

# W O M E N ' S ORDINATION

31 POPULAR ARGUMENTS  
& BIBLICAL ANSWERS

A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PERSPECTIVE



**EUGENE PREWITT**

FOREWORD BY  
DOUG BATCHELOR



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## FOREWORD

In George Orwell's classic book *Animal Farm*, the pig-dominated society teaches that "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." Many have accused the Seventh-day Adventist Church of using a similar logic in its response to the question of whether or not the church should ordain its ministers without regard to gender.

It's an unfortunate slander over a complicated disagreement to a serious subject that has many significant questions to ponder.

Is women's ordination a question of fairness or culture or both? Should we be trying to keep pace with the historical trajectory of progress regarding women's rights? Were the Bible writers victims of their narrow-minded times? If the Scriptures are the final word regarding this subject, are those Scriptures being misunderstood? Is there an absolute truth regarding women's ordination, or does the truth regarding this subject vary from one country to the next?

All these questions and many more are carefully considered in this concise but practical book. I thank Eugene for tackling these relevant questions in a calm, rational manner so we all can weigh the evidence. I recommend this book to everyone who wants to understand the primary arguments over this delicate and potentially divisive subject.

Let us each pray for wisdom to settle the issue in our own minds and to treat each other with respect no matter our points of disagreement. "The truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

—Doug Batchelor



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# INTRODUCTION

**I**n all likelihood, you have read or heard something, somewhere, about the topic of women's ordination. Perhaps you've read online that some members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church would like to see women being ordained to the gospel ministry. Perhaps you are one of them! Maybe you have even heard a pointed sermon or two addressing the question in your church.

In many cases, debates on this controversial subject often generate more heat than light. Do arguments against ordaining women really stem from male chauvinism? Are "grumpy old men" pulling strings behind the scenes to prevent women from competing with them for calls to the ministry? Or is this actually a controversy over the reliability of the Bible? Are all the scholars who promote the ordination of women merely a collection of doubters who don't take Scripture seriously?

The answer to all four questions is—"not generally." There are some male chauvinists. And there are some grumpy old men (on both sides of the issue). And there are some raving feminists who treat the Bible as if it were only a blessed fairytale. But the Adventist church isn't composed largely of these extreme groups. We are a body of millions of Bible believers who have both common sense and care for the truth. Whether we believe that women should be ordained as ministers or not, most of us try to base our beliefs on the Bible. We want to practice what the Scripture teaches.

However, this book argues that some sincere and studious persons are being confused by many subtle errors regarding the issue of gender and ordination. Everyone should be an informed believer—don't you agree? That's why this book has been published. If you decide to take a stand against the ordination of women, you need to know why you believe what you believe. And if, after reading this book, you still differ in your views, I am content to know that I did what I could to make you aware of the

issues. What is most important, of course, is that we all be humble lovers of truth.

No matter by whom light is sent, we should open our hearts to receive it with the meekness of Christ. But many do not do this. When a controverted point is presented, they pour in question after question, without admitting a point when it is well sustained. O, may we act as men who want light! May God give us His Holy Spirit day by day, and let the light of His countenance shine upon us, that we may be learners in the school of Christ (*Gospel Workers*, p. 301).

Yes, we want light. On the other hand, if this topic keeps you so busy that you forget to share Christ with your neighbors or to witness at work, you have fallen for Satan's trick—even if you end up on the right side of the debate. I don't believe that the issue of ordination is one of the three angels' messages, but how we interpret the Bible in light of this controversy could very well impact the effective delivery of those messages.

## Using this Book

The first portion of this book is organized as a discussion. Arguments in favor of women's ordination are briefly stated and perhaps reworded as you might encounter them in casual conversation. They are generally phrased as challenging questions. These questions, of course, have not been drawn from any particular person. Rather, they represent a wide range of points used in debating this position coming from various segments of the church.

The first two groups of questions cover arguments from the Bible and arguments from history. The third section of questions deserves its own little introduction. In 2012, I was visiting with my uncle, a man who had opposed the ordination of women for decades. But to my surprise, on this visit he informed me that his position had changed when he was confronted with an Ellen White statement regarding how “both men and women should be trained for pastoral labor.”

There are many more people like my uncle who have sought answers to this issue in Ellen White's counsels. As Adventists, most of us hold great



confidence in the reliability of her commentary. But I do not believe that her counsels run counter to what the New Testament seems to clearly teach on the issue of ordination. Thus, this book includes a section related to Ellen White's statements regarding ordination and ministry, and their implications.

This section on arguments from the *Testimonies* concludes the “dialogue” portion of this book, but it doesn't bring it to an end. The closing section covers a few “good reasons” not to ordain women. Until you have read these important points, I don't believe you have really heard the full argument.

If you were to read a book that listed all the arguments that have been used against keeping the seventh-day Sabbath, you might find it all a bit disheartening. This could be true even if all the arguments were well answered. Why? Because an argument-answer dialogue can leave the impression that the data is neutral, that it could be taken either way. But what you would be longing for is to see a straightforward presentation of the truth. That would be powerful. That would be convicting. Then you could be satisfied.

In like manner, it would not be proper to leave you without a straightforward Bible study on this significant topic. Such a study forms the latter part of this book.

Finally, a helpful series of appendixes round it out. These include material on the Greek and Hebrew words for ordination (Appendix I), fascinating Ellen White statements related to the role of ordination (Appendix II), and a series of three “responses” to questions and arguments regarding church order that have come my way (Appendix III).

I hope this book helps you in your search for biblical truth on this topic.



# CHAPTER 1

## Questions Asked by Those Who Favor Women's Ordination

### *Arguments from Scripture*

#### 1. All believers are priests.

**Argument:** *All believers in Christ are New Testament priests. There is no Protestant doctrine called the “priesthood of all male believers.” If we recognize that all believers are priests, how can we deny that any one of them might be called to the ministry? How can we say that there were never any female priests in the Bible?*

**Answer:** The Scripture from which this argument derives, 1 Peter 2:9, is a beautiful one.

Initially, God promised Israel that they would be a treasure to Him. Among the nations of the world, they would be the holy nation. They would be a kingdom of priests:

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel (Exodus 19:5, 6).

In the New Testament, we learn that the blessing promised to the Israelites now belongs to Christians. We are the peculiar people, the royal priesthood.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

This leads to a sensible question: Why do we even have pastors? If every man and woman is already set apart for ministry, why do we set aside any one person for this work?

The fact is that God's ministers are organized. Even a kingdom of priests has order. Martin Luther reasoned this way: The priesthood belongs to everyone. If we didn't all possess it, we wouldn't have the power to choose our ministers. Our choice in the matter shows that we possess the priesthood. And for the sake of order, we select someone to be our spiritual leader.

The idea that "since all are priests, all can be ministers" is faulty. It is obvious, for example, that not everyone can be a ruler over the church. (See Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24.) You can't have a tribe of all chiefs! And it is obvious that when elders were chosen in each church, it wasn't the whole church that was chosen. (See Acts 14:23.)

In short, everyone in the church, both men and women, are equally called to be priests to the world. We are all teachers of the lost; we are a kingdom of priests. But we are an organized kingdom. And if God has given us guidelines regarding who among us should be placed in the position of elder, we aren't at liberty to ignore that counsel. We can't say to God, "But everyone is qualified!" when He has said to us, "Lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Timothy 5:22). Apparently, some people just aren't qualified. And if some believers aren't qualified, how do you know that women are not among them? While the priesthood of all believers shows who should be doing ministry, it doesn't teach us anything about who should be set in charge of those doing that ministry.

A final thought: When Peter says we are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation," he is referring back to the Old Testament, when Moses says, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:5, 6). When God's people were called out of Egypt and identified as a kingdom of priests, didn't He make a distinction between the tribes who would serve in the temple and as priests? Yes—the Levites and the sons of Aaron. And among the priestly family of Aaron, didn't God

make a distinction in the roles of women and men in that family? Absolutely, He did. Only the men offered sacrifice, but the whole family was of the priesthood. In the New Testament, Elizabeth is a descendant of Aaron, but only her husband Zacharias served in the temple (Luke 1:5). Being a “nation of priests” apparently does not eliminate the distinction of roles in that priesthood between men and women.

## 2. When God sends the latter rain, it will be gender neutral.

**Argument:** *At the end of time, God will reverse the male dominance that has characterized the church. He will send the latter rain on both male and female. In view of what God is doing in our time, shouldn't we also accept this change and ordain women to the gospel ministry?*

**Answer:** We all look forward to the near future when the Spirit of God will be poured out without limit. And I agree that the promise of that blessing is, indeed, gender neutral. More than that, it is age neutral. God's Spirit will be poured out on all those who have been made ready.

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions (Joel 2:28).

In the past God has used children to preach the message. This doesn't mean, of course, that those children were fit to be ordained to the ministry. But they were fit to be used of God to do a great work.

Peter tells us that what happened at Pentecost was also a fulfillment of the promise given in Joel chapter 2 (Acts 2:16–21). So the natural question is why did the apostles continue to only ordain men as elders and pastors even after the Holy Spirit had been freely poured out on both men and women at Pentecost?

Yes, God will use women and men, old and young. God will use all races and all nationalities—"all flesh," as the prophet says. But does this mean that God is making a change in His biblical order? Not at all.

God has been pouring out His Spirit on women since ancient times. Indeed, the Bible is full of examples of women who were called to be prophets. Both the New and Old Testaments record females who spoke for God. Huldah, Miriam, Deborah, Mary the mother of Jesus, and the daughters of Philip were, each of them, inspired with heavenly messages.

