

29 **Introduction**

30 In 1853, Antoinette Brown became the first woman ordained as a Christian
31 minister in a major American denomination. Brown was ordained by a small
32 Congregational church in South Butler, New York. Even before this, she had already
33 achieved some significant firsts. She was one of the first women to obtain a degree
34 from a co-educational college, the progressive Oberlin College, run by the Arminian-
35 tinged New School Presbyterians, which had begun admitting women around 1840.
36 Believing she was called to ministerial work, Brown was not content with the literary
37 course prescribed for women. She petitioned the faculty to allow her to take the
38 advanced theological course, which was limited to men. Eventually, the faculty relented
39 and allowed her to take the course-work. She was the first woman to do so, but the
40 faculty refused to award her the actual degree.¹

41 Undaunted, Brown entered the field, and looked for a ministerial opportunity,
42 lecturing in the meantime on temperance, slavery, and literary topics. Her acceptance
43 and eventual ordination by the Congregational church in New York was a satisfying and
44 symbolic moment, celebrated with a fiery sermon by a Wesleyan Methodist preacher.
45 Not only did Brown achieve her goal of ordination, but it was within a church that in
46 many ways represented the most distinguished religious heritage of the country—the
47 Congregational church being the most direct ecclesiastical heir of the venerable New
48 England Puritans.

49 This first ordination, however, did not really represent the decisive beginning of
50 a new era of women’s leadership in American Christianity. The Congregational church,
51 due to its localized leadership structure, had the capacity to make unique decisions
52 without having to wrestle with difficult questions on a denominational-wide basis. The
53 fact that one, small, socially-progressive church in New York would decide to have a
54 female pastor said little about the denomination as a whole. (Though, as the local
55 conference did need to approve such appointments, it says something about at least a
56 certain region of New York at the time.)

¹ Barbara Brown Zikmund, “Women’s Ministries Within the United Church of Christ,” in Catherine Wessinger, ed., *Religious Institutions and Women’s Leadership: New Roles Inside the Mainstream* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 67-68.

57 But over thirty-five years later, in 1889, the national Congregational yearbook
58 listed only four ordained women ministers. Like Brown, they served as, quite literally,
59 the exceptions that proved the general rule of male ministerial leadership. As one local
60 conference put it, “while we do not approve of the ordination of women to the Eldership
61 of the church, as a general rule, yet as Sister Melissa Timmons has been set forward to
62 that position at the request of her church . . . we send her credential letters of an
63 ordained minister.”²

64 By that time, however, Brown herself was no longer in the Congregational
65 ministry. Indeed, within a handful of years of her ordination, she encountered health
66 difficulties, and doctrinal doubts, and resigned from the pastorate. She spent several
67 years lecturing and speaking, until in 1878 she joined the Unitarian church. There, she
68 was recognized as an ordained Unitarian minister.

69 Brown’s challenging experiences as a pastor are unsurprising, given the tenor
70 and climate of her culture and times, and her role as trailblazer. But her pathway, from
71 the gender-conservative Presbyterians, to a more flexible group of Congregationalists,
72 who allowed the Methodist preacher at her ordination, and her later move to the
73 “broad-minded” Unitarians, illustrates in a single life the complexity of views that
74 existed in mid-19th century America on women’s ministry. It is this varied religious
75 background that is the foundation from which 20th century developments in women’s
76 ministry and ordination must be understood, as the first Protestant churches to ordain
77 women did so in the United States.³

78 A book could be written for each denomination’s experience of grappling with
79 the ordination question. Fortunately, one book has been written based on a detailed
80 study of the reaction of the 100 largest American denominations to the issue of

² Ibid., 68.

³ Some suggest that some of the early European Anabaptists ordained women, but the evidence of this is thin and does not seem to be supported by the early primary sources. See Dennis Bollinger, *First-Generation Anabaptist Ecclesiology, 1525-1561* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 169, fn. 533. Whether such groups did ordain at some early point, by the time of the 17th and 18th centuries there is no record of them continuing to do so. Hence, the history of the church in America is central to understanding the dynamics of how women’s ordination entered modern Protestantism, and became an issue for the Adventist church.

81 women's ordination. Entitled *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious*
82 *Organizations*, the author, sociologist Mark Chaves, looks at both internal church
83 factors, including theology and organization, and external societal pressures, such as
84 women's rights movements and political pressures, to understand how various
85 American churches dealt with the ordination question.⁴

86 Chaves's book is a valuable resource, but his questions as a sociologist differ
87 somewhat from my concerns as a historian and theologian. I tend to give more weight
88 and attention to theological matters. His work provides a framework and some data for
89 this paper. Most notable is his breakdown of the 44 denominations that have chosen to
90 ordain women, including the dates they made the decision, and the reason for the
91 decision.⁵ I have added to Chaves's list, by attempting to both bring it up to date, as well
92 as adding information about church population and growth, as well as the attitude of
93 these denominations towards homosexuality.

94 Both sides on the ordination discussion in the Adventist church have made
95 various claims about the impact of ordaining women on both church growth, as well as
96 on the likelihood women's ordination leading to biblical liberalism, including the
97 acceptance of homosexual behavior within the church. I wanted to test these claims by
98 looking at the experience of other denominations. I have included my expanded version
99 of his list in the Appendix to this paper.

100 Due to space limitations and manageability, for purposes of my analysis I have
101 chosen to group Chaves's list of churches into five categories based on historical
102 affiliations and theological connections. These groups are as follows: 1. Biblically
103 Unorthodox (Quakers, Universalists, Unitarians, Christian Science, Mormons); 2.
104 Sacramental (Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, High Lutheran); 3. Calvinist/Reformed
105 (Presbyterian, Congregational, Particular Baptists), 4. Methodist/Wesleyan/Pentecostal
106 5. Restorationists (Christians, Adventists, Baptists, Mennonites).

107 The groupings themselves do not indicate whether women's ordination will be
108 accepted or rejected. But the groupings do indicate a pattern of similar experiences and
109 questions that are involved in dealing with gender and ordination. The experiences of

⁴ (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.)

⁵ Ibid.,16-17.

110 many of these groups will be helpful as Adventists consider their options in relation to
111 the ordination issue.

112 Before the experiences of these groups are considered, a brief historical sketch
113 will be provided of the moments in American history when women's ministry and
114 ordination became issues of important concern. This history will be told, with some
115 exception, without reference to the particular groups, as all groups essentially
116 experienced and were subject to the same social and historical forces produced by
117 these larger historical events. After the historical sketch, each of the five groups will be
118 considered in turn, with a focus on the experiences that might be relevant for our own
119 church. The paper will conclude with some observations on how this history may help
120 us chart our future.

121 **A. Historical overview**

122 Questions of gender and ministry are not a constant concern of churches, but
123 arise from time to time in relation to both internal church developments and to events
124 in society. The five moments when the issue of women and ministry came to the
125 foreground in American religion are as follows: 1. The Great Awakenings of the mid
126 18th and early 19th centuries; 2. the first women's rights movement of the mid-to-late
127 19th century; 3. the spread of fundamentalism and liberalism in the early 20th century;
128 4. the second women's rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and; 5. the ascent of
129 total equality as the central American legal and social doctrine at the end of the 20th
130 century. This overview will provide the context in which the experiences of the various
131 denominational groups can be understood.

132

133 **A. The Great Awakenings – Women Prophesyers and Exhorters**

134 While Antoinette Brown may have been the first American woman ordained to
135 the gospel ministry, she was certainly not the first woman preacher. Catherine Breckus
136 has masterfully documented and recorded the extensive history of female "public
137 prophesying," as preaching was often called, in the century and more prior to Brown's

138 appointment.⁶ Women’s involvement in public preaching and exhorting clustered
139 around the two great revival events in American history, the First and Second Great
140 Awakenings. Both events challenged social and cultural conventions in ways that
141 opened doors for minorities, including blacks and women, to play roles of public
142 leadership that had previously been denied them.

143 The First Great Awakening began in the 1740s with the preaching of Jonathan
144 Edwards, George Whitfield and the Wesley brothers. The emphasis on individual,
145 public conversion, the importance of both mind and emotion, and the equality of
146 believers before God, led to a challenge of social mores. “Wives rebuked husbands for
147 their lack of piety; children evangelized their parents; the clergy undermined one
148 another; lay men became exhorters; and even women refused to keep silent in church . .
149 . .”⁷ Many “new light” leaders, as the revivalist preachers were called, allowed women
150 to share their testimonies of conversion in public meetings.

