It places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. *All are brought nigh by His precious blood*. (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:13.)³⁶

It is important to note that although Ellen White is clearly alluding to Galatians 3:28 she did not include the phrase “male or female” in this quotation. Not only did she stop short of

³⁶ Ellen G. White, *Christ—s Object Lessons* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1941), 386.

quoting the last phrase of the verse, but at the beginning of the quotation she refers only to a distinction of nationality, race and caste. Gender is totally absent from the quotation! To claim that Paul in Galatians 3 is abolishing the headship of man is clearly a case where a cultural trend and bias is introduced into the text.

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

7. 1 Timothy 2:12-14 applies only to a specific situation in Ephesus and does not refer to the relationship that should universally exist between men and women.

And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

Contrary to the claim that Paul addresses only a specific issue in Ephesus in these verses, what Paul says in 1 Timothy 2 and 3 is clearly meant for the universal church, not just for the church in Ephesus. In chapter two he discusses the universality of Christian worship (2:1–15):

- A. Prayers for those in authority (2:1–3) should be made in all churches, not just in Ephesus.
- B. God wants all human beings saved (2:4–7), hence all churches should work for the salvation of souls, not just the church in Ephesus.
- C. The worship procedures 2:8–15 are for all churches, not just for Ephesus.

In chapter three, Paul discusses the prerequisites for Christian leaders in all churches, not just in Ephesus (3:1–13):

- A. The character of bishops (3:1–17) refers to bishops in all churches, not just in Ephesus.
- B. The character of deacons (3:8–13) refers to deacons in all churches, not just in Ephesus.

Thus to claim that 2:12-14 refers only to the local church is to ignore the context which is clearly universal. The immediate context of verses 12-14 begins in verse 8 with the words “I

desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting,” indicating that Paul is speaking to the universal church and not just to the local church in Ephesus. In verse 9, Paul begins his admonition to women with the words “in like manner also,” i.e., speaking to women everywhere; he addresses the issue of adornment and good works. The whole of chapter two is addressed to the universal church. John Stott warns that “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.”³⁷

“I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man” (v. 12). The Greek word *didaskō* (teach) refers to sound instruction, it does not refer to false teaching, for which Paul uses the word *heterodidaskaleō* (teach false doctrine) in 1 Timothy 1:3 and 6:3. Does Paul mean that women can never speak in church? Certainly not, he has women praying and prophesying (preaching?) in church (1 Cor 11:5). What is prohibited to women is the authoritative teaching which is part of the ecclesiastical office of minister/elder, which involves the exercise of spiritual authority. In other words, teaching in combination with “have authority over” refers to the authoritative teaching of the ordained minister/elder.³⁸

Why does Paul prohibit women from teaching authoritatively? First, he appeals to the creation order, “For Adam was formed first, then Eve” (v. 13); and second, “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression (v. 14). Paul grounds his teaching on this matter on the events described in Genesis 1-3, not on cultural circumstances. To the modern mind his explanations may seem rather trivial; nevertheless, these are the reasons Paul, under inspiration, provides for the universal church.

The fact that Paul addresses certain false teachings in his letter to Timothy does not mean that everything he says has only meaning for the local situation in Ephesus. For example,

³⁷ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 77.

³⁸ It is interesting to note that Ellen White used the word “ordination” only in the context of the biblical offices of apostle, elder, deacon, and minister, but never for a physician or part time women workers. She recommended that these persons to be set aside with the laying on of hands, but she did not refer to this setting aside as ordination in the context of a biblical office.

what he says in chapter 3 about elders and deacons is repeated in Titus 1, indicating that his counsel is meant for all churches not just for the Ephesians. Similarly, what Paul says about the apparel of women in 1 Timothy 2:9, 10 is also emphasized in 1 Peter 3, again showing its universal meaning.

Conclusion

Paul's counsel in 1 Timothy 2:12-14 concerning women not having authority over men, based on his inspired interpretation of the Genesis account of creation and the Fall, is clearly meant for the universal church, not just for the church in Ephesus.

8. The priesthood of all believers permits women to be ordained as pastors.

But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (1 Pet 2:9)

The term "priesthood of all believers" is not a biblical term; it refers primarily to the fact that believers have direct access to God without an earthly mediator. Most likely it originated in the time of the Reformation. Martin Luther in his tract *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520) promoted a general priesthood in Christendom. He argued that a common individual was just as capable to approach God, as was a priest, i.e., every believer has direct access to God. This is biblically correct, but to argue that the text in 1 Peter also permits women to be ordained as pastors goes far beyond the textual evidence.