But never once during the ages of Bible times do we find a female priest or elder. Female prophets? Yes. Female priests? No. In view of all this, a future filling of women with the gift of prophecy is not evidence regarding who should be ordained to the role of elders today.

### **3. If God gives a woman the spiritual gift of ministry, we should ordain her.**

**Argument:** *God gives spiritual gifts to every believer as He chooses. When you see a woman who has been gifted in such a way that she can successfully manage the spiritual affairs of a congregation, how can the church withhold ordination? Wouldn't that be denying the right of the Spirit to choose whomever He will?*

**Answer:** The key passage for this argument is derived from Paul's longest essay on spiritual gifts.

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit. . . . But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will (1 Corinthians 12:8, 9, 11).

The question I ask is, how do we know which persons have been gifted? Is it by the observation of these gifts? We had better not say "yes." We live in an age when apparent "gifts" will be used to deceive many. Miracle gifts will even deceive the ones who are working the miracles. The fact that someone

shows evidence of being gifted is no real reason to suppose that he or she is even on the right track spiritually.

Many will say to Me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” (Matthew 7:22, 23 NKJV).

If it isn't by observing the gifts, how are we to know who has them? One key phrase in the Corinthian passage above is “as he will.” How do we find the will of the Spirit? The best way is by reading the things that were inspired by the Spirit in the Bible.

Short and simple: If the Bible teaches that women should not be in the position of ruling a church, then that is the will of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit will never direct that a gift He has given is used in a role that is out of harmony with the Word.

Because a woman has the gift of teaching does not mean she can only use that gift if she is ordained as a pastor. Can a person have administrative abilities without being spiritually gifted? Yes. Leadership talents and charisma are natural to many persons. While these talents might point to a career in administration, they cannot point someone to a position in God's church who is not otherwise qualified. Talents are not always spiritual gifts.

#### **4. Female preachers mentioned in the book of Psalms did a great work.**

**Argument:** *The King James Bible hides the gender information in Psalm 68:11. In that verse we find that women are a great host to proclaim the good news of the gospel. If God is content to use this great host, why is the church hesitant to use them? The verse reads in the ESV, “The Lord gives the word; the women who announce the news are a great host.”*

**Answer:** Maybe you have lived long enough to remember a time when some congregations were served by more ladies than men. As Bible workers and canvassers, these ladies spread the news of the three angels' messages like wildfire. And because of the word "publish" in the KJV of Psalm 68:11, this was even one of their favorite verses. But they didn't see evidence in the verse that ladies should be the guardians of the flock. It doesn't say anything about ordination.

To be perfectly accurate, this passage comes from one of the victory Psalms, where it speaks of women who were singing and rejoicing as the men came back after victory in battle. The women were praising God and proclaiming the good news of victory. As with Miriam following the Red Sea experience (Exodus 15:20), the women of Israel rejoiced following a victory over the Philistines (1 Samuel 18:6) and the daughter of Jephthah rejoiced following his victory in battle (Judges 11:34). No one questions that God has always used women to share the good news. It's quite a stretch to say this verse supports women being ordained as pastors.

## 5. Deborah, Miriam, and Huldah show what women can do in leading God's church.

**Argument:** *Women were promoted to administration by God in the Old Testament. Deborah, Miriam, Huldah, and even Queen Esther were called at appropriate times to take the reins of governance into their own hands. If God would do that in an age when women had low status, how can we doubt that He would do it today?*

**Answer:** First, there is no reason to doubt that God calls women to administrative positions. The powerful people at the helm of guiding the nations of the earth have been set there by God. To resist those powers is to resist the ordinance of God. So, in a real way, we can agree that God has ordained female prime ministers to their office. Even the secretary of state selected during President Obama's tenure, Hillary Clinton, held her position by God's ordinance.

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are



appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves (Romans 13:1, 2).

When we read the Bible's prohibition against women having spiritual authority over their husbands, we do not believe it is making a general statement about the ability of women to lead. We are making a statement, rather, about God's directions for choosing the leaders of His church.

"But," you say, "these three women weren't leaders of some secular nation! They were leaders of God's own people!" That is partly true. They were leaders. But excepting Esther, they were more significantly serving as prophets. Deborah was a prophet who served with the general Barak, a man listed in the hall of faith. Miriam was a prophet who served with her high priest brother, Aaron, and her administrative-prophet brother, Moses. Huldah was a prophet who served under the kings of her realm. And Esther, the queen, needed permission even to enter the court of her husband, the supreme monarch.

As we observed earlier, prophets can be female in the Bible.<sup>1</sup> And they can be female even in our Adventist church. But during that same biblical period, we find no female priests. Aaron's daughters, Miriam's nieces, were welcome to eat from the priestly share of meat. But they were not to officiate in any of the priestly functions.

## 6. The Apostle Junia was noteworthy to the church in Paul's day.

**Argument:** *Paul speaks of Junia, "who was of note among the apostles" (Romans 16:7). Apostles were, in rank, even above the*

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1 Near the end of this book, you will find an answer to the question, "Why were there female prophets but not female priests?" It is not sufficient to say that culture forbade females to be priests; there were female priests in several of the surrounding cultures. It is not sufficient to say that culture forbade female administration. Jezebel and Athalia, both pagans, were comfortable taking the reins of government. Egypt had its female heads of state. Many of the Roman cities of Asia Minor had their "chief women" even in New Testament times. Many nations even had female gods. And Proverbs 31 is not a description of a socially repressed female. These things should be kept in mind before you buy into the idea that the gender bias in God's directions for the priesthood were socially conditioned.

*prophets. And Junia, a female apostle, proves that women were in the upper levels of church governance. Why, then, do we not find women at that level in the ministerial departments of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?*

**Answer:** Romans 16:7 says, “Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.” The natural reading of this passage is that Junia and her husband, Christian Jews who were imprisoned for their faith, were well known to the apostles. The idea that Junia was herself an apostle is not even slightly hinted at in the Greek any more than it is in the English. Since the term “the apostles” in all of its other 41 uses always means “the twelve,” it is not sensible to strain the reading here to make it say something else.

It is, then, remarkable that this verse is used as serious data by those who promote women’s ordination. Is it right, when you cannot find evidence of a female apostle in any of the scores of plain Bible statements about that group, to use a questionable statement like this as contrary evidence? This stands among the weakest and most suspect arguments.

## **7. We are neither male nor female in terms of church function or privileges.**

**Argument:** *Paul says that in Christ we are neither male nor female. The cross took away such barriers as gender. How, then, can a truth-loving church use gender to identify potential persons for ordination?*

**Answer:** Because Galatians 3:28 is the fundamental sticking point of those endorsing women’s ordination, we’re going to take our time on this one. Here is the passage—

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

It is certainly true that the gospel offers pardon and peace to all persons irrespective of gender, rank, or nationality. But is Paul also saying that all distinctions between men and women evaporate after accepting Jesus?

Let's allow him to explain himself:

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13 NKJV).

Here, Paul is saying that no one is restricted from salvation, or from receiving God's Spirit, or from entering into the church based upon their social rank or gender. Another similar verse by Paul—

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all (Colossians 3:9–11 NKJV).

Again Paul clarifies that salvation, victory, and the new heart are offered freely to everyone. But also consider that after Paul says “there is neither Jew nor Greek,” he then says three times “to the Jew first”—

What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God (Romans 3:1, 2 NKJV).

Paul was not saying that a Jew stopped being a Jew after he or she was saved. Neither did he advocate that slaves run away from their masters. He actually taught the contrary—

Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; ... Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called (1 Corinthians 7:21, 24 NKJV).

So does Galatians 3:28 mean that women and men should have identical functions in the church? Christian women certainly don't have identical functions to their husbands in the home. Only one gender is capable of carrying a child. Only one is equipped to suckle an infant.

Though both can read and pray, though both are made in Christ's image, though both have been purchased by the precious blood of Jesus, it's still true that one gender is cherished as the "weaker vessel" in the home. Equality in terms of grace, but not in terms of function, is the key idea in the following text:

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

In fact, no Bible writer says more to emphasize the gender distinctions in church roles than the apostle Paul.

Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression (1 Timothy 2:11–14 NKJV).

To take Galatians 3:28 to mean there is no distinction between women and men in church function requires ignoring everything else Paul says on the subject—and that's not scholarly.

No one is arguing that heaven is only for men. And neither is church uniquely for males. When Paul sought a place of prayer outside a pagan city, he sought it in the company of the women who gathered there. But to take the gender-inclusiveness of the gospel and make it into gender-blindness is extremism. Feminine and masculine are not Christian synonyms. If God gives guidance to His people regarding gender roles in church administration, it would not be sensible for us to ignore them.

## 8. Adam and Eve were ordained as priests.

*Argument: When God killed the first animals to clothe Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, they were thus ordained as priests. If God himself ordained the mother of all mankind, why don't we ordain her daughters?*

**Answer:** If God established Eve as a priest in the garden of Eden, why did He seem to consistently command the contrary from then on?

Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron and Aaron's sons (Exodus 28:1 NKJV).

God never ordained Eve to be a priest. Beware accepting the stretching and twisting of Scripture merely to defend a pet idea. The notion that Eve is a priest is extrapolated from the nature of key words found in Genesis 3:21. But is such an extrapolation just? Let's look at the text—"Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21 NKJV).

There is not one single example in Scripture of a woman offering an animal sacrifice.