151 Many of the early Baptist and Methodist meetings were out of doors, and this
152 female preaching was thus less offensive to traditional sensibilities than if it had taken
153 place in churches. Women acted as prayer leaders, exhorters, and finally preachers, but
154 as “most meetings were held outdoors . . . the objections of those who might have been
155 offended if a women stood behind the pulpit were eased.”⁸ Inside the church, women
156 were still not allowed to formally preach from the pulpit, but the Baptists, Methodists,
157 and the “new light,” Separate Congregationalists allowed women to function as
158 exhorters in meetings, sharing testimonies and information scriptural messages from
159 the pews. Again, this openness to “prophesying and exhorting” should not be confused
160 with women being ordained as elders or pastors.⁹

161 The role of women in speaking and exhorting in public generally diminished as
162 the revivals subsided. Periods of dynamic charisma and growth turn into times of

⁶ Catherine Brekus, *Female Preaching in America: Strangers and Pilgrims 1740-1845* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸ Wolff, Joseph, “women, ordination of,” in *Encyclopedia of Protestantism* (Gordon Melton, 2005), found at protestantism.enacademic.com/642/women,ordinationof (accessed on 5/28/2013.)

⁹ Breckus, 48-51.

163 consolidation and institution building, where traditional roles reassert themselves.
164 Ironically, the revolutionary war period was a time of conventional gender roles even in
165 the “new light” churches. It was not until the beginnings of the Second Great
166 Awakening in the 1790s and early 1800s that women once again began to make an
167 appearance as exhorters and preachers.¹⁰

168 The Second Great Awakening saw even greater female involvement in both
169 exhorting and preaching than the First. Breckus documents about one hundred
170 evangelical women who preached in the revivals of late 18th and early 19th century
171 America, among a broad range of religious groups. The Christian Connection, the
172 Freewill Baptists, the Methodists, the African Methodists, and the Millerites allowed
173 women exhorters and preachers to address mixed crowds of men and women. At
174 times these were in outdoor and prayer meeting settings, but it also included the
175 preaching of sermons from pulpits.¹¹

176 These religious groups existed on the edge of the social margins, and part of
177 their dissent against the establishment was in their willingness to allow a wider range
178 of religious voices, including women’s, to be heard. Yet certain women preachers came
179 from, and preached to, more “respectable” audiences. Harriet Livermore was a gifted
180 evangelist and speaker, and was from a well-to-do family, the daughter and
181 granddaughter of U.S. Congressmen. She was invited to preach to overflow crowds in
182 the U.S. House of Representatives on four separate occasions between 1827 and 1843.¹²

183 Breckus acknowledges, however, that these evangelical preachers from the
184 awakenings were “biblical” rather than “secular” feminists. Their arguments in favor of
185 women preaching were based on the Bible, rather than natural rights, and they believed
186 in what might be called a complementarian division of labor and authority. They “never
187 asked for permission to baptize” or “give the Lord’s Supper.” Nor “did they broach the
188 forbidden topic of female ordination.” As Livermore herself described her view of the
189 Bible’s teaching on ordination, “I conclude that it belongs only to the male sex.” Though

¹⁰ Stanley J. Grenz, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 44-47.

¹¹ Breckus, 7-11.

¹² Breckus, 1, 12, 18.

190 she lived for another two decades after the Seneca Falls women’s rights convention of
191 1848, she never demanded full leadership equality with men.¹³

192

193

194 **B. First Women’s Rights Movement – Mid-to-Late 19th Century**

195 As the revivals of the Second Great Awakening waned, a movement for women’s
196 political and social equality began to ferment in circles that had worked for slavery
197 abolition and temperance reform. Scholars point to the 1848 Seneca Falls convention
198 as the beginning of modern feminism in the United States. There were certainly
199 precursors to this event in England and Europe, and two distinct influences helped
200 instigate the movement, one religious, the other rooted in the egalitarian skepticism of
201 the French revolution.

202 Feminist scholars have recognized the important influence of evangelists Charles
203 Finney’s practice of allowing men and women to pray aloud and exhort in public
204 religious gatherings.¹⁴ This religious heritage was seen at Seneca Falls in the active role
205 that religious Quaker women, such as Lucretia Mott, and the location itself, a Wesleyan
206 Methodist Chapel.¹⁵

207 But the other strand of skeptical influence was also well established by this time.
208 This strand harkened back to the likes of British author Mary Wollstonecraft, who
209 defended the French Revolution, lived in basically an open marriage, and wrote the
210 feminist touchstone, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*.¹⁶ This secular approach to
211 the rights of women was well represented at Seneca Falls by the skeptical Elizabeth
212 Cady Stanton, who was later responsible for the provocative and revisionist *The*
213 *Women’s Bible*. Published in the 1890s, this work viewed the Genesis creation account
214 as “myth and fable,” applauded the independence and “natural curiosity” of Eve, and

¹³ Breckus, 7.

¹⁴ Janet Wilson James, “Women in American Religious History: An Overview,” in *Women in American Religion* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 7.

¹⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seneca_Falls_Convention#Reform_movement

¹⁶ Bonnie Anderson, *Joyous Greetings: The First International Women’s Movement 1830-1860* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 54-55.

215 advocated praying to the trinity of “a heavenly Mother, Father, and Son.”¹⁷

216 These religious and secular strands of the women’s liberation movement existed
217 in uneasy tension for a time, until the secularist wing, led by Stanton as well as agnostic
218 Susan B. Anthony became the predominant influences in the 1880s and 90s. It was the
219 influence of these “secular” feminists that kept the “biblical” feminists like Harriet
220 Livermore and Ellen White at arms length from this movement, despite their shared
221 concerns on issues of slavery and temperance.

222 It is important to recognize that churches of this period were contending with at
223 least two versions of feminism. One took seriously scriptural teaching regarding the
224 roles of men and women, but felt that the roles had been too narrowly understood, in
225 preventing women from speaking and acting in public, whether in the church or in
226 society. This group still upheld male headship in the home, and often in the church as
227 well, generally retaining the role of ordained elder and pastor for men. This position is
228 often described as complementarianism.

229 The other kind of feminism proceeded from essentially philosophical
230 commitments to abstract notions of equality, and sought to treat men and women as
231 essentially interchangeable entities with little or no role differential. This position
232 would describe those egalitarians who reject male headship even in the home, as well
233 as the more extreme versions identified as secular or liberal feminism.

234 Depending on their biblical and social orientations, churches reacted similarly or
235 differently to both versions. In embracing a “biblical” feminism, allowing women
236 complementarian roles in teaching, preaching, and evangelism, a church may still have
237 rejected the “secular” version, which tended to call for equality in all areas of
238 leadership. A certain historical confusion has been created by an oversight of these
239 important distinctions.

240

241 C. **The late 19th century rise of fundamentalism and liberalism**

242 The rise of the first women’s rights movement was one symptom of an

¹⁷ Ibid., 168-172; New York Times, March 7, 1896, Mrs. W. Winslow Crannell. Her View of the "Woman's Bible."; What a Correspondent Says of Objections: Offered to Work. (viewed on June 9, 2013).

243 underlying ideological challenge to social, cultural and religious authority that also
244 provoked the religious responses that historians call fundamentalism and liberalism.
245 These two opposing, yet philosophically connected, religious responses impacted
246 basically all religious groups in America, and indeed in the West.¹⁸

247 Fundamentalism is typically associated with the biblical conservative and
248 socially insular reactions against evolution and Biblical higher criticism of the early 20th
249 century. Such reactions are seen in the 1878 Niagara Bible Conference Creed, the
250 Scopes Monkey Trial, where evolution was put on trial, and the twelve-volume set of
251 *The Fundamentals*, a defense of the Bible against higher criticism published between
252 1910 and 1915.¹⁹

253 Historians of fundamentalism have placed the core of fundamentalism, however,
254 a bit earlier than these events, when the doctrine of Biblical verbal inerrancy was
255 formulated in the sophisticated environs of Princeton University in the mid-19th
256 century.²⁰ This occurred under the guidance of Professor Charles Hodge in the 1840s
257 and 50s, and then under his son Archibald Hodge, and his son's colleague Benjamin
258 Warfield, in the 1870s to the turn of the century.²¹ The Hodges and Warfield insisted on
259 verbal, dictation type of inspiration that was not part of historic Protestantism. Rather,
260 it was an innovation to meet the new "scientific" standards of objectivity required in the
261 minds of many in the modern age.