In 1 Peter 2:9 the apostle quoted from Exodus where God says to Israel, "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (19:5-6). Did God intend that everybody in Israel—adults and children, male and female become priests? No! All Israel was a kingdom of priests, but only the Levites and Aaron and his sons served at the sanctuary. "Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle of meeting and wash them with water. You shall put the holy garments on Aaron, and anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest." (Exod 40:12-13).

In the NT, Peter calls Christians “a royal priesthood, a holy nation,” but again it does not mean that all adults and children, male and female are serving as priests or ordained ministers. Just as in the OT the “kingdom of priests” was led by the Aaronic priesthood, so in the NT all Christians are a “royal priesthood” but only the apostles and elders served as spiritual priests and leaders of the churches, and all of them were males.

In what sense was all Israel a royal priesthood when God invited them to enter a covenant relationship with Him at Mt. Sinai? Because every member of Israel was a member of the covenant community, each was expected to mediate the gospel to the world and prepare it for the arrival of the Messiah. In other words, the objective of God’s call to each and every member of Israel was to evangelize the world and the priests and Levites were called upon to lead and teach the people how to do it! Similarly, all Christians are a royal priesthood called to announce to the world what Jesus has done and that he is coming again, but it is the role of the elders/overseers to lead and teach the people how to do it.

Conclusion

The concept of the priesthood of all believers in the Old and New Testaments refers to the fact that all members of the community are participants in the mission of Israel and the church. Nevertheless, it upholds the leadership of elders and deacons and it does not open the door for women to be ordained as elders/ministers.

9. Ministry in the New Testament Church was non-hierarchical

Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. ⁴⁴ "And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. (Mark 10:42-44)

The argument that the words of Jesus in Mark 10:43 constituted “a thorough rejection, or reversal, of the hierarchical model”³⁹ is misleading. Jesus condemned the selfish, self-seeking, or self-exalting use of authority, but He did not condemn an authority structure *per se*. When Jesus says, “But it shall not be so among you,” He is especially addressing the Twelve.

³⁹ Jankiewicz, 12

Each of the Twelve desired to be “first” in the kingdom that they all soon expected the Lord to establish (Matt. 18:1). They forgot that true greatness involves the renunciation of greatness as an objective in life. The Twelve were peers to each other in every sense of the word. Jesus warned them not to “lord it” over each other; not to *seek* the highest place, or to exercise power over their peers. Yet, the New Testament church was clearly structured along hierarchical lines with levels of authority (apostles, elders, deacons). Not everyone could be an apostle, elder, or deacon. Apostleship was a spiritual gift distributed by the Holy Spirit according to His will (1 Cor 12:3-11; 28-31). Elders and deacons were to be vetted carefully according to rather stringent lists of qualifications (1 Tim 2:10-3:13). Those holding an office had authority over others:

1 Corinthians 16:15-16.

I urge you, brethren-- you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints-- ¹⁶ that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with *us*.

Hebrews 13:17

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

1 Timothy 5:17

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

Paul’s epistles all begin stating his apostleship as a form of authority: Romans 1:1 “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God” (see also 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; etc.)

A times Paul had to defend his authority as an apostle:

1 Corinthians 9:1, 12

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? . . . If others share this authority [*exousia*] over you, don't we even more? However, we have not used this authority; instead we endure everything so that we will not hinder the gospel of Christ (CSB).

Elders had authority in the church. Paul wrote to Titus, “Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you” (Titus 2:15).

Conclusion

Jesus did not forbid the exercise of godly authority, but the selfish usurping of authority not granted by God. The New Testament church was clearly structured along hierarchical lines. Not everyone was given the same authority, but each was to respect and submit to those of greater authority, and each was accountable for serving responsibly, in humility and love, those who were of lesser authority. Nevertheless, levels of authority point to a hierarchy. And yes, there are roles and offices in the NT reserved for *men*—men who also meet the stringent qualifications for these offices. In that sense, NT authority is based on the principle of male spiritual-headship.

10. Head in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 has the meaning of source rather than headship authority⁴⁰

This passage in 1 Corinthians has often been seen as a purely local issue of head covering for women without much theological importance. Whatever the details of the case, and there may be much we don't know, Paul begins his counsel by stating the biblical principle, "that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God" (v. 3). Thus Paul makes it clear at the beginning that whatever he has to say flows from the principle of male headship.

The claim that "although headship is often understood as ruling power, this meaning is not normal in the Greek language"⁴¹ is not borne out by the facts. Walter Bauer's *Greek Lexicon* under the figurative use of *kephalē* (head) says that head "in the case of living beings" denotes "superior rank," and cites examples of texts both within and outside of Scripture.⁴² No reference is given for *kephalē* as source; in fact, in the latest edition of the Lexicon "source" is explicitly rejected as a possible meaning for head.⁴³ Clearly the intent of the metaphorical use

⁴⁰ Reeve, 30, 31.