Let me say a word here about scholarly word studies. Modern academia has scorned the tried-and-true method of comparing Scripture with Scripture. In place of this method, the very one recommended by God, men and women have substituted studies of Hebrew and Greek words to ascertain the breadth of their meaning and application. The problem with this method is that it is frequently intellectually bankrupt. Words are given meanings that the authors themselves never imagined.

Common sense guides common readers and keeps them from extravagant misunderstandings. So a common person, guided by the Spirit while reading Genesis 3:21, is the best-qualified person to understand it. We wouldn't want to use a method of Bible study that would disenfranchise an uneducated traveling man. And why not? Because the Bible was also written for him. If our method places the Bible out of his reach, our method is flawed. "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isaiah 35:8).

## **9. When male headship is absent, female headship is essential.**

**Argument:** *We see the Bible truth that the husband is the priest of the home. But sometimes the husband isn't even a Christian. In some cases he is no longer living. So sometimes the woman must be the*

*priest of the home. Wouldn't you agree? And if you can see that plain fact at the home level, surely you can see it at the church level too!*

**Answer:** We agree that a mother often needs to take spiritual oversight of her children; this is no contradiction of the role assigned her in Scripture. Her role in the order of the family includes guiding the children.

I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully (1 Timothy 5:14).

Likewise, sometimes a father must take up the responsibilities that typically fall to the mother, yet he would never ask the children to call him “Mommy.” The titles and office do not change because one spouse covers for the other.

But I do not think that the Christian woman is ever granted spiritual authority over her husband. Yes, her connection to Christ enables her to love him better. Yes, that connection serves her prayers and adds conviction to her entreaties. But her spirituality does not relegate him to the second place in the home. He is still the man of the house, charged with its priestly responsibilities. His neglect of that responsibility does not free him from its weight.

What if a husband is absent or dead? Just as it is possible to have a church without a pastor, so it is possible to have a family without a priest. In both cases, those without someone qualified to be their natural head are obliged to make the best of their situations. They are to organize themselves as efficiently as they can manage.

“It is not always men who are best adapted to the successful management of a church. If faithful women have more deep piety and true devotion than men, they could indeed by their prayers and their labors do more than men who are unconsecrated in heart and in life” (Manuscript Release, Vol. 19, 56.3).

But the absence of a pastor does not automatically fit some present person to fill that position.

This is all immaterial anyway. The truth is that Scripture trumps excuses. If God has given us instructions, we ought not to search for great reasons to ignore them. Such searching might be far too successful. Is hunger a good enough reason to eat forbidden foods? Are mounting bills reason enough to report to work during holy hours? Is a need for intimacy sufficient grounds for premarital sex? The answer in all these cases is that God's ways are best. Whether we can see it or not, they are. Reasoning from a need to self-justify is poor policy.

This argument is also the same rationalization that King Saul used when the prophet Samuel was delayed in coming to offer a sacrifice for the Israelites before battle. The king decided that the practical thing was for him to "fill in" in the absence of Samuel. This decision played out very poorly. Samuel told Saul that "to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22). While Saul continued to serve as king, the Spirit of God was withdrawn from him.

## 10. Men have headship in the home but not in the church.

***Argument:** Adam was made the head of his wife, Eve. Likewise, men are the heads of their wives in the home. But men are not granted headship over women otherwise. Your father is obviously not the head of the single young ladies that attend your church. So why do people try to make the order in the family an excuse for keeping women out of church administration? That is neither biblical nor sensible.*

**Answer:** The connection between family administration and church administration is, in fact, a biblical one. Paul reasons that the family is the testing ground where we are trained for responsibilities in church. The elders are to be men who have ruled their families well.

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife. . . . One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? (1 Timothy 3:2, 4, 5).

If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly (Titus 1:6).

It is true that I, as a male, have not been given headship generally over the females of the planet. I have worked most of my adult years under school principals and administrators who were female. But this does not negate God's administrative policy that makes successful home administration an entry-level requirement for church administration. God is the one who instructed us, through Paul, that a woman should not be given, in the church, an administrative role over her husband. "And a woman I do not suffer to teach, nor to rule a husband<sup>2</sup>, but to be in quietness" (1 Timothy 2:12 YLT).

More of this line of reasoning is found in the affirmative section of the book.

**11. We already ordain women.**

**12. We already commission women.**

**13. We already ignore the cultural New Testament statements regarding women.**

*Argument: The Adventist church is a little late on this issue. Already we have women elders in many parts of the world. And, biblically, a woman elder is the same as a woman bishop or overseer. More than that, we commission women pastors already. But the verb "commission" means today all that the verb "ordain" meant in Bible times. Consistency is a jewel. Since we already ordain women in two ways, let's face it squarely and honestly and do what is right—ordain them formally to the gospel ministry. Furthermore, the New Testament teaches that women should be silent in church. By letting Ellen White preach we have already shown that we are ready to move away from a literal practice of the text. Good, now let's take it to the next level—ordain women.*

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2 The Greek could be rendered either as "man" or "husband." But in harmony with the argument in this section, "husband" is a more sensible reading.



**Answer:** This is an objection worthy of consideration in that it shows some church practices present a conundrum. We are simply inconsistent and are practicing an indefensible position. The correct and consistent position is that the church needs to back up. In the days of Josiah, the king found himself in a similar position. There were plenty of priests in the northern kingdom, but these had been ordained by Jeroboam contrary to Jehovah's express commands.

In the southern kingdom, unfaithful kings had followed Jeroboam's lead. And what began as a politically expedient action by Jeroboam in the north became a shameless defiance in the south. They had ordained priests to oversee the worship of Baal in their "high places."

What did Josiah do about that? How could he promote reform without angering the populace and disappointing the families of those who were serving contrary to Divine direction? That was impossible. So Josiah "did that which was right in the sight of the LORD." He put the priests out of office.

And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven (2 Kings 23:5).

Jeroboam's priests remained instated, but that only lasted until the northern kingdom was destroyed "without remedy." Then later, when God punished the heathen of that land for their idolatry, the Assyrians decided to send for one of Jeroboam's priests. That was the beginning of the mixed religion of the Samaritans that existed even until the time of Jesus.

What about the other part of this objection? It's clear we don't require women to be silent in church. So if we ignore one New Testament passage, why give such strict obedience to another like it? The Adventists of the 1800s faced the first part of this objection routinely when Ellen White addressed large audiences. Often someone would come forward with one of these passages:

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak (1 Corinthians 14:34).

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence (1 Timothy 2:11, 12).

How did our pioneers address this question? They pointed out, in the first of these passages, that either Paul can't be referring to sacred services (James White's view) or that it was a reference to public speaking as a minister of the church. Both parties observed that Paul expected women to pray and prophesy in sacred service. He even went so far as to regulate their public ministry to the point of admonishing them to have feminine hair lengths.

But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. ... Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? (1 Corinthians 11:5, 13).

James White observed that if we take 1 Corinthians 14 as referring to church worship, then we have the odd situation of a woman asking her husband about a sermon that they had both heard. Why, wondered James, wouldn't it be the husband asking the wife? He concluded that the chapter was about the business meetings of the church elders.

## 14. Cultural conditioning influenced Paul's letters.

**Argument:** *Women drew the short stick a long time ago. In the Near East, the Far East, and in pagan cultures and Jewish imitations of the same, women have been treated badly. They have been treated like merchandise by some and like toys by others. This is the cultural background to Paul's letters. When you understand these things, you can see why Paul had to quiet women who were bucking the accepted order. But are you going to make his counsels into laws for the church of 2015? Today women hold every level of office, from presidents and prime ministers to CEOs and CFOs. If Paul were writing today, his counsels would be as up-to-date as they were when he penned them.*

**Answer:** This was the initial primary argument in favor of women's ordination, and likely because of cultural forces, this viewpoint has had the widest public exposure and popular support. This particular argument, however, involves the most fundamental element of truth—the authority of Scripture.

If we begin to pick and choose through the Bible which of the Scriptures we think are still valid today and which ones we think were misguided by culture, where will that end? Based on that approach, we will soon abandon foot washing. The dangerous element in this proposition is in viewing some of the teachings of Scripture as being outdated and based on the mistaken opinions of the apostles. This conclusion puts the Bible at the mercy of private interpretations.

The truth is that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for showing the right way to live. If the Bible has portions that are in error, then who determines which parts are outdated? If history exposes such errors in New Testament times, how would we ever understand which portions are erroneous in Genesis, where no history can guide us? Does science become the only guide at that point?

What I am trying to say is that either the Bible trumps all other authorities or it becomes a wax nose on the face of charismatic scholars to be molded according to their fancy. Either it means what it says or else we can't know truth. Either it is authoritative or else postmodernism is the new gospel.

What about the social aspect of this argument? Yes, women have had it hard in history. The Bible and the spirit of prophecy do not support these injustices.

On the other hand, the Bible calls men to treat women with godly dignity. Not only should wives be treated well, but all women in general. "Older women" are to be treated "as mothers" and younger women "as sisters" (1 Timothy 5:2). Bible rules protected women from domestic violence. Jesus raised the bar on marriage and protected the wives of believers from frivolous divorce.

When it comes to prestige, do not forget the female prophets. If it was cultural norms that stopped God from appointing female priests, why did He ignore those same norms when choosing prophets? Clearly, cultural

norms are not a satisfactory answer to the question, “Why were there no women priests?”

Feminine and masculine are words that transcend culture. They harken back to creation—“Male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27). And this brings us directly to the next faulty argument in favor of women’s ordination.