262 This attempt to completely objectify the Bible conflated the standards used in
263 the separate fields of empirical science and historical inquiry. It tried to hold Christian
264 belief to standards the Bible itself did not envision, and that science itself could not

¹⁸ For a discussion of how liberalism and fundamentalism actually draw on the same, non-biblical, philosophical foundationalism, see Miller, Nicholas, "Divided by Visions of the Truth: The Bible, Epistemology, and the Adventist Community," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 2, 241-262 (2009).

¹⁹ Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenerianism, 1800-1930* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1970), 140-141, 273-277.

²⁰ Sandeen, 114-121; George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1980), 5.

²¹ Mark Noll ed., *The Princeton Theology: 1812-1921* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1983, 2001), 30-33, 165-166, 218-220.

265 actually meet. This did not, however, deter the determined dogmatists.²² In their goal
266 to adhere to an objective and scientific model, the Princeton theologians developed a
267 biblical system that was rigid, inflexible, and socially conservative.

268 Charles Hodge wrote in defense of slavery, and in opposition to any public role
269 for women in the church, or in society at large for that matter. Not only was Hodge
270 opposed to women's ordination, but also to female preaching, and even women's
271 involvement in the reform and benevolence societies of the day.²³ A few years later in
272 the 1880s, Benjamin Warfield supported the revival of the New Testament order of
273 deaconesses, so as to "relieve the embarrassments we have had to stop [women] from
274 preaching in the Presbyterian churches." Warfield believed that Paul's injunctions
275 against women speaking in the churches were "precise, absolute, and all inclusive."²⁴

276 Not all biblically conservative churches held either to the verbal, dictation model
277 of scripture, nor to the Princetonians rigidly defined view of gender limitations. As we
278 have already discussed, a number of biblically conservative churches allowed for
279 women's public praying, exhortation, and even preaching. But as the strife between
280 liberals and fundamentalists began to heat up, more and more biblically conservative
281 denominations were influenced by both concepts of verbal inspiration, as well as
282 narrower gender roles.

283 An important point to recognize is that, as there were at least two types of
284 feminism in the 19th century, so there were at least two different views of gender roles
285 in most biblically-conservative churches. The Princetonian view, which worked its way
286 more broadly into fundamentalism and churches affected by it, had a very narrow and
287 circumscribed view of women in ministry. They forbade not just ordination, but also
288 women teaching and preaching in church, as well as taking other kinds of active, public
289 roles in mixed-gender settings.

290 This rigid and limited view of the women's role in the church and society is often
291 referred to as patriarchy (though this modern, fundamentalist model should not be

²² Sandeen, 116-118.

²³ Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender: 1875 to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 35.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

292 identified with the Bible’s description of the patriarchs). This fundamentalist
293 patriarchy stands in contrast to the practices of other biblically conservative churches
294 which, while not often accepting women’s ordination to presiding elder or pastor, did
295 allow for a much more extensive role for women in preaching, evangelism, teaching,
296 and other kinds of leadership. This more flexible view has, as we earlier noted, been
297 referred to as complementarianism. (As we discuss below, a few biblically conservative
298 churches in this period did appear to accept, at least in theory, an egalitarianism, which
299 made no gender distinction in relation to church office.) As with the case of “biblical”
300 versus “secular” feminism, the failure to distinguish between patriarchal and
301 complementarian positions has also been the cause of much historical confusion. Our
302 Adventist pioneers were not, on the whole patriarchal, but defended the ability of
303 women to preach and evangelize in church, though they did not extend full pastoral
304 ordination to women. Thus, they held a classic complementarian position.

305 In the 1910s and 1920s, as fundamentalism spread, many churches that had
306 been complementarian in nature, with very active women’s reformist, missionary, and
307 benevolence societies, became more patriarchal. These women’s groups were often
308 placed under the oversight of committees controlled by men, or discontinued
309 altogether. This was often triggered as a reaction against liberal churches and factions
310 that advocated for the kind of full and total equality, or sameness of role and function, in
311 church that the secular feminists were calling for in civil society.²⁵

312 This spread of liberal theology, with the movement to read Old Testament
313 stories as myths, and to view the New Testament as being heavily influenced by culture
314 in relation gender teachings, that opened up many of the mainline churches to full
315 gender equality, including all forms of ministry, preaching and ordination. As Chaves
316 notes, the first women’s liberation movement dissipated by the 1920s. It did not
317 resurge until the late 1960s and 1970s.²⁶ Yet ten major denominations implemented
318 women’s ordination in the period from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, including
319 Reformed/Presbyterian churches and various Methodists.²⁷

²⁵ Bendroth, 55-60.

²⁶ Chaves, 160-161.

²⁷ Chaves, 16-17.

320 Some of this change can be attributed to the social upheavals caused by World
321 War II. But the leavening of the mainline denominations by higher Biblical criticism is
322 also an important part of the story. The spread of this liberal approach to the Bible was
323 enhanced by the rise of the ecumenical movement in the 1950s and 1960s, as a focus on
324 social justice, and a move away from strong biblical positions, made for a greater
325 possibility of unity among various branches of Protestantism.

326 But again, a distinction needs to be made between those churches, generally
327 mainline Protestant, that embraced a biblically liberal, feminist agenda, and those that
328 accepted egalitarian arguments from an essentially biblically conservative view, such as
329 Pentecostal, Wesleyan Holiness churches, and African Methodist churches. Some
330 churches that allow for women's ordination, such as the Conservative
331 Congregationalists, are strongly opposed to any interfaith activity. As we will see in our
332 discussion of the various groups below, women's ordination did not necessarily go
333 hand-in-hand with biblical liberalism. While a correlation exists between biblically-
334 liberal denominations and women's ordination, to conflate the two would be a
335 historical mistake. We will take a closer look at these connections in our discussion of
336 the various groups below.

337

338 **D. The Second Women's Rights Movement – 1960s to 1970s**

339 Unsurprisingly, the rise of a secular feminism in the mid-to-late 1960s and early
340 1970s produced a new wave of denominations adopting women's ordination, including
341 Presbyterians, many Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, and Mennonites.²⁸ This flurry of
342 changes ended in 1979, and with the rise of the conservative Reagan years, no more
343 major denominations made the switch throughout the 1980s or most of the 1990s.
344 Indeed, at least one major denomination, the Southern Baptists, reversed their position
345 on ordaining women pastors in the 1990s.²⁹ It was during this second round of
346 women's rights advocacy that the issue of women's ordination became a significant one
347 for the Adventist church.

²⁸ Chaves, 17.

²⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Baptist_Convention#cite_ref-women_57-0
(viewed on 6/10/2013).

348 While another paper is being presented on Adventism and women’s ordination,
349 it is worth noting here that it is quite apparent that Adventism during the early to mid
350 20th century had been influenced by fundamentalism, and moved from the
351 complementarian camp, into the patriarchal camp. This was evidenced by the almost
352 complete lack of female leadership in many church circles in the mid 20th century,
353 including the absence of women evangelists and preachers that were far more
354 common in the pioneer days.³⁰ It was also shown by an unequal pay scale, contrary to
355 the counsels of Ellen White, which was afforded female employees. The Church
356 suffered an embarrassing legal defeat at the hands of a book editor, Merikay Silver,
357 during the 1970s, that helped begin to nudge it out of its patriarchal ways, and back
358 towards its complementarian roots.³¹

359

360 **F. The New Civil Rights: Equality as Sameness - 1980s to the Present.**

361 The second women’s rights movement was one symptom of a larger cultural
362 shift in America that impacted a wide array of social issues in the late 60s and early 70s.
363 The turbulence of the anti-war demonstrations, the rise of a protest culture, the
364 outbreak of the sexual revolution, and the questioning of all gender roles—in short the
365 quest to break down all societal distinctions in the name of a broad-based notion of
366 equality—led to what has become almost a permanent cultural divide in our country
367 that has left no institution, public or private, untouched. The Stonewall Riots in
368 Greenwich Village, New York, in 1969 announced the beginnings of another kind of
369 gender revolution—gay rights.

370 This movement rapidly morphed from simply trying to remove criminal
371 penalties and the stigma of mental illness, to one that sought acceptance, legal and

³⁰ This shift can be graphically seen on the wall outside the office of the Treasurer in the General Conference building where pictures of all the GC Treasurers are hung. In observing that wall, I noticed that in the first thirty years of the office during the late 19th century, no less than three women served as GC Treasurer. Since the beginning of the 20th century, no women have served in that position. The influence of Fundamentalism on Adventism in the 1920s and 30s, especially in terms of a rigid view of inspiration, has been well documented by George Knight in his *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 128-138.