⁴¹ Ibid., 30.

⁴² Frederick William Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, third edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 542.

⁴³ Ibid., citing Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Another Look at *Kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11.3," *NTS* 35 (1989): 503-11. See also, more recently, idem, "*Kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11:3," *Interpretation* 47 (1993): 52-59, esp. 57: "Those who have claimed that 'source' is the meaning intended by Paul have offered no other argument than their claim that *kephalē* would not have meant 'ruler, leader, one having authority over' in Paul's day. The evidence brought forth above shows that it was certainly possible for a Hellenistic Jewish writer such as Paul to use the word in that sense ['ruler']. Hence, their argument has collapsed, and the traditional understanding has to be retained."

of “head” is to describe someone who holds superior rank as leader, master, ruler, authority figure, or other person of first status among others.

We need to understand “head” in 1 Corinthians 11 as it is used in the parallel expressions found in other Pauline passages such as Ephesians 5:23: “For the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church.” The husband is certainly not the source of the wife, and it would be awkward to understand in the same context that Christ is the source of the church, since He is depicted not as Founder of the church but as its Savior, and the relationship is clearly defined in the next verse as one of submission to the head: “Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything” (Eph 5:24). Also, in Colossians 1:18, which declares Christ to be “the head of the body, the church;” the text explicitly states, so that “in all things He may have the preeminence.” The issue is one of rank, not of source.

The claim that the order used in verse 3, “the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God,” supports better the idea of head as source⁴⁴ is contradicted by the text itself, unless we accept the Arian idea that the Father created Christ. The text states that Christ is “the head of every man,” not only of Adam, and while it is true that ultimately Christ is the creator of every man, that is not the point Paul is trying to emphasize in the text, as is evident from his rationale in verses 7-9, in which he argues from the order and purpose of the creation of Adam and Eve for the headship of man over woman.

Conclusion

The meaning of “head” in 1 Corinthians is headship not source. The leadership which Scripture points to as headship, and which was modeled by Christ, is a loving, nurturing, self-sacrificing leadership to which women voluntarily submit, as called for in Ephesians 5:22-33 and 1 Peter 5:2, 3.

Unintended Consequences

The ordination of women may have unintended consequences that none of us would welcome. If we ordain women as elders/ministers/pastor on the basis that the Bible does not

⁴⁴ Reeve, 30, fn 96.

say anything against it, i.e., all the problem texts can be reinterpreted, we may find ourselves in difficulties when we have to face the next issue – homosexuality. Some may say, but this issue is clearly addressed in Scripture. Yes, it is, but these clear texts can and have been reinterpreted to allow some churches to appoint homosexual pastors and bishops. Once the concept of cultural conditioning dominates the method of biblical interpretation the door is opened wide to let other modern practices enter the church.

It is true that there is no direct correlation between the ordination of women and the acceptance of homosexuality, but history does reveal a trend in this direction. In 1991 the Anglican Church voted to ordain women priests. In 2003 Gene Robinson became the first gay bishop of the Episcopal Church in America. The American Lutheran Church began ordaining women as ministers in December 1970. In 2013, the openly gay Lutheran Guy Erwin, who has lived in a gay partnership for 19 years, was installed in California as Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Episcopalians and Lutherans may be far ahead with ordaining gay clergy, but many other churches are not far behind. The United Church of Christ has ordained women since 1853. In 2005 the church accepted homosexual marriages. The United Reformed Church in 1995 approved the ordination of women to all the offices of the church. In 2011, The United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom allowed the blessing of same-sex unions. There are an increasing number of Christian churches and communities that have ordained women, and are now open to gay marriages, and to the ordination of people who are gay and lesbian. This is a trend that cannot be swept under the rug. May God help us to resist this social trend!

There is no law that tells us that we must ordain women, but there are laws that tell us that we cannot discriminate against homosexuals, lesbians, and their marriages. If we are not sure the Bible says anything on the first issue, will we be able to defend our biblical position on the second issue?

Conclusions

It is ironic that Jesus in Luke 18:8 says “when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” The implied answer is “no!” And yet Christians and many Adventists today seem to believe that they have greater faith and a better understanding of God’s will than all the generations of Christians before them.

Because of the progress in technology and in other fields of human endeavor, we have become accustomed to think that each generation knows more than the previous one, even in the fields of faith, morality, and the understanding of Scripture. This has led to a new understanding of biblical texts that until recently were seen as barring women from the office of the ordained elder or minister. We claim to be so clever, so spiritual that we now know that what Paul said about women in some of his letters only applied to his generation, or to a specific historical situation, and not to ours. But to understand God's word we must first have faith in it as God's inspired message for all people and all times. Otherwise we are bound to come to wrong conclusions in studying it, just as many scientists do when they study nature, God's "other book."