## 15. The headship of man is a result of sin and to be overcome by the gospel.

**Argument:** *Sin brought many problems to mankind. The ancient curse on creation causes illness and decay. But the gospel undoes the curse. Men are restored to health, happiness, and spiritual connection to God. In our end-time age, when all things are to be restored, we should expect the church to rise above this curse in all its phases. Why should we, then, continue gender discrimination in the church? Jesus took the curse of Eve on Himself. Why do we force it back on her?*

**Answer:** Is male headship in the family a result of gender qualities (originating at creation) or of gender behavior (originating at the curse)? Ultimately, it does not matter which position you choose in this case. The effects of the curse, you see, are yet with us. Men still need to prepare a last will and testament. Bodies still degenerate. Unworked fields still support thorns and thistles. Women still experience pain during childbirth. And human institutions still need order to be able to adequately address conflicts and to bring them to a peaceful solution.

That being said, there are some other important observations to be made. Order and headship exists even where sin does not. And order and headship will exist in the world made new. Revelation speaks of the “nations of them which are saved” (Revelation 21:24). There will be positions of honor and responsibility, even in the kingdom of God. Those appointed to these positions will be chosen by God (Matthew 20:23). Even angels differ from each other in glory and rank. In other words, order and government pre-existed sin. And they will exist when sin is no more.

It is not true that the gospel creates some sort of holy anarchy. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ, but we still should recognize those who

have rule over us (Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24). When we order the church in such a way as to promote the functioning of well-ordered family units, we are doing well. Such order is not a compromise with the curse. It is conformity to the Word.

The headship position of pastoral ministry is not granted as a human right. There were men, descendants of Aaron, who could not minister as priests because of a disability. Whether blind or impotent, paralyzed or lame, an otherwise qualified man would be excluded from the priesthood. Was this some sort of evil discrimination? Hardly. The priest was a type of Christ. A major physical imperfection unfitted him for service. He could not represent the Messiah as well as his whole-bodied counterpart.

This is not saying, by way of parallel, that being female is an affliction. Rather, this fact shows that there is no human right that entitles every intelligent, God-fearing person to an equal opportunity for church administration. The eleven tribes had no right to chafe over their exclusion from the priesthood. And the Levitical families assigned to assist the priests had no inherent right to serve as priests. Korah didn't understand this, but we should.

They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" (Numbers 16:3).

Korah thought the current priests were hoarding authority unfairly. But we shouldn't follow his reasoning. We would do better to follow Moses who argued that it is God who established the "discriminatory" regulations regarding the priesthood. The Lord set aside specific people for a holy purpose and chose them by His express directions. He confirmed the very same persons again by a miracle soon after the death of Korah.

Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him. . . . Tomorrow . . . it shall

be that the man whom the LORD chooses is the holy one. You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi! (Numbers 16:5 NKJV).

## 16. The New Testament church adapted, and so may we.

**Argument:** *When the church needed deacons, it invented them. When it needed elders, it ordained them. When it needed qualifications for these posts, it composed them. The church is still the vibrant, living body it once was. If it needs female pastors, it is welcome to ordain them. If the Bible demonstrates a model of innovation in the New Testament, how can we forbid innovation in the church today?*

**Answer:** First of all, the New Testament church patterned their new organization after the Old Testament principles found in Scripture, that “there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

Additionally, this argument seems to ignore all the problems the Protestant reformers had from those with similar arguments. When was it, the Catholic doctors would argue, that the church lost its ability to innovate? When did she become incapable of establishing orders and ordinances?

The Protestants responded with a fundamentally different view. They believed that the Bible was the standard. The apparent innovations of the first-century church were made by apostles and prophets. It was by the Spirit and the gift of inspiration that deacons and elders came into existence. God had established authoritative directions for the organization of His church, and men were not at liberty to change them.

These same two views of Scripture later divided the Church of England. Was the church at liberty to retain Roman forms and rituals that were not forbidden by the Bible? Did she have freedom to innovate in terms of worship and church governance? Or had God already given the instructions needed to conduct the worship of the church?

The English Reformers, while renouncing the doctrines of Romanism, had retained many of its forms. Thus though the authority and the creed of Rome were rejected, not a few of her customs and ceremonies were incorporated into the worship of

the Church of England. It was claimed that these things were not matters of conscience; that though they were not commanded in Scripture, and hence were nonessential, yet not being forbidden, they were not intrinsically evil. Their observance tended to narrow the gulf which separated the reformed churches from Rome, and it was urged that they would promote the acceptance of the Protestant faith by Romanists.

To the conservative and compromising, these arguments seemed conclusive. But there was another class that did not so judge. The fact that these customs “tended to bridge over the chasm between Rome and the Reformation” ... was in their view a conclusive argument against retaining them. They looked upon them as badges of the slavery from which they had been delivered and to which they had no disposition to return. They reasoned that God has in His word established the regulations governing His worship, and that men are not at liberty to add to these or to detract from them. The very beginning of the great apostasy was in seeking to supplement the authority of God by that of the church. Rome began by enjoining what God had not forbidden, and she ended by forbidding what He had explicitly enjoined (*The Great Controversy*, p. 289).

Adventists are historically on the side of those who stick close to the Bible. The New Testament model was given by inspiration, and where it is being used, the church is prospering, even in the 21st century. When Adventists set their hearts on establishing church order, they never experimented with innovating new practices. They began with a structure that they had largely inherited from the Protestant churches. And they modified it to conform to Scripture as they uncovered more aspects of the New Testament model.

When God used Ellen White to help the church through this time, He did not give them a blank canvas and say, “Design an order that fits you.” No, He instructed them to go to the Bible and discover principles of church government. Already they had men in the field as teachers who lacked biblical qualifications. It was the “duty of the church” to declare that

these men were self-sent. And to prevent further scattering of the flock, Bible order was to be established.

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

Some years later, they were referred back to that same source when church governance had degenerated from its original biblical principles. She went so far as to point out three Bible chapters that establish the relation of the gifts of the Spirit to the issue of resolving church conflicts.

A great many of the difficulties that have come into our work in California and elsewhere have come in through a misunderstanding on the part of men in official positions concerning their individual responsibility in the matter of controlling and ruling their fellow-laborers. Men entrusted with responsibilities have supposed that their official position embraced very much more



than was ever thought of by those who placed them in office, and serious difficulties arose as the result.

Simple organization and church order are set forth in the New Testament Scriptures, and the Lord has ordained these for the unity and perfection of the church. The man who holds office in the church should stand as a leader, as an adviser and a counselor and helper in carrying the burdens of the work. He should be a leader in offering thanksgiving to God. But he is not appointed to order and command the Lord's laborers. The Lord is over His heritage. He will lead His people if they will be led of the Lord in the place of assuming a power God has not given them. Let us study the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of First Corinthians, and the fifteenth chapter of Acts (*Loma Linda Messages*, p. 464).

The short of all this is that God has given excellent guidance to His church. The church is not at liberty to discard a portion of it in preference of conventional wisdom. What is the chaff to the wheat?

## **17. Jesus honored Mary, Martha's sister, as an insider and used her as an apostle to the apostles.**

**Argument:** *Mary was encouraged to seek a man's place at the feet of Jesus, like one of His disciples. She was defended by Him when her sister complained about how her theological studies were keeping her from woman's work. She saw Him first after the resurrection and was sent to bear a message to the apostles, the "sent ones." Why don't we encourage Marys today? Why don't we send them to give the message? Are grumpy old men afraid of losing some of their turf to the talented women in their midst?*

**Answer:** I have heard this argument from only one source, but as that sermon has been heard by thousands now and rebroadcast repeatedly, I include it here in my own words.

The primary problem with this argument is that being near Jesus wasn't just a man's place. Martha enjoyed being there, too. If there hadn't been guests to serve, Martha would have been right beside Mary. Further, the dissatisfied disciples were thinking about money and guilt, not about gender roles.

It is very wrong to use a Bible story, like this one, in a way that changes the thrust of its lesson. This is what Peter means by the "wresting" in 2 Peter 3:16, addressing those who twisted and misconstrued the Word of God.

Keep in mind that those who oppose women's ordination are Bible students of both genders. Even those who oppose the ordination of women believe that women who do full-time work for the church as Bible workers, or otherwise, are entitled to an equal share of conference budgets, even when those budgets are being strained.

Yes, we ought to send Marys out to give the message to those who will listen. Serving the world, and even the church, is far different than being an ordained minister of the latter. The woman at the well (John 4) was, for example, a very efficient evangelist. Her testimony drew hurting and searching people from her village in large numbers. She prioritized the message over her personal needs for water and refreshment. She spoke boldly about Jesus without regard to her own reputation. But we have no indication that she was to be made a spiritual overseer of either her village or of the apostles. While all elders ought to teach, not all teachers ought to be pastors.

## **18. The apostles were all Jews. Are you going to restrict ordination to Jews now? Then on what basis will you restrict it to males?**

*Argument: True, the apostles were all males. But there is a difference between prescription and description. In the New Testament, all the apostles were also Hebrews. Does that mean that only Hebrews should be preachers today? No, we recognize that their nationality was the result of their cultural situation. We should, then, open our eyes and be careful not to use the New Testament description of events to be taken as a prescription of what we should do today.*

**Answer:** This is a weak argument on several accounts. First, everyone who accepts Jesus does become at least a spiritual Jew. “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29).