³¹ <http://www.vfa.us/MERIKAY%20McLEOD.htm> (accessed on 6/10/2013).

372 social equality, and in more recent years, full marriage rights for LGBT couples.
373 Churches that had accepted women's ordination in the mid-to-late 20th century began
374 to experience pressure to normalize homosexual behavior, and even to ordain
375 practicing gays. Beginning in the 1980s, a number of churches, mostly mainline, liberal
376 denominations began to do so. This trend has continued into the 2000s, with the
377 Episcopal and the American Lutheran Church voting to ordain practicing gays in 2009.
378 However, a number of biblically conservative churches that ordain women have
379 resisted the acceptance of homosexuality.

380 These groups include the historically black African Methodist churches,
381 conservative Congregational churches, Pentecostal churches, and churches arising from
382 the Wesleyan holiness tradition, including the Salvation Army. Thus, it is not historically
383 true to say that all churches that embrace women's ordination are also likely to
384 embrace homosexual practice. Much is dependent on the theological context and
385 reasons they use to move forward on ordination. There is some evidence, though, that
386 at least some of these conservative churches are facing greater internal challenges on
387 the issue of homosexuality than is faced in church's that have not accepted women's
388 ordination. These issues will be looked at more closely as we examine the various
389 groups in the section below.

390

391

F. Four Historical Views

392 In telling the above history, at least four different approaches to gender and
393 leadership emerge. Understanding these four groups will help us understand the
394 evolving and shifting approaches of the various churches that we examine below. The
395 four approaches, just roughly outlined, are as follows:³²

³² This chart is my own creation, though I draw on existing terminology for the four categories. But in defining these categories, I draw from my reading of the history of the various denominations and their differing approaches. These are rough historical typologies, and there will be disagreement over how the elements of each category are defined, and whether there other categories between these listed categories. But this crude overview will give a general sense of how various churches have shifted over time.

View	Patriarchal/ Fundamentalist	Complementary/ Evangelical	Egalitarian/ Evangelical	Liberal/ Feminist
Pre-Fall	Male headship; Adam had authority over Eve	Male leadership & representation; each authority in own roles, but no authority “over”	gender roles; but no overall leadership	Roles entirely based on individual capacities apart from gender
Post-Fall	Male headship intensified and extended to all elements of church and society	Male headship created; man is primary leader of family and spiritual leader in church	Male headship results from fall; but only in family, not in church	Male headship purely descriptive result of sin; roles not gender related
Home	Man in charge of spiritual and temporal affairs; women confined to home matters	Man provides oversight, but woman in charge of many things in home; man first among equal partners	Man provides oversight, but woman in charge of many things; aim for equal partnership	Equal partnership with roles based on skills and gifts, not gender
Church	Men in charge; women’s role limited to teaching children and other women	Men have primary ecclesiastical authority, but women can teach, preach, and evangelize to all audiences	No gender roles in relation to any church offices or positions.	No gender roles in relation to any church offices or positions
Society	Women should not have public roles	Woman may have public roles, balanced with domestic roles	Gender makes no difference for public life	Gender makes no difference for public life

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In discussing the various church groupings, we will discover that there is not only a variety of the above views within a single grouping, but also that individual churches move among several of the views over periods of time. Some churches have embraced all four views, though usually at different times. A strong embrace by large factions of a single denomination of differing views at the same time has usually led to schism.

II. Church Groupings

A. Group 1 – Historically Biblically Unorthodox Churches

The name of this group is not a subjective evaluation of the non-scriptural nature of the group's teachings. Rather it is an assessment of the formal position the group holds to the authority of the scriptures. So, this group includes those churches that have historically rejected the divine or ultimate authority of the scriptures, such as: the Unitarian/Universalists, theosophists, and spiritualists; groups that place the "inner light" above scripture, such as the Quakers; or groups that place their own revelation as superior to scripture, such as the Christian Scientists or Mormons. I do not include those groups that have embraced biblical higher criticism, and have placed secular reason over scripture, as most of these churches historically had higher commitments to scripture, and will thus be discussed as part of the groups to which they originally belonged.³³

The historically unorthodox group will not require much attention, as they are least like the Adventist church. This group as a whole usually embraced women's ordination early on, but has members that continue to oppose it, including the Mormons. The LDS church lives on the border between the Patriarchal and Complementary views. The reality is, that as most of the denominations within this group do not take the Bible as supremely authoritative, when secular society or culture begins to press another way, they rather readily follow. Thus, most of this group embraced women's ordained leadership during the first round of women's rights in the late 19th century.

While this biblically unorthodox group that supports ordination exists, it is not the direct historical impetus, template, or example that caused more biblically conservative church's to consider, and at times adopt, women's ordination. Indeed, most conservative evangelical churches were openly critical of all these unorthodox groups. That these groups were among the first to ordain women would have made most of the evangelical churches less likely, not more, to adopt it themselves. Thus, it is not correct that the women's equality movement came into the biblically-conservative Christian churches

³³ For an overview of a number of various unorthodox, outsider groups in relation to female leadership, see Bednarowski, Mary Farrell, "Outside the Mainstream: Women's Religion and Women Religious Leaders in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XLVIII/2, 207-231.

433 primarily or even secondarily through spiritualism or mysticism, as some at times argue.
434 Any such influence will be very indirect, tenuous, and peripheral, if it can be shown to
435 exist at all.

436 **B. Group 2 – Sacramental and High Churches**

437 Another group far removed from Adventism in history and theology is the
438 churches that embrace some form of sacramentalism in their theology and ritual. This
439 group, made up mostly of Catholics and Eastern Orthodox, also includes some high
440 church Protestants, such as Anglo-Catholics and some conservative Lutherans. Churches
441 that are sacramental believe that the ordinances, such as communion and baptism, are
442 means of physically transferring the grace and presence of God to the participating
443 believer, rather than just being a symbol of an underlying spiritual reality.³⁴

444 In the sacramental churches, the form and manner of the performance of the ritual
445 is a key part of the function, and the manner can extend to the identity of the priest or
446 officiant, which includes his gender. The priest is understood to be “iconic” of Christ, and
447 as his agent, must resemble him in various ways, including his maleness. As Chaves
448 notes, “by this logic, it is literally impossible for a woman to be a priest; the sacrament if
449 performed by a woman, would not be valid.”³⁵ Those churches that embrace
450 sacramentalism also have a strong regard for the authoritative role of tradition. The
451 tradition of male-priesthood, and of arguments like the iconic argument, which it rooted
452 in tradition rather than the New Testament, are given very strong weight in these
453 denominations. It would appear to be this tradition, as much as, if not more than, the
454 logic of sacramentalism, that causes them to persist with male-only ordination.

455 Because of the strength of this sacramental tradition, very few historically
456 sacramental churches have considered the women’s ordination option. The few that have
457 are those that represent a broad outlook on the sacraments within their denominations.
458 For instance, the Anglican and Episcopal churches are well known for being home to a
459 wide range of theological persuasions, from evangelical, to moderate, to high church. It
460 turns out that the two opposite wings, the biblically conservative evangelical wing, and
461 the high church, Anglo-Catholic wing, both oppose women’s ordination, though for

³⁴ Chaves, *Ordaining Women*, 84-85, fn. 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

462 different reasons—the high church group for reasons relating to sacrament and tradition,
463 the evangelical wing for reasons relating to biblical teaching. The moderate middle,
464 which had a lower view of both scripture and tradition, quite overwhelmingly favored the
465 ordination of women at nearly 72% clergy support.³⁶

466 As the moderate, biblically-liberal middle group expanded, and the pressure from
467 the second women’s equality movement of the 1960s and 1970s increased, resistance to
468 ordination was overcome, especially in those countries where church tradition and
469 history was not strong, such as the English-speaking countries outside of Britain. The
470 American and Canadian Anglican/Episcopal Churches approved ordination in 1976,
471 followed by New Zealand in 1977. In 1992, the Church of England did so, followed by
472 many other Anglican/Episcopal churches around the world.³⁷ Currently, most of these
473 churches are expanding women’s leadership role to include bishop and higher. At the
474 same time, ordination is also being opened to actively gay priests and bishops

475 Adventism is historically neither sacramental nor iconic in its understanding of
476 communion or baptism. The underlying temptation to reify and sacralize symbols and
477 signs is a temptation for all believers, including Adventists, and we need to be careful not
478 to endow any religious ritual or practice or person with more spiritual authority and
479 power than is biblically appropriate. But as a historical matter, the sacramental and
480 traditional arguments for male leadership in the church are not those that have
481 historically caused the Adventist church to ordain only men to the gospel ministry.
482 Rather, Adventists have far more in common with the evangelical wing of Anglicanism,
483 which has centrally biblical concerns about the issue.