As I indicated at the beginning, the hermeneutics used by some egalitarians goes beyond the grammatical-historical method. For example, the *ad hoc* argument restricting Paul's counsel in 1 Timothy 2:12-14 to a specific issue in Ephesus is exegetically not a valid argument. All of Paul's letters, with the exception of Romans, "are *ad hoc* responses to deal with specific problems,"⁴⁵ yet no one limits the other letters of Paul to the original recipients. Why should 1 Timothy be limited to the local situation?

Furthermore, Paul's reason for writing the letter to Timothy was not only to combat false doctrine. In 1 Timothy 3:14, 15 he writes, "These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Here Paul writes to Timothy "to instruct him on how to order and direct the life of a Christian congregation."⁴⁶ The grammatical-historical method does not teach that an *ad hoc* letter is automatically limited to the local situation.

A second example is the influence of culture on the interpretation of biblical texts. The issue of women's ordination did not surface in the Seventh-day Adventist church because forty years ago somebody discovered that we were wrongly interpreting Genesis 3:16 or Galatians 3:28. It arose in the church because of a specific societal trend, the feminist movement, in

⁴⁵ Cosaert, 2.

⁴⁶ Paul W. Felix, Sr., "The Hermeneutics of Evangelical Feminism," *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8.2 (Fall 2003): 36.

Western culture. The feminist movement has some legitimate claims, e.g., equal pay for equal work, but it goes too far when it tries to impose its ideology on Scripture.

In order to accommodate the push for women as elders in the church, every biblical argument that in the past had been used against women's ordination to pastoral leadership has been explained away or reinterpreted by seeking a deeper meaning in the text, by an appeal to other supposedly contradictory texts (e.g., 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 speaks against 1 Corinthians 11:5), or by a reinterpretation of the meaning of biblical words. Some of the arguments are based on imaginative or creative reasoning and assumptions which are not supported by Scripture. At times, questionable information from non-biblical sources and hypothetical situations are brought into play in order to reinterpret or set aside the plain meaning of the text. We believe that what is simple and clear to the common reader of the Bible has been relativized. Ellen White once wisely wrote:

Numberless words need not be put upon paper to justify what speaks for itself and shines in its clearness. Truth is straight, plain, clear, and stands out boldly in its own defense; but it is not so with error. It is so winding and twisting that it needs a multitude of words to explain it in its crooked form."⁴⁷

As far as Ellen White is concerned, we do well to remember that she strongly urged the setting apart of lay women by the laying on of hands to empower and encourage their greater involvement in the work of the church.⁴⁸ She vigorously promoted women workers in evangelism and pastoral care, especially to women and families, and that such women should receive salaries paid from the tithe. However, she believed that they could do this without ordination.⁴⁹ She never made any clear statement promoting the ordination of women as church elders or ministers. She favored a consecration service for women, but never promoted their ordination to the headship position of elder or ministers

Male leadership in the church does not mean women have to renounce their calls to be gospel workers. It only requires that they be willing to carry a credential other than that of an ordained minister, in order to honor Scripture. If women today could make Paul's words their

⁴⁷ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1945), 96.

⁴⁸ *Idem*, RH July 9, 1895.

⁴⁹ *Idem*, GW 452-453; see also AA 355; MYP 226; TM 188; 6T 444; BTS, Mar. 1, 1912 par. 6; RH, Nov. 24, 1904 par. 16.

motto: “Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor 1:17), accepting such a credential, and letting others do the baptizing, then Seventh-day Adventist women could “preach the gospel” as a lifelong career—without violating Scripture or dividing the church. The church could give them full support as career preachers, evangelists, evangelistic trainers, pastoral visitors, and provide equal pay for equal work while still upholding the Creation distinction between male and female.

Western society seeks to elevate women by denigrating men. A headline in a recent *Time* magazine read: “2013: The Year Man Became Obsolete?” God’s plan is to elevate both men and women, each in their own roles and spheres of giftedness. Let’s remember, the church is not a democracy; it is the body of Christ, the church of God, existing under the headship of Christ, the rules of which are laid down in Scripture and not to be changed without Scriptural warrant.

If we are able to explain away the texts that speak against the ordination of women, we will have great difficulties when we have to deal with the next issue that confronts the world-wide Adventist church – homosexuality. It behooves us, therefore, to be careful on how we handle the biblical text and not to import cultural presuppositions and assumptions into the text, or jump to conclusions that are not warranted by Scripture.