And yes, there is a difference between description and prescription. The fact that King David had multiple wives does not warrant us to do the same. The fact that Jesus served bread and fish to His guests does not make it an ideal hospitality menu. The issue of women’s ordination does not derive from incidental cultural observations. And when Paul teaches about spiritual headship of men, he points back to Adam and Eve (1 Timothy 2:13–15). It was certainly not a “cultural thing” in their day. It is Scripture that prescribed the firstborn males to be the priests of Abraham’s time and the male Levites to be the priests of Moses’ day.

After observing these plain scriptural ordinances, we are prepared to see more than coincidence in the male make-up of the 12 apostles. Jesus followed in principle what He has elsewhere communicated in precept. How many biblical precepts do we demand before we are willing to conform? In the Bible stories, one prophetic message was expected to settle issues for many individuals. Men didn’t have a right to ignore what God said the first time.

During the time of Pentecost when the apostles needed to replace Judas, even though there were 120 men and women gathered in that upper room, God instructed them to choose Judas’ replacement from among the men (Acts 1:21–25).

## 19. Jesus conformed to cultural norms by not ordaining women.

**Argument:** *Jesus planted His church wisely, in a way that would not shake up social norms. That is why He did not put women into administrative roles. The world wasn’t ready for that. But today it is ready. Are you ready?*

**Answer:** In truth, Jesus planted His church with consummate skill as a pattern for the future. That we can affirm. But was Christ a man who conformed to cultural norms? Consider the evidence. In Jesus’ day,

teachers taught by quoting great scholars and rabbis of the past. Jesus could have done this too, but He didn't. And that was shocking to those who heard Him.

The officers answered, Never man spake like this man (John 7:46).

And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes (Mark 1:22).

Jesus frequently rebuked the spiritual leaders for following manmade traditions that conflicted with truth.

He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?" (Matthew 15:3 NKJV).

Jesus would never have gone against His own teachings.

In His day, you could hear men condemning adultery. But Jesus shocked men by saying that even immodest thoughts are a violation of God's law. Social norms in Christ's day required religious teachers to study at the feet of eminent rabbis. But Jesus didn't do this, even to the consternation of His own family.<sup>3</sup>

No, Jesus was not a conformist. But when we see that He folds His death napkin or that He washes feet or that He puts children on His knee, we know that His non-conformity is based on principle. If there had been a principle at war with choosing only men for apostles, Jesus would have lived by that principle too. It is safe to say that Jesus was killed because He refused to follow popular traditions.

While the choosing of male apostles is not direct evidence against the ordination of women, it is a valid precedent that should carry some weight. We cannot dismiss that weight on the basis of divine cultural conformity. Principle should always trump culture.

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3 See *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 438–441.

## 20. Remember slavery, social welfare, and the trajectory of Scripture.

**Argument:** *The New Testament neither abolishes slavery nor prohibits the use of alcohol. And it does not even come close to recommending a vegetarian diet. Adventists recognize these reforms as logical outgrowths from ideas that were being taught by prophets. The trajectory of the Bible's teachings on these points warrants taking a high stand today. Society wasn't ready for these reforms 2,000 years ago, but today society is ready for them. In the same way, the trajectory of Scripture shows a far greater respect for women than was current in the days of the prophets. On the basis of this trajectory, we should be able to extrapolate today a policy devoid of gender discrimination.*

**Answer:** The distinction of spiritual roles with regard to gender does not come from a flawed manmade culture or social pressures, but rather from the first chapters of Genesis.

But to be more specific, the Bible does teach abstinence from alcohol. While it is not within the scope of this paper to address this issue thoroughly, it is reasonable to say that "wine" includes grape juice since the Bible speaks of the "wine" in the "cluster." And when grapes are crushed, it is in a "winepress," not a "juice press." That wine could age and become intoxicating is addressed in New Testament passages that forbid drunkenness. It is "new wine" that Jesus blessed at the Last Supper and promises to drink with us in the kingdom (Matthew 26:27–29).

Furthermore, we are a royal priesthood. In other words, we are kings and priests. In the Bible, intoxicating beverages are forbidden to two classes of persons, royalty and priests. The Bible clearly opposes the use of alcoholic beverages for Adventists.

What does the Bible teach about slavery? God's law established that men might indenture themselves either by crime or by debt or even through a desire of some advantage (such as the hand of a daughter). This "slavery" has none of the moral evils that come with the modern idea of slavery. Indentured service had an end at the years of release and jubilee, showing that slaves were of the same class of men as were free persons. The rights of

slaves, even before their date with freedom, were protected by Moses' laws. (The rights of the employer were also protected.)

But under typical pagan nations, slavery had no such protections and regulations. Slavery under such rule varied from simple voluntary domestic service to forced labor of a cruel type. You might remember how David and his men encountered the Egyptian slave of an Amalekite, who had abandoned the sick man to suffer and starve to death. That was the wicked kind of slavery that blighted American history. It wasn't the servanthood of the Jews.

In the New Testament, Rome had real slaves (though some rose to important responsibilities in the empire). Rome was not a subsidiary of the Christian church, so the church could not abolish Roman slavery. The church did teach slaves how to be good slaves and masters how to be good masters. To be a good master was to regard your servants as deserving compensation. "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven" (Colossians 4:1).

So to get back to our topic, it just isn't true that the Bible taught faulty principles regarding intoxication and slavery. The Bible is a harmonious and authoritative whole. The same is true regarding diet. In the time of Jesus, before interstate transport of fresh foods, it was not possible for a poor Palestinian to get a year-round variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Refrigeration was not yet invented, and even sealed-tight canning was yet a future development. What, then, was the best diet that a poor working man could eat? It would be bread and fish supplemented with seasonal fruits and vegetables.

There are places in India today where I would never encourage the poor to become vegans. I have been to many homes that subsisted on white rice and the products of the goat, chickens, and water buffalo. The healthiest diet for such a person includes eggs. What I am saying is that Jesus lived perfectly. He did what was best to do. And while He was not a vegetarian, He was a health reformer and even a medical missionary. Vegetarianism is not an addition to scriptural teaching, it is merely an application of New and Old Testament principles directly to the plentiful produce of the 21st century.

What have these things to do with women's ordination? Not much, really. That is, unless you think that the Bible is sub-ideal. Unless you think

that its poorer values were left for us to perfect. I don't buy the idea that the Bible needs improvement. The refining of these Bible verses was done before they were penned. We have the books of the Bible delivered to us as pure truth. "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Psalm 12:6).

## 21. Priscilla was the spiritual teacher of Apollos.

**Argument:** *If you are looking for a New Testament precedent for ordaining women, you need look no further than the story of Priscilla and Apollos. She discipled this new convert and set him on his spiritual feet. She sent him on his first mission. She was the mentor; he the student. Whatever Paul's writings mean elsewhere, he certainly allowed this to happen. Why don't you permit what he permitted? Why not encourage what the Bible models?*

**Answer:** A good way to address this argument would be to present all the evidence that the Bible provides regarding the incident. Here it is:

[Apollos] was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly (Acts 18:25, 26).

There you have the whole story. Did Priscilla act alone? Or was she with her husband? Was the education formal and public? Or was it private and informal? Was Apollos mentored by an administrative woman or by a godly couple?

Stretching the evidence to make a point probably means the point is suspect. This passage, a great one for promoting team ministry, is also a wonderful one for promoting self-supporting ministry. Priscilla and her husband made their living, like Paul, by the trade of tent-making. But the passage contains nothing regarding ordination, nor regarding the authority of a woman over her husband in church.

## 22. What about the gender neutrality of the Ten Commandments?

**Argument:** *When the Ten Commandments speak from the male gender's perspective, we understand the application to both genders. The command forbids coveting someone's "wife," yet we understand that it is equally wrong to covet someone's husband. If we have such common sense in Exodus 20, why do we lack it in regard to Paul's writings?*

**Answer:** In writing, it is often convenient to use the masculine gender for a generic idea. "Why does man want food? Because he gets hungry." Often, gender-neutral ideas are awkward to express in gender-neutral sentences.

When ancient people wrote, brevity had many advantages. Spaces and vowels were both omitted from average writing, even in the time of Jesus. When writing mediums are expensive and duplication is laborious, it makes good sense to write briefly and explain broadly. That is the nature of the Bible. It presents parables in a few verses that we would take a few hundred words to teach today.

Yes, often the principles stated as true for men should likewise be understood as applicable for women. But not every statement is like that. We know that men don't deliver babies. Those statements that compare and contrast the genders and that discuss their respective duties are obviously not gender neutral. This passage, for example, is not gender neutral:

But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety (1 Timothy 2:12–15).

Nothing here could be viewed as gender neutral, which leads us to this question: Should we view the gender of nouns in the verses that follow these four verses as more neutral than in the verses directly before them? This is what the very next words say:



This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach (1 Timothy 2:1, 2).

If context is a guide and contrast an indicator, then gender neutralizing 1 Timothy 2:1, 2 is simply out of the question.

### 23. The Bible teaches fairness and justice.

**Argument:** *Bible teachings regarding fairness and justice are so plentiful as to need no proving. And it is manifestly not fair to deprive half the race from a spiritual ministry. Justice does not permit us to discriminate on the basis of gender.*

**Answer:** When I was in elementary school, my teacher made sure that I learned one thing well: Life isn't fair. It isn't fair that some people are born into good Adventist homes and others into drunken abusive homes. It isn't fair that some children are hungry and some feast daily. It isn't fair that tornadoes target Oklahoma and volcanoes target Indonesia. But the final judgment is fair. And everyone will be judged righteously.