484 Both the conservatives and the “progressives” need to be cautious about over-
485 using the sacramental churches as an example or foil for their respective positions. It is
486 simply not true, as some progressives propose, that Adventists that oppose women’s
487 ordination are drawing on, either explicitly or implicitly, sacramental or traditionally
488 iconic arguments. Indeed, conservatives are more likely to be influenced away from

³⁶ Nason-Clark, Nancy, “Ordaining Women as Priests: Religious vs. Sexist Explanations for Clerical Attitudes,” *Sociological Analysis* 1987, 48, 3:264-65, 268.

³⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ordination_of_women_in_the_Anglican_Communion#First_ordinations (viewed on 6/25/2013).

489 these arguments precisely because they clash with underlying commitments to the
490 authority of scripture and the priesthood of believers.

491 On the other hand, conservatives need to be cautious in using the Anglicans' move
492 to ordaining homosexuals as a logical outcome of the arguments for ordination in
493 Adventism. Anglicans embrace of female ordination had to do with the rejection of
494 certain sacramental arguments based on tradition rather than scripture. The underlying
495 theological center of the Anglican Church has been, for the last century or so, quite far on
496 the liberal end. Notwithstanding the Anglican evangelical wing, ennobled by such names
497 as C.S. Lewis and John Stott, the Church's conservative cultural practices were the result
498 of the weight of social establishment inertia rather than meaningful scriptural
499 commitment.

500 This lack of a scriptural anchor allowed the church to go, in a few short years, from
501 a relatively extreme patriarchy, to a feminist liberalism, leaping entirely over the
502 evangelical options of complementarianism and egalitarianism in between. Without a
503 commitment to the biblical teaching, as the social forces of the 60s and 70s undermined
504 the social establishment, so the Church's commitments were undermined with it, leading
505 on into the gay rights revolution of the 1990s and 2000s, with a similar result for the
506 church.³⁸

507 The Catholics, the Eastern Orthodox, some conservative Lutherans, and various
508 breakaway Anglican groups show that commitment to the traditions of sacramentalism,
509 apart from a high view of scripture, can continue to hold at bay both women's ordination
510 and gay rights. But these successes should not cause us to aspire to a sacramental
511 theology; neither should their failures cause us to immediately accuse those with
512 conservative biblical arguments *for* women's ordination of following in the biblically-
513 liberal sacramentarian's inevitable slide into acceptance of homosexuality. While the
514 sacramenterians may provide some lesson for both sides, we are following very different
515 theological pathways from them, and should be very careful in over-applying any lessons
516 from their stories.

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³⁸http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ordination_of_women_in_the_Anglican_Communion#First_woman_bishop_and_primate (viewed on 6/25/2013.)

518 **C. Group 3 – Calvinist/Reformed Churches**

519 Somewhat closer to the Adventist heritage, but still a step or two removed, is that
520 part of the magisterial reformation represented by the churches associated with the
521 Calvinist/Reformed tradition. With a high view of God’s sovereignty and power, and a
522 low view of human nature and natural ability, representative churches from this tradition
523 include Presbyterians, Congregationalists (the denomination of the early American
524 Puritans), and the particular Baptists. Their view of scripture is particularly interesting,
525 as they have tended, as a group, to oscillate between extremes, moving at times from a
526 rigid biblical fideism to an extreme liberal view of scripture.

527 After the period of the First Great Awakening in the mid-18th century, and partially
528 responding to the civilly enforced biblical conservatism of the New England
529 Congregationalists, certain pastors within that denomination began pushing back, and
530 experimenting with theories of universalism and Unitarianism. Eventually, they
531 developed both the Unitarian and Universalist denominations, and also contributed to the
532 theologically liberal, panentheist, transcendentalist movement of the early 19th century.
533 These were among the first groups to embrace women’s ordination.

534 The biblically conservative reformed churches tended to embrace a rather
535 extreme patriarchal outlook, forbidding not only women’s ordination, but also opposing
536 women preaching or teaching in mixed public settings. That Antoinette Brown, the first
537 woman ordained in America, was a Congregationalist minister says much more about the
538 polity of the church than its theology. Due to its congregational organization, a local,
539 liberal church, could take ordain a woman, but as a whole, Congregationalists were quite
540 opposed to women’s ministry.

541 Indeed, as we discussed in the historical section, the extreme biblical conservatism
542 of the Congregational theologians at Princeton, where verbal inerrancy was developed,
543 went hand-in-hand with a social conservatism that forbade women from teaching,
544 preaching, and other public roles. This combination of Biblical rigidity and social
545 conservatism was bequeathed to the larger fundamentalists movement, which was
546 looking for weapons with which to push back against the liberal higher Biblical criticism
547 coming over from Germany in the late 19th century.

548 The Princetonian verbal inerrancy provided one response to the liberal assault.

549 But many denominations did not see the liabilities that came with it: an artificially rigid
550 view of scripture, a socially conservative outlook, and a strongly patriarchal view of the
551 role of women. As we will see below, many non-reformed denominations that were at
552 least complementarian in their orientation in the mid-to-late 19th century, including, as
553 earlier discussed, Seventh-day Adventists, moved over into a version of patriarchy in the
554 early 20th century, because of the influence of the new fundamentalistic outlook.

555 The Presbyterians and Congregationalists themselves were quite impacted by
556 their own extreme positions. The dogmatism and inflexibility of the conservatives led to
557 a schism, with the most conservative group starting their own seminary and church. This
558 conservative breakaway survived, but did not flourish. With only moderates and liberals
559 remaining in the main Presbyterian Church, the balance of power shifted towards the
560 liberal side of the church. It is this that explains the eventual acceptance of women's
561 ordination by most Presbyterians in 1956.³⁹

562 The mid-20th century was an unusual time for a gender change, as it fell between
563 women's rights movements, the first of which dissipated by the 1920s, the second of
564 which did not ramp up until the late 1960s and 1970s. The timing is explained by the
565 growing influence of biblically liberal theology, which by the 1950s had gained sufficient
566 traction to implement liberal values. Similar things were happening with some of the
567 other mainline denominations, including the Reformed Church (1948) and the
568 Methodists (1956), as the results of the fundamentalist/liberal split continued to play
569 itself out in the American churches. These same churches have, in the period of equality
570 since the 1990s, also accepted the gay rights movement.

571 A number of conservative reformed churches split off, and continued with a
572 conservative Biblical outlook, but there numbers are quite small (50,000) compared with
573 the main Presbyterian churches (1.9 million.) It is worth noting that, while they are quite
574 small, the conservative reformed churches are growing, whereas the main Presbyterian

³⁹ A good discussion of the process from the "progressive" view can be found at Carson, Mary & Price, James, "The Ordination of Women and the Function of the Bible," *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 59:2 (Summer, 1981), 250-256, and the "conservative" view of the story can be found at Smith, Frank, "Petticoat Presbyterianism: A Century of Debate in American Presbyterianism on the Issue of the Ordination of Women," *Westminster Theological Journal* 51: (1989), 51-76.

575 churches are rather rapidly dwindling. The conservative reformed churches have also
576 generally accepted the possibility of women's ordination, though leave it up to the local
577 church, the vast majority of which have not chosen to implement it. These conservative
578 Presbyterian churches, however, despite being open to women's ordination, have
579 continued to strongly resist the gay rights' movement. Given their limited size and
580 history, however, their continued viability as a major conservative denomination is in
581 question.⁴⁰

582 While there exist distinct theological differences between Adventists and the
583 reformed churches, their experiences hold deeply important lessons for all Adventists.
584 We have in one church an illustration of the danger of both strongly conservative,
585 patriarchal positions, and liberal, feminist positions. It can be tempting sometimes, for
586 conservatives to believe that inflexibility will prevent us from heading down a slippery
587 slope. But at times, it is that very inflexibility that actually provokes a strong opposite
588 reaction, leading to the very consequences one hoped to avoid.

589 The Biblical rigidity and conservatism of the reformed movement lead, at least in
590 part, to both the universalist/Unitarian excesses of the early 19th century, and to the
591 liberal excesses of the 20th century. It was the reformed theologians and leaders of the
592 19th century that most fiercely defended an artificially rigid view of scriptural inspiration
593 and an overly patriarchal view of gender roles. The result of their efforts were, as a
594 historical matter, the very liberal mainline reformed liberalism of the mid-to-late 20th
595 century. It is true that extreme can easily produce extremes. Like the sacramental
596 churches, the reformed churches tended to go from a conservative patriarchy to a liberal
597 feminism, to the extent of embracing gay rights, in a matter of a few decades, largely
598 jumping over the middle-ground positions of complementarianism or egalitarianism.
599 There are some exceptions within the reformed tradition, but these conservative
600 churches tend to be quite few in number and unable to speak for the denomination as a
601 whole, or even in major part.

602 The lesson for Adventists does not require much explication. Indulging a strong
603 patriarchy will not protect the church from a slippery slide into liberalism, but rather

⁴⁰ See the descriptions in the attached Appendix of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches.

604 could be the kind of push that would hasten that in some parts of the church. We need to
605 carefully understand our complementarian roots, and affirm women’s ministry and
606 leadership, even as we look for biblically appropriate and faithful ways to do so. A
607 defense of the patriarchal status quo, as the history of the reformed churches shows, will
608 be an inadequate, and even harmful, response to the present crisis over gender and
609 leadership in our church.

610 **D. Group 4 – Methodism - Holiness/Pentecostal/Black Churches**

611 A closer step still to Adventism are the constellation of churches growing out of
612 the Methodist/Wesleyian tradition, from which many of our pioneers came, including
613 Ellen White. These churches are characterized by an Arminian/free will orientation, an
614 emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in a changed life of the believer, and, at least
615 historically, a high view of scriptural authority, all elements that characterize Adventism.

616 Examples of this group include the various Methodist churches, the Wesleyans
617 holiness churches, and the various Pentecostal churches, which had their roots in the
618 holiness movement. The historically black American denominations are almost all
619 connected historically with Methodism, as shown by the “Methodist” and/or “Episcopal”
620 labels that often appear in their names. This is the hardest group to make generalizations
621 about, as the various sub-groups handled the gender and leadership quite differently.
622 The mainstream Methodists tended to be true to their sacramentally-influenced Anglican
623 roots. Early on Wesley and other Methodist leaders allowed for women preachers and
624 exhorters under “extraordinary circumstances,” but they did not ordain women to the
625 pastoral role until the liberalizing of their theology in the 1950s and 1960s.⁴¹

626 The Wesleyan holiness and Pentecostal churches, with their emphasis on the
627 importance of the influence and gifts of the Holy Spirit, tended to minimize role
628 differentials, and elevate the importance of the unction of the Holy Spirit in choosing
629 whomever it would. The holiness churches and the Pentecostals were among the earliest

⁴¹ John Wesley cautiously supported at least some women preachers as an “extraordinary” call of God to a position generally reserved for men. Jacqueline Field-Bibb, *Women Towards Priesthood* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 10-13. But such an extraordinary call did not extend to the actual office of pastor. As one early Methodist leader put it, “but in this extraordinary call I do not consider *any* female strictly and fully called to the *pastoral office* . . .” Ibid., 13-14.

630 biblically conservative denominations to ordain women as preachers, pastors and elders.
631 The Salvation Army began ordaining women in 1870, the Wesleyan Methodist Church in
632 1891, and various Pentecostal churches in the early 1900s.

633 “Progressives” like to emphasize the apparently egalitarian position of the
634 holiness/Pentecostal churches, a position they held along with a generally conservative
635 approach to scripture, and a rejection of higher biblical criticism. But this is not the
636 whole story. These churches tended to be a combination of complementarian and
637 egalitarian, upholding women in various kinds of ministry, but also holding to the
638 doctrine of male headship, especially in the home. Thus, the Salvation Army, despite
639 ordaining both men and women, never allowed a woman to outrank her husband, and
640 considered the wife the ministerial assistant of the husband, subject to his oversight.⁴²

641 Similarly, nearly all of the Pentecostal groups drew a distinction between
642 prophetic and priestly leadership. The former had to do with preaching and teaching, the
643 latter with church administration and administrative oversight. All Pentecostal groups
644 were united, at least at their beginnings, in allowing women the prophetic role of
645 preaching and evangelism. But most of them reserved roles of administrative oversight
646 within the church for men. These groups followed the model of having two tracks of
647 ministry: licensed ministers, which could include women, who could preach, teach and
648 evangelize; and ordained ministers, limited to men, who could baptize, organize churches,
649 and ordain elders and pastors.⁴³

650 Historians and scholars of the modern gender debate often overlook these
651 meaningful gender distinctions in the holiness and Pentecostal groups.⁴⁴ They report on

⁴² Stanley, Susie, “The Promise Fulfilled: Women’s Ministries in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement,” in *Religious Institutions and Women’s Leadership: New Roles Inside the Mainstream*, ed. Wessinger, Catherine (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Press, 1996), 148.

⁴³ Barfoot, Charles & Sheppard, Gerald, “Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion: The Changing role of Women Clergy in Classical Pentecostal Churches,” *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (September), 10-12.

⁴⁴ For example, while he accepts that a number of holiness churches were complementarian, Chaves simply states that the Salvation Army starting ordaining women in 1870, and had granted “full formal equality to women from its beginning.” Chaves, 98, 114-115. But this is to overlook the public women limitations a women experience in the Salvation Army if she was married. See, Stanley, Susie, “The Promise Fulfilled,” 148.

652 the acceptance of women preaching and teaching and working in a pastoral role, and
653 assume or imply that full equality was the rule or norm. When this is deviated from
654 among these groups, it is often blamed on external fundamentalist influences that began
655 to impact all biblically conservative denominations from the early 1900s forward. But
656 this is simply not the case, as most of the holiness and Pentecostal churches had these
657 distinctions from their early days.

658 As one scholar has noted, early on, “with the exception of the Church of the
659 Foursquare Gospel, the Pentecostal denominations prevented women from performing a
660 minimal, negotiated set of priestly functions.”⁴⁵ Some groups moved towards full
661 equality, and then as quickly moved back again, as they emphasized first the prophetic,
662 then priestly aspects of ministry. It seems that biblically conservative groups, such as the
663 pentecostals, are at most ambivalent and conflicted over a purely egalitarian position, and
664 frequently move back toward a complementarian view, either in theory, or in practice, or
665 both.⁴⁶

666 It is true that as fundamentalism began to impact American conservative
667 Christianity more broadly, that Pentecostal and holiness groups were impacted by its
668 inherent patriarchy, as were the Adventists. These groups not only moved away from
669 women licensed ministers, but even away from allowing women public positions of
670 leadership at all, and even limited their preaching and teaching.⁴⁷ Still, these groups had
671 a much higher percentage of female participation in leadership than other groups.
672 Though whether this was from choice or necessity, or some combination of the two, is
673 uncertain. Pentecostal churches had a percentage of women membership about 10%
674 higher than other denominations. In the 1920s and 30s, this meant that women made up
675 nearly 2/3 of the Pentecostal denominations, whereas in other denominations, they

⁴⁵ Barfoot & Sheppard, “Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion,” 5.

⁴⁶ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 170-176; as one women scholar put it, “males founded Pentecostalism, and males dominate the leadership roles in Pentecostalism . . . [and] generally dominate the public and political aspects of Pentecostalism.” “Elaine Lawless, “No So Different a Story After All: Pentecostal Women in the Pulpit,” in *Women’s Leadership in Marginal Religions*, ed. Wessinger, Catherine (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 41.

⁴⁷Chaves, 109-113; Stanley, Susie, “The Promise Fulfilled,” 148-150.

676 accounted for a little more than half.⁴⁸

677 While not embracing an explicitly patriarchal position, in practice many churches,
678 including the Adventists,⁴⁹ in the 1920s and 30s moved to a semi-patriarchal position.
679 Male ministers and preachers became strongly preferred over women. But the influence
680 of this creeping patriarchy, baleful as it was, should not be allowed to obscure the fact
681 that many holiness/Pentecostal churches were originally, as the early Adventist church
682 was, much more complementarian in their outlook and practices, rather than being
683 purely egalitarian, as they are at times portrayed today.

684 The African American churches have their own story, shaped by their rise from the
685 conditions of slavery, and from the continuing discrimination found in the white churches
686 they initially entered. Resistance to the abusive hierarchy that constantly surrounded
687 them tended to make black Americans suspicious of any hierarchy or hint of
688 discrimination. From early days, they welcomed women as exhorters and prophesiers,
689 and at least one of the major denominations, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion
690 Church, ordained women pastors as early as 1898. A number of the others followed in
691 the 1950s and 1960s, including the AME Church and the CME Church.⁵⁰ All of these
692 churches, however, have remained strongly resistant to homosexual practices.