You might also argue that it wasn't fair when God struck King Uzziah with leprosy when he burned incense in the temple simply because he was not a descendent of Aaron. This looks like discrimination, yet this is what God commanded (2 Chronicles 26:16–20).

All this being said, there is nothing unrighteous about the fact that men can't get pregnant or that women are, pound for pound, weaker than men. Variety is not injustice. Gender role distinctions do not violate human rights. We never want to create a new ethic that would turn Jesus into a sinner. It wouldn't reflect well on us.

If verses had been used to show that God is fair and right, they would have shown that our ideas of fairness are frequently way off base. "Yet ye say, The way of the LORD is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal?" (Ezekiel 18:25).

*Arguments from Church History***24. Ordination can be traced back to pagan origins and is a Catholic relic.**

**Argument:** *The word “ordination” can be traced to rites and rituals connected with the pagan Roman power. These were later adopted by the Roman Catholic Church. There, ordination is one of the sacraments. It grants miracle-working power to priests and sets them above the laity. Adventists, despite our best intentions, have adopted this relic. We set our ministers apart from the other members and exalt them by ordination. This whole process smells of improper authority and, frankly, should be abolished. Not only should women not be ordained, neither should men. Furthermore, the New Testament lacks sufficient information to guide us to our current views on ordination. If we stick with the New Testament only, the church’s rituals were variable and flexible. In view of that, if we wish to choose our ministers by some ritual like ordination, we should view it also as a flexible and variable process. If we wish to ordain women, in that case, that is up to us. The Bible does not give us directions regarding who should be ordained.*

**Answer:** The Old and New Testaments demonstrate a consistent pattern of men who were set aside, ordained, anointed, chosen, appointed, or invested by God or church leaders with unique spiritual authority to preach, teach, judge, organize, baptize, and mediate for God’s people. (See Numbers 8:10; 27:22, 23; Deuteronomy 34:9; 1 Samuel 16:13; Mark 3:13–19; Acts 6:1–7; Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 3:2.) These examples of holy consecration are often summarized by the word “ordain.”

As with many other words and passages, the Catholics read an entirely different meaning into the word “ordain”—that definition should not be applied to this debate. Besides, no Adventist should believe that the ordination of a minister is a mystical sacramental ceremony that confers special powers.

Ellen White warned against this kind of abuse of ordination, but she also never suggested that the word “ordain” should be changed or the service abolished.

“At a later date the rite of ordination by the laying on of hands was greatly abused; unwarrantable importance was attached to the act, as if a power came at once upon those who received such ordination, which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work” (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 161).

This argument about the Catholic definition of “ordain,” developed in a dissertation that has gained much publicity, has many facets. There is no brief way to counter it thoroughly, so I have decided to answer it briefly here and then more thoroughly in the appendix, where a reference to its source can be found. (See pages 137–143.)

It is true that Catholicism followed paganism in the distinction it makes between clergy and laity. When Jesus said to the apostles, “All you are brethren,” He was laying down a principle at odds with pagan religions. And when Jesus taught servant-leadership, He parted ways with paganism even further. Not only was His teaching in contrast to paganism’s priestly system, He was undermining the philosophy of its civil order.

And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve (Luke 22:25, 26).

We should admit to more than this. Our church leaders were rebuked repeatedly for taking to themselves authority that was not rightfully theirs. They thought their ordination and appointments gave them the rights of a corporate officer. Ellen White called this idea of administration “kingly authority.” It mistakenly entrusted a man or a small set of men with the authority that belongs to larger representative committees.

God has not set any kingly power in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to control the whole body or to control any branch of the work. He has not provided that the burden of leadership shall rest upon a few men. Responsibilities are distributed among a large number of competent men (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, p. 236).

There is to be no ordering, no exertion of kingly authority. Enough of this kind of work has been done in our publishing house at Battle Creek. Its influence has soured those in the office, who now need converting through and through. This harsh management, this ordering and scolding, is not of God but of the enemy (Ellen White, *Letter 55*, 1901).

If these problems existed in Ellen White's day, it will do us no good to assume that after her death they were forever banished from the church's experience. Nevertheless, the unjust abuse of authority has never been sufficient justification for the abolishment of just authority.

It is false that the Bible presents insufficient data on which to build our program and ritual of church administration. There will be more on that in the final appendix, so I will avoid some level of redundancy by not addressing it further at this time.

One interesting twist of the abolish-ordination argument was presented to me by an author, a respectable scholar, who abhorred the division and harm that he perceived would threaten the church over the ordination issue. He observed that the brass serpent of Moses, that good emblem of the Lord of Glory, had become an idol centuries later. It was called "Nehushtan," or "brass thing." To stem the idolatry, that ancient relic of a miracle story was (Bible archeologists will cringe) destroyed. And our scholar opined that ordination deserved a like demise. It has been, he expressed, blown all out of proportion. Indeed, in some places it has. Some young men have learned to stay silent regarding important issues for fear that their ordination would be compromised.

The same could be said for church meetings. They have been corrupted in some places. So have some church schools. But do we have liberty to fix localized corruption by abolishing the whole? Can we excusably ignore God's counsels on church order, on worship decorum, and on Adventist

schools by abolishing order, services, and classrooms? The answer, of course, is no. We are obliged to do what we have been instructed to do.

## 25. Millerites ordained women widely.

**Argument:** *According to the eminent Adventist historian LeRoy Froom, the Adventist movement involved a small army of female preachers, evangelists, and pastors. There was no notable gender discrimination in the preaching of the first and second angels' messages. And it wasn't the result of anything said by the most prominent woman preacher in Adventist history that changed it. Why, then, do we act like it would be a big change to ordain women today? Are we saying that God wasn't with the message of the Millerites?*

**Answer:** The evangelists of the Millerites were, indeed, a small army. And while only a small minority of them were female, those few females were active. And, yes, a few of them even edited one of the Adventist papers. But it was, unsurprisingly, a paper for Adventist women. This was in perfect harmony with the Bible counsel regarding women mentoring women.

The aged women likewise [ought to] be ... teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children (Titus 2:3, 4).

This agrees with Ellen White's counsel regarding the need for women to have training posts in the work of the church—

Women instructors should labor with the young women, not to see how much work can be gained from them, but to win their love and confidence. When this is won, there will be no difficulty about the work, for the workers will be filled with a desire to please (*Pastoral Ministry*, p. 259).

It is not true, however, that the Millerites ordained women to the gospel ministry. They weren't even organized as a church denomination. As a consequence, they had no system or ritual for ordaining men. Any of

them who might have been ordained received it from the various denominations from which they had come. Even the most liberal of those varied denominations did not begin ordaining women until more than a decade after the Great Disappointment.<sup>4</sup>

There is nothing in Froom's history of the Millerites that would run afoul of current General Conference policy regarding gender and ordination.

## **26. A motion to ordain women was carried but mysteriously dropped.**

**Argument:** *In the 1880s an executive committee referred a motion to ordain women to the General Conference. This shows a strong move in that pivotal decade to remove gender bias from the work of the ministry. How that motion was squelched by a few men in the General Conference has never been discovered.*

**Answer:** This idea has been squarely put to rest by fair scholarship. David Tim, PhD, director of the General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics, has explained to the Ordination of Theology Study Committee that a move to refer an idea to the General Conference was just a polite way to vote it down. His examination of the records from that period have demonstrated this repeatedly.

This fact turns the argument on its head. Since it is perfectly true that a motion was made that women be ordained came forward, and since it was politely refused, it is apparent that our church addressed the issue at that time. And it has addressed it several times since. Each time, studious brethren have come to the same conclusion. And that has been to keep ordaining men and not to start ordaining women.

## **27. In China there is obvious proof that women make good ministers.**

**Argument:** *We are a universal church. In China we have already ordained many prominent women to important positions in the*

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4 For a few more details regarding their name and work, see pages 105, 106.

*church. These women have promoted the church there with great success. Are you prepared to deny that God has gifted them with the ability to lead the churches that are prospering under their hand?*

**Answer:** It is a wonderful thing that God is spreading the truth in China through dedicated women, but it also is not necessary for these women to be ordained to help shepherd the flock.

If the Lord Jesus had only played things “smoothly” in John 6, the Christian church would have gotten off to a much stronger and bigger start. Thousands were inclined to follow Him that day. They were ready to take risks for His kingdom. But at the end of the day, only a handful of persons were still following Him and He was off the radar map for most. “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?” (John 6:66, 67).

Then again, the early church could have been much better funded long before the cross if Jesus had not handled one seeker so strictly. By requiring the earnest man to sell his possessions, it seems that Jesus squelched his interest in the truth.

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions (Matthew 19:21, 22).

What I am saying is that it is impossible to gather from apparent numerical successes in evangelism and church work what God wants us to do. If in China there are women pastors doing a successful work, may God bless their work with faithfulness to the Bible rule. Underground there might be a very different picture of what God is doing. There might even be men who refuse to submit their faith and practice to governmental oversight and whose successes are accordingly invisible. But all this is neither here nor there. Why? The Bible, not experience, is the ground of our faith and practice. We do what God says to do in His Word.

Yes, we are a universal church. But not all parts of the church are above ground. And in places where the world church is forbidden by law

to take oversight of local churches, it is not surprising that those local churches would stray from the norms voted by the body. The solution to this problem is manifestly not for the world church to follow China's lead. Rather, persons gifted with the Spirit of God and burdened by the message will need to work from inside China to bring the church into harmony with Bible principles. Since we can't orchestrate what the Chinese Adventists do, at the least we should model what they should be doing.

Again, the Bible, not experience, is the ground of our faith and practice.

## 28. This issue could divide us. That is the most important thing.

**Argument:** *Many things are more valuable than winning an argument. Unity is one of them. And since there is no way for the church to be united except by allowing each division to decide for itself regarding gender ordination, we should do that. Even if we don't see ordination of women as being best, we should see unity as being essential. To refuse to give unions and divisions freedom on this point is to invite a rift and to make the church responsible for its own splintering. Let us seize the olive branch and act as if unity matters.*

**Answer:** This argument virtually says, "Give the few what they demand or they will abandon us and it will be our fault." Who, I ask, is despising the value of unity in such a case? Who should be held responsible for a schism stemming from such a scenario? Obviously, it is those who snub the general consensus of the body. It is they who disregard church order, so how can they profess to champion the cause of unity?<sup>5</sup>

In other words, it sounds as though the only definition of unity some will accept is the one where women are ordained. Those who wish to ordain women contrary to the decisions of the world church are the ones who are putting the ordination of women above church unity. And that is both wrong and rebellious.

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5 In defense of some of them, they hold great respect for the consensus of the brethren in their region of the world or in their caste or social rank. Their error hinges on their myopic view: What looks to them as a unifying position would tear the church apart. And this they would see if they had a broader knowledge of the world church.



Unity is worth a great deal; we should not underestimate it. In Adventist church history, God revealed that unity was worth more than doctrinal consensus on minor points. The minor points, however, did not seem minor to the church leaders involved. The question of whether Jesus' mediation is represented by the "daily" in Daniel 8, 11, and 12 garnered wide attention. And even before that period, the brethren argued about the school-teacher law in Galatians 3. The church's two flagship magazines, *Signs* and the *Review*, were publishing opposite editorials on the topic!

The leaders of both sides of the law issue were asked to put down their banners and to call a halt to hostilities. They were to desist from publishing on an issue that exposed internal divisions to the gaze of an irreverent world.

Did that mean that one side should just drop the issue and let the other side carry the opinion of the body? No, the church needed to look at the issue candidly and kindly. And if it could not be done in private, then it must be done nonetheless.

Then the question was asked whether I thought the matter better drop where it was, after Brother Waggoner had stated his views of the law in Galatians. I said, "By no means. We want all on both sides of the question." But I stated that the spirit I had seen manifested at the meeting was unreasonable. I should insist that there be a right spirit, a Christ-like spirit, manifested, such as Elder E. J. Waggoner had shown all through the presentation of his views; and that this matter should not be handled in a debating style. The reason I should urge that this matter should be handled in a Christ-like spirit was that there should be no thrust made against their brethren differing with them. As Elder E. J. Waggoner had conducted himself like a Christian gentleman, they should do the same, giving the arguments on their side of the question in a straightforward manner (*Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 9, p. 218).

It should also be noted that unity, though a great treasure, is not the ultimate aim of faithful persons. Faithfulness is the *aim*, while unity with other faithful persons is the *result*. In the early centuries of the Christian church, "unity" was used as an excuse for advancing new superstitions and

for holding on to old ones. The early faithful saw through the ploy. They could not value a superficial unity above faithfulness to Scripture.

To secure peace and unity they were ready to make any concession consistent with fidelity to God; but they felt that even peace would be too dearly purchased at the sacrifice of principle. If unity could be secured only by the compromise of truth and righteousness, then let there be difference, and even war (*The Great Controversy*, 1888 edition, p. 45).

Did these persons value peace and unity? Why, assuredly they did. Were they willing to negotiate and concede their own views to maintain unity on many things? Yes, absolutely. Then why didn't they have peace? They couldn't afford it. If it could only be purchased by the disregard of biblical truth, it was just too expensive.

Faithful persons today can see the same. The issue we are studying is tied to the question of the reliability of the Bible. And that makes it, as Dr. C. Raymond Holmes aptly described it, "the tip of the iceberg."

*Arguments from Ellen White's Writings*

**29. Ellen White was ordained.**

**Argument:** *When the denomination began issuing preaching credentials to ordained ministers, Ellen White was issued her credentials just like other preachers. She accepted and carried this card with her. It is true that some cards had the word "ordained" crossed out. But not every card had this word struck. These cards are on display in several historical centers for anyone to see. Why have we regressed in regard to women while the world has made progress on the same topic?*

**Answer:** Credentials served an important purpose in the early Adventist church. When a visitor showed up for church and announced that he had come with a message for the congregation, how were the local elders to know whether or not he should be trusted? This was the purpose of the credential cards.

Ellen White was a regular traveling speaker for the church. This was, of course, in her role as a prophet. She came to deliver messages that originated in her visions and dreams, or other means of inspiration. So it made sense for her to have credentials.

But she never was ordained. And according to her personal helper, Clarence C. Crisler, she was careful not to express herself in any way that would encourage the ordination of women. Crisler's comment below reveals one reason for such a view, namely that the "gainsaying world" would make a great deal of it.

And may I add that Sister White, personally, was very careful about expressing herself in any wise as to the advisability of ordaining women as gospel ministers. She has often spoken of the perils that such general practice would expose the church to by a gainsaying world; but as yet I have never seen from her pen any statement that would seem to encourage the formal and official ordination of

women to the gospel ministry, to public labor such as is ordinarily expected of an ordained minister.<sup>6</sup>

Crisler's view, one that I think could be defended by many readers of Ellen White's writings, is that she approved of laying hands on women to consecrate them to any number of functions (such as to be deaconesses, canvassers, Bible workers, etc.), but not to set them apart to that particular position as the head of the church, an ordained minister. And that brings us to the next argument drawn from her writings.

### 30. Ellen White supported the ordination of women by the laying on of hands.

**Argument:** *Ellen White specifically and forcefully told the church, as early as 1895, that consecrated women should be "appointed" to the ministry "by prayer and laying on of hands." This statement was no obscure sentence. It was published in the church's general paper for the entire world to see.*

**Answer:** Ellen White is very clear that only men should be ordained as ministers of the flock—

The Lord will not entrust the burden for his flock to unqualified individuals. Those whom God calls must be men of deep experience, tried and proved, men of sound judgment, men who will dare to reprove sin in the spirit of meekness, men who understand how to feed the flock (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 209).

Nevertheless, in replying to this argument, it would be good to read the referenced statement. Here it is:

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They

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6 Coon, Roger W., *Ellen G. White's View of the Role of Women in the Church*, Appendix H, p. 25.

should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work. Place the burdens upon men and women of the church, that they may grow by reason of the exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness (*Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895, par. 8).

Now, review the paragraph again and see if you can answer these questions:

1. With whom might these ordained ladies need to counsel?
2. To what type of ministry are these women to be consecrated?

Does the Bible give any evidence of a woman doing this very type of work? Yes, indeed, it does. Dorcas was a woman with just this type of ministry. She was “full” of good works. When she was dead, the widows advertised the products of her ministry.

Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them (Acts 9:39).

Our conclusion is a simple one: Ellen White promoted the idea of consecrating Dorcas-like workers to their ministry. She advocated a broad approach to ordination that included consecration to any of the church's real responsibilities. But never, not in this paragraph, nor in any other, has she authorized women to be ordained to the leadership position in the church, the position of overseer, or elder.

This isn't to say that women are disqualified from doing gospel ministry or even from being supported by the tithe. Frequently they do high-quality

evangelistic labor. Their talents help hold the church together. In many cases a woman unites with her husband to form a ministerial team that shepherds the flock. And that fact brings us to our next point.

### 31. Ellen White said that canvassing would train women to do pastoral labor.

**Argument:** *Ellen White saw the canvassing work as a training ground that produced a pool of workers from which the church might choose qualified persons to be fitted for pastoral labor. But did she see only male canvassers as being part of this pool? No, her pastoral counsel was gender neutral. Then why isn't ours?*

**Answer:** The noun “pastor” appears in Scripture long before the noun “minister.” That is because the word “pastor” is another word for “shepherd.” A pastor is one who cares for the sheep. When we use the word “pastor,” we are reminding ourselves of the flock-like nature of congregations.

Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD (Jeremiah 23:2).

Who doubts that many women are excellent caretakers? Who has argued that they are disqualified by their gender from ministering to lambs and from gently leading “those that are with young?” In view of that, even those who are strongly opposed to placing women in the position of overseer ought to be content to see them in the position of pastor. The flock needs as many pastors as it can get.

If there is one work more important than another, it is that of getting our publications before the public, thus leading them to search the Scriptures. Missionary work—introducing our publications into families, conversing, and praying with and for them—is a good work and one which will educate men and women to do pastoral labor (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 4, p. 390).

But not in this statement, nor in any other, do we find evidence that the oversight of the congregation's teaching and theology may be placed in the hands of women. She should not be placed in a position that could place her over her husband and, thus, further weaken an institution that already has suffered enough abuse.

It is fair to mention that there is one particular type of pastoral labor for which women are uniquely qualified. Their male counterparts shouldn't even try to fill the role. Effective pastoral labors will win the love and respect of their women parishioners. And what is true in the canvassing work is equally true in the church work, that woman instructors are needed for this very purpose.

Women instructors should labor with the young women, not to see how much work can be gained from them, but to win their love and confidence. When this is won, there will be no difficulty about the work, for the workers will be filled with a desire to please (*Pastoral Ministry*, p. 259).

And a final word from Ellen White on the subject—

The same principles of piety and justice that were to guide the rulers among God's people in the time of Moses and of David, were also to be followed by those given the oversight of the newly organized church of God in the gospel dispensation. In the work of setting things in order in all the churches, and ordaining suitable men to act as officers, the apostles held to the high standards of leadership outlined in the Old Testament Scriptures" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 95).