693 It is important to note, though, that while the black churches have been supportive
694 of black female leadership in theory, in practice these biblically conservative
695 denominations show a preference at the local level for male pastors. In most of the
696 historically black churches, despite accepting female equality for a half to a full century,
697 female pastors typically represent about 3% of the pastorate.⁵¹ There are, it seems, a
698 higher percentage of ordained women elders in these churches. But it is interesting also
699 to note that while most evangelical churches are at about 60% to 2/3rds women, black

⁴⁸ Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 161.

⁴⁹ See *Supra*, p. 13.

⁵⁰ Chaves records the AME Church as accepting women pastors in 1960 (Chaves, 17), but Jualynne Dodson, in a scholarly article on the AME Church, gives the date as 1948.

Dodson, Jualynne, "Women's Ministries and the African Methodist Episcopal Tradition," in *Religious Institutions and Women's Leadership: New Roles Inside the Mainstream*, ed., Wessinger, Catherine (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 124-125.

⁵¹ See Appendix description of the AME churches.

700 churches are generally about 75% female to 25% male.⁵² Whether this gender disparity
701 necessitates a greater allowance of women leadership, or whether female leadership is
702 somehow partly causative of the disparity, are interesting questions that would require
703 further study to resolve.

704 **E. Group 5 – Restorationist Churches – Anabaptist, Baptist, Adventist**

705 In the final group are those churches that are least dependent, at least overtly, on
706 tradition and creed, and most open to overturning practices that are not established on
707 the Bible. The Restorationist movement in early 19th century America included groups
708 coming out of a variety of churches and identifying themselves simply as “the Christians,”
709 or the “Christian Connection.” These were the roots of some of the Churches of God, as
710 well as some segments of the Disciples of Christ. Joseph Bates and James White were
711 affiliated with the Christian Connection before they became Adventists, bringing the non-
712 creedal spirit with them.

713 These Restorationist groups had a very similar outlook and approach as another
714 group that started at the beginnings of the Protestant Reformation, the evangelical
715 Anabaptists. This group of “radical” Protestants had a high view of scripture, and a desire
716 to build the church from scratch, completely apart from the civil state. The heirs of this
717 early group include the Mennonites, Brethren, and the Baptists.⁵³ I have thus included
718 these and their related denominations in the Restorationist group.

719 Despite feeling entirely free, and even opposed to, social convention, at least
720 where it differed from biblical teachings, the Restorationist groups were generally
721 complementarian in their gender outlooks. The Baptists, for instance, early on had a good
722 number of women preachers and evangelists, but did not ordain them as presiding elders.
723 In fact, it was the Baptists who began the practice in America of licensing women
724 preachers, rather than ordaining them, in 1815.⁵⁴ Baptists typically have a highly

⁵² The Pew Forum U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, May 8 to Aug., 13, 2007.

⁵³ Baptists are divided into Calvinist/Predestinarian and free-will groups, and a number of the Calvinist Baptist groups are probably best thought of as part of the Calvinist/Reformed group discussed above.

⁵⁴ Blevins, Carolyn DeArmond, “Women and the Baptist Experience,” *Religious Institutions and Women’s Leadership: New Roles Inside the Mainstream*, ed. Wessinger, Catherine (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1966), 172-173.

725 congregational polity, and it is not uncommon for individual congregations to move
726 ahead on certain issues without full denominational support. Thus, various Baptist
727 churches appear on the list of ordaining women pastors from the 1890s through the
728 1920s.⁵⁵

729 The reality was, though, that the vast majority of Baptist churches were not
730 ordaining women, but rather opposed the idea. This changed somewhat in 1964, when
731 the largest Baptist group, the Southern Baptist Convention, voted to ordain women. In
732 the following years, however, the SBC reconsidered its action, and in the 1980s and
733 1990s, rolled that decision back. While some local congregations persist, the SBC has
734 made the family and male headship a fundamental belief, and some churches are
735 disciplined if they choose to ordain female pastors.⁵⁶

736 Another major restorationist church is the Disciples of Christ, tracing their
737 heritage to the movements shepherded by Barton Stone and the father and son
738 Campbells. In their early days, these groups were complementarian, but in the late
739 1880s, the relatively large and successful Disciples of Christ chose to ordain women. The
740 movement continued to flourish into the 1920s and 30s, but it went the way of the
741 mainline Protestant denominations, being leavened by higher biblical criticism, and
742 becoming active in the ecumenical movement. After the 1950s, it experiences a rather
743 precipitous decline, going from more than 2 million members, to somewhere around
744 600,000 today. The church has also become open to homosexual practices, with various
745 regions and localities of the church opening up to membership for openly practicing gays
746 and lesbians.⁵⁷

747 A group very close to the Seventh-day Adventist church is the Advent Christian
748 churches. These came out of the Great Disappointment, and did not adopt the Sabbath or
749 the Sanctuary, but continued on preaching the Advent. This group adopted women's
750 ordination in 1860, one of the first churches to do so on a denominational basis. This
751 group has generally decided Biblically conservative, I can find no evidences of meaningful

⁵⁵ See Appendix.

⁵⁶ See Appendix.

⁵⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Church_%28Disciples_of_Christ%29#Membership_trends; <http://www.gladalliance.org/open-affirming/directory> (viewed on July 3, 2013.)

779 The above stories challenge aspects of both the liberal and conservative telling of
780 history in relation to gender, leadership, and the Church. It is simply not true that only
781 biblically liberal churches have accepted women’s ordination, or that ordaining women
782 necessarily leads to more liberal biblical views, such as the embrace of higher criticism or
783 homosexuality. But it is true that churches that liberalize their theology do almost
784 inevitably embrace women’s ordination, and then many do continue on to embrace
785 homosexuality. And it also appears to be true that biblically conservative churches that
786 ordain women do face greater internal agitation on the question of homosexual practice.

787 But, as we can see especially from the history of the Presbyterians—the
788 originators of views of verbal inspiration and inerrancy and promoters of patriarchy—
789 taking extreme defensive positions in relation to gender and leadership actually can have
790 the opposite effect, and result in pushing major portions of the church towards the
791 opposite extreme of liberal, feminist, often pro-gay, equality. On the other hand,
792 ordaining women to stay up with the times and to remain culturally relevant appears also
793 to have the opposite effect. There is greater correlation between embrace of gender
794 equality in leadership and membership stagnation or even decline.

795 Ultimately, the appropriate approach to gender and leadership within the church
796 must be decided by reference to Biblical teaching, and not by the lessons of culture or
797 history. But an understanding of history and culture can help us understand the range of
798 possible biblical approaches. It can also open our minds to the truth that certain readings
799 of the Bible are driven more by the influence of either tradition (in the case of the
800 patriarchal camp) or culture (in the matter of the liberal feminist camp). It can reveal
801 that even the more moderate complementarian and egalitarian groups are haunted and
802 somewhat shaped by those two extremes. Whatever détente or concord is reached
803 within the Adventist church between the two moderate camps, all needs to be sensitive to
804 and guard against the pitfalls found on either extreme—and open to the importance of
805 achieving a biblically-faithful balance between gender roles and the principle of gender
806 fairness, both of which are taught in Scripture.

807

Appendix

U.S. Churches that Ordain Women, Their Stance Towards Homosexuality, and Their Growth Patterns

Church¹	Ordain Women	Accept Homosexual Practice?	Growth – North America²
United Church of Christ (Mainline Congregationalists)	Yes – 1853 (though not widespread until the 1920s)	Since 1985, generally, yes. ³	About 1 million and declining – 2 million at time of merger in 1957 ⁴
Conservative Congregational Christian Conf.	Some – Left to local church.	No	About 50,000 and growing – split from Mainline in 1945
Advent Christian Church	Yes - 1860	No	About 25,000 and static since 1925
Universalist Church of America	Yes – 1863	Yes	About 160,000
Christian Church (General Convention)	Yes - 1867	Yes – since 1985 as merged with UCC in 1957	Part of UCC
Salvation Army	Yes – 1870 (though women serve in positions subject to husband)	No	400,000 in U.S.; 1.4 million worldwide – regular growth
American Unitarian Association	Yes - 1871	Yes – 1984	About 215,000 decline from about 500,000 in 1970s

¹ The listed churches are based on the list found in Chavez, *Ordaining Women*, 16-17.

² Accept where otherwise noted, church size statistics taken from The Association of Religious Date Archives at http://www.thearda.com/Denoms/D_1425.asp

³ <http://www.ucc.org/lgbt/>; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominational_positions_on_homosexuality#United_Church_of_Christ

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Church_of_Christ#Membership (viewed on 6/2013)

Church of God (Anderson)	Yes – 1885	No ⁵	About 250,000, steady growth except last 10 years
Disciples of Christ	Yes – 1888	Some - Decided regionally and , locally ⁶	About 660,000; declining from a high of nearly 2 million in 1950s
Church of the United Brethren in Christ	Yes - 1889	Not church wide, but a number of congregations endorse ⁷	23,000 – no meaningful growth over last century or so.
Weslyan Methodist Church	Yes – 1891	Formally, no, but practice appears to vary with locality. ⁸	Some growth; merger in 1968 with Wesleyan Church
Methodist Protestant Church	Yes – 1892	Formally, no, but practice appears to vary with locality. ⁹	Merged into United Methodist Church – declined by nearly 50% in last 50 years
National Baptist Convention, USA (historically black)	Yes - 1895	Generally not ¹⁰	5 million – mostly steady growth through 20 th century
Pentecostal Holiness Church	Yes – 1895, preaching and teaching, but women not to hold all leadership positions	No.	330, 000 in U.S.; 3.4 million worldwide – steady growth
Pilgrim Holiness	1897 - preaching	No.	About 32,000

⁵http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominational_positions_on_homosexuality#Summary_of_denominational_positions_in_North_America_and_Europe

⁶ <http://www.accsd.org/site/page/christian-church-disciples-of-christ>

⁷http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominational_positions_on_homosexuality#Mennonite_Churches

⁸ <http://www.unitedmethodistreporter.com/2012/08/conferences-react-to-umc-stance-on-gay-issues/>

⁹ <http://www.unitedmethodistreporter.com/2012/08/conferences-react-to-umc-stance-on-gay-issues/>

¹⁰ <http://www.nbc12.com/story/19809729/baptist-church-ordains-gay-man-asked-to-leave-baptist-group>

Church	and teaching, but women not to hold all leadership positions		when merged with Wesleyan Church in 1968
AME Zion Church	1898 –formally, yes, but in practice, very limited, less than 3% female clergy in historically Black churches	No.	1.4 million – dramatic growth through 20 th century, but decline over last decade
Friends United	1902	Generally Opposed ¹¹	About 35,000, decline of 50% since early 1900s
Northern Baptist Convention aka American Baptist Churches in USA	1907 ¹² - Mixed, decided locally	No ¹³	1.3 million – declined by 200,000 over the last fifty years.
Church of the Nazarene (Pentecostal)	1908	No	640,000 in US; steady growth
Baptist General Conference	1918 – mixed, decided locally	No	195,000; steady growth
Cumberland Presbyterian Church	1921	Generally Opposed ¹⁴	About 65,000; 40% decline over last 40 years.
Churches of God, General	1923	?	32,000; stagnation over last century

¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality_and_Quakerism#North_America

¹² <http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/ordain.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/homosexuality.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://johnvest.com/2010/07/26/what-the-pcusa-could-learn-from-cumberland-presbyterians/>

Conference			
Community Churches, Int. Council	1923	Yes ¹⁵	69,000; decline of 60% over last 30 years.
General Association of General Baptists	1925 - Mixed, decided locally – About 8% in 2002 ¹⁶	Generally Not ¹⁷	45,000; decline of 40% in last 20 years
International Church of the Foursquare Gospel	1927	No ¹⁸	350,000 in U.S.; 8 million worldwide; dramatic growth
Assemblies of God	1935 ¹⁹	No ²⁰	About 3 million in the U.S.; 65 million worldwide; dramatic growth
Open Bible Standard Churches (Pentecostal)	1935	No	45,000 – steady growth
Evangelical and Reformed Church aka United Church of Christ	1948	Yes	About 1 million and declining –2 million at time of merger in 1957 ²¹
Presbyterian Church in the USA (North)	1956	Yes.	Part of Presbyterian Church, USA – 2.7

¹⁵ <http://www.holierthanthou.info/denominations/community.html>

¹⁶ <http://www.christianethicstoday.com/cetart/index.cfm?fuseaction=Articles.main&ArtID=777>

¹⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominational_positions_on_homosexuality#Baptists

¹⁸ <http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/stances-of-faiths-on-lgbt-issues-pentecostals>

¹⁹ http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Position_Papers/pp_downloads/PP_The_Role_of_Women_in_Ministry.pdf

²⁰ <http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/stances-of-faiths-on-lgbt-issues-pentecostals>

²¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Church_of_Christ#Membership

			million and dramatically declining
Methodist Church	1956	Officially not, but there is meaningful division in American Methodism ²²	7.7 million – United Methodist Church – dramatic decline of 50% in 40 years
Church of the Brethren	1958 – formally, but in practice limited. 15% women by 2000	Not formally, but some exceptions. ²³	About 125,000 – 70% decline in 40 years
United Presbyterian Church, North America	1958	Yes.	Part of Presbyterian Church, USA – 1.9 million and dramatic decline
AME Episcopal	1960 - formally, yes, but in practice, very limited, less than 3% female clergy in Black churches	No ²⁴	2.5 million – decline of 1/3 in last 20 years
Christian Congregation	1961	No	About 1 million and declining – 2 million at time of merger in 1957 with United Church of Christ ²⁵
Presbyterian Church, US (South)	1964	Yes	Part of Presbyterian Church, USA – 1.9 million and declining

²² <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/06/nyregion/caught-in-methodisms-split-over-same-sex-marriage.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

²³ <http://www.brethren.org/news/2011/committee-announces-decisions-for-2012-annual-conference.html>;

<http://www.peacecob.org/aboutourchurchpastor.html>

²⁴ <http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/stances-of-faiths-on-lgbt-issues-african-methodist-episcopal-church>

²⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Church_of_Christ#Membership

Southern Baptist Convention	1964, but reversed in 1990s	No	16 million; dramatic growth in 20 th century, stagnation over last 10 years
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church	1966 - formally, yes, but in practice, very limited, less than 3% female clergy in black churches	No ²⁶	850,000; strong growth, though stagnant in last decade
Evangelical United Brethren Church	1968	Officially not, but there is meaningful division in Methodism ²⁷	Merged with United Methodists in 1968
American Lutheran Church aka Evangelical Lutheran Church since 1987	1970	Yes – formally adopted ordination of openly gay clergy in 2009 ²⁸	In 1987 Became Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with about 5.2 million members – rapid loss with about 4 million recently
Lutheran Church in America aka Evangelical Lutheran Church since 1987	1970	Yes – formally adopted ordination of openly gay clergy in 2009 ²⁹	In 1987 became Evangelical Lutheran Church in America - 4 million members- but rapid loss with a decline of 500,000 since 2009

²⁶ <http://www.christianpost.com/news/african-methodist-episcopal-church-rejects-gay-147-marriage-148-blessing-rights-2783/>

²⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/06/nyregion/caught-in-methodisms-split-over-same-sex-marriage.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

²⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelical_Lutheran_Church_in_America#Ordination_of_lesbian.2C_gay.2C_bisexual.2C_and_transgendered_clergy

²⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelical_Lutheran_Church_in_America#Ordination_of_lesbian.2C_gay.2C_bisexual.2C_and_transgendered_clergy

Mennonite Church	1973	Generally opposed, but some variation allowed in local congregations and conferences. ³⁰	About 105,000 – stagnant for the last 30 years
Free Methodist Church, North America	1974	No ³¹	75,000 – stagnant for last 30 years
Evangelical Covenant Church (Swedish Lutheran)	1976	No.	About 114,000 – general growth since the 1920s
Episcopal Church	1976 – may ordain 1994 – may oppose 1997 – may not oppose, ordination of women is mandatory	Yes in 2000, ordination in 2009	About 2 million, down from a high of 3.5 million in the 1960s
Reformed Church in America	1979 1980 – conscience clause for those not wanting to participate 2012 – conscience clause stricken	No, but official recognition of division within church ³²	240,000 and declining – down from a high of 380,00- in the 1960s, but still at about 350,000 in 1979
Worldwide Church of God <i>aka</i> Grace Communion International	Yes – 2006, after giving up Sabbath in 1995 ³³	No	38,000 worldwide - dramatically declining in recent years

³⁰http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mennonite#Sexuality.2C_marriage.2C_and_family_mores; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominational_positions_on_homosexuality#Mennonite_Churches

³¹http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality_and_Methodism#Free_Methodist_Church

³² <https://www.rca.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=492>

³³ <https://www.gci.org/church/ministry/women11>.