## CHAPTER 2

### Bible Observations Related to the Issue of Ordination

In answering the many pro-ordination questions and arguments mentioned in the first part of this book, we've already learned a lot about the diverse issues involved in ordaining women to the gospel ministry. Later on, we will look at the specific viewpoints of those who do not favor women's ordination and the good reasons they bring to the table of discussion.

However, between these two sections, let's consider some Bible data that provides fascinating background to the ordination crisis facing Adventists today. We can always find ways in which our situation differs from a particular Bible situation. But if we want help from the Word of God, we had better look for something else—we want to notice how the Bible stories are similar to our own. And then we want to observe God's plan in those situations as a guide to discovering His will and plan for us today.

#### Korah and Company

Korah was a Levite. His lot in life was already sacred before he aspired to more. As a Levite he had the responsibility of teaching the law of God to those tribes that resided nearest him in the camp. His descendants would be the only tribe to receive no land inheritance (except for some cities scattered among the other tribes). What was the work of the Levites to include? They had been ordained by the laying on of hands, set apart by Moses for holy service. Ultimately, that service was an educational service to the populace and a logistical service to Aaron and his descendants.

Ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my

name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD (Malachi 2:4-7).

And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel (Numbers 3:9).

Korah wanted something more than this service-oriented ministry. Authority was his aim. And he sought to broaden the distribution of authority even beyond the range of the Levites. His co-conspirators were Reubenites. They aspired to a position of administrative control. Moses seemed like a lawgiver, and they wanted that kind of authority.

And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? (Numbers 16:3).

The response of Moses shows that the Levites had already attained a high calling. The work of ministering to the church was a noble one. But in seeking inclusion among the overseers, the Aaronic priesthood, they were seeking for something that was not theirs. And more than that, they were showing how little they recognized the sacredness of the job that had already been assigned to them.

You take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi. And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? (Numbers 16:7-9).

Today, it is again true that a group of persons, already gifted and blessed with the job of ministering to the congregation, are aspiring to something more. But the sad fate of Korah and company shows that broad coalitions of disgruntled leaders could be in rebellion against God's plainly revealed will. And the aftermath of the story included the insertion of Aaron's rod into the most interesting receptacle: It was placed in the ark of the covenant. Did God anticipate, by this placement, that rebellions against God's delegated authority would both rise and be put down during the last portion of earth's history?

## Jeroboam

Solomon's midlife apostasy doomed his great kingdom to trouble. He had promoted a talented young man, his servant, to a high level of administration. That man, Jeroboam, was accosted by the prophet Ahijah. Alone in the field, he learned that he was destined to be the ruler over 10 of the landed tribes. Solomon's descendants would retain only one. Jeroboam apparently failed to keep this secret, and the result was that Solomon tried to kill the faithful young man. No one had ever successfully opposed God's judgment plans by treachery, and Solomon did not become the first to do so.

After Solomon died, Jeroboam returned from self-banishment. In a short time, he was in possession of 10 of the tribes. Unfortunately for this king, the one tribe that had been retained by David's grandson included the city of Jerusalem. And, practically speaking, that meant that every adult male under Jeroboam was obliged, three times each year, to visit the enemy kingdom. That boded ill for future war scenarios. If every male could be captured easily unarmed, how could the 10 tribes stand?

Thinking like this wasn't as wise as it seemed. God foresaw this objection to keep the national feasts and made provision accordingly. He promised, "For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year" (Exodus 34:24).

Jeroboam's solution was to change the religious order anyway. He ordained men who would not feel loyal to the Jerusalem temple. These were not Levites. Then the king established two new centers of worship within his borders. Images were procured that were historically respectable. They

were spitting images of Aaron's golden calf. These were not new gods. They were the "God" who had brought the people out of Egypt.

Did God smile on this progressive worship innovation with its new relevance, cultural sensitivity, and convenience (not to mention safety!)? Wasn't it obviously a winning program? Didn't it set a new standard for the people?

Jeroboam did set a new standard. He became the prophetic benchmark for decades, for all the wrong reasons. Wicked kings were recorded as being like Jeroboam. And it was said of him that he ultimately caused the 10 tribes to be rejected. "And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin" (1 Kings 14:16).

We learn from Jeroboam that God's directions regarding worship are to be carefully followed, political difficulties notwithstanding. We learn that social progressiveness is not just grounds for ignoring even what we might think are the least consequential of God's directions. When Jeroboam's faulty ordinations were imitated in Judah, the great revival under Josiah put down those idolatrous priests as part of a broad program of bringing the people back to faithfulness. (See 2 Kings 23:5.)

## **Nehemiah the Reformer**

Among the great reformers who returned from captivity in Persia stands Nehemiah. To him belonged the difficult task of righting wrongs that had been long practiced. The Sabbath had come to be lightly regarded, for example, and had turned into a shopping day. Marriage with unbelievers had become common. In a nation where priesthood was established by genealogy, the records had been kept in a shoddy manner. The result was that several priests were practicing their occupation who could not prove, by reliable sources, that they were entitled to that position.

And of the priests: the [descendants] of Barzillai, who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called by their name. These sought their listing among those who were registered by genealogy, but it was not found (Nehemiah 7:63, 64).

This was a messy issue. Priests have families that need support. They have persons who look to them for guidance. Considering the ramifications,

how was a reformer to address this problem? The answer is that reformers should never stoop to think about consequences. God's directions were given by One who has already considered all difficulties. And so it was for that reason that Nehemiah knew what to do.

Therefore they were excluded from the priesthood as defiled. And the governor said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things till a priest could consult with the Urim and Thummim (Nehemiah 7:64, 65).

In view of these things, if it is biblically true that women should not have the position of overseer in the church, then it is also true that women who have been ordained to that office as local elders should retire from their position until Inspiration says they are welcome to it.

## The Firstborn Son

Long ago, very long ago, the priesthood was patriarchal. It was this context in which we find that Enoch was the "seventh from Adam" (Jude 14). That doesn't mean that Enoch was the seventh child of Adam. Rather, it means that Enoch was the seventh priest in a line from Adam, each priest being the first-born son of the priest before him. In the event of apostasy (as in the case of Cain) or of death (as in the case of Abel), the position might be passed to the next younger son. But it was not passed to the daughters.

This patriarchal system of priestly responsibilities survived the global flood. Little else from the social structures of mankind did. And so it was that Melchizedek (probably Shem) was high priest in Abraham's day. And Abraham's family practiced the same principle of priesthood. His firstborn legitimate son carried the spiritual birthright. Esau could have had it. But he forfeited it for a mess of porridge. And so Jacob became the father of the chosen nation.

Whatever man might say about culture in the ancient Near East, it should be observed that the firstborn son system of priestly inheritance predates the culture of the ancient Near East. It even predates Babylon. It is as old as history goes. That makes it sound more like a Divine plan than an act of homage to prevailing customs. What is more reasonable to

assume is that the low state of women in ancient history was the result of pagan interpretations of the inspired system. (In like manner, we can explain the prevalence of sacrifices in ancient pagan religions. All of them had their origins in Noah's family, who offered sacrifices of thanksgiving after the flood.)

## CHAPTER 3

### The Role of Faulty and Imaginative Arguments in Sustaining Truth

Sometimes the truth suffers while being defended by odd arguments. It is even likely that some promoters of women's ordination feel that I have done a disservice to their cause by responding to arguments that they feel don't belong on the list. They would say, perhaps, that I set up a straw man and then tore him to pieces.

I hope they will pardon me. In my own defense, let me say that there are some arguments on both sides of the fence that I feel are too weak to warrant being included in the list of the first section of this book. And so I will briefly mention them here for the sake of those who might yet encounter them, as I have often.

#### **Adam named Eve.**

As an argument against women's ordination, some have made an issue out of the idea that Adam named Eve. Arguments could be made about whether she was brought to him for naming or not. But it just doesn't matter. Whether or not Adam named Eve has no bearing on whether or not women should be ordained to the position of overseer in the church today.

#### **The Ephesians believed that Eve was created first.**

Some have noted Paul's argument in 1 Timothy that Adam was created first and have postulated from that fact a very strange idea. They suggest that the Ephesians were under the impression that Eve was made first.

I object to this kind of reasoning. When I make an illustration to establish a point, I use illustrations that my audience will agree with. That is the beauty of illustration. It connects an already understood point to a not-yet-internalized one. So when Paul writes, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve" (1 Timothy 2:13), he is not introducing a shocking and doubtful

point. He is asserting a known point to bolster the previous statement. This is simply true. And it is apparent in English as well as in Greek.

This has no bearing on the issue of ordination, except some have built on this supposition and concluded that 1 Timothy 2:12, the previous verse, must be a reference to some strange and local belief system.

### **John wrote to the “elect lady.”**

One of John's epistles was written to the “elect lady” (2 John 1:1). Whether this was written to a special female or whether it was written to the church under the symbol of a chosen bride, this verse has no bearing on our subject. Every saved person is chosen in Jesus, whether they are eight years old or eighty, whether they are a genius or not particularly intelligent. The status of being chosen does not automatically confer eligibility for church office. (To be chosen is to be “elect.”)

### **Jezebel, found in Revelation 2:20, is the only New Testament woman with teaching authority.**

While this is technically true, it is also a stretch to say that John intended to make this point. If a prophet didn't intend to make a point, it isn't safe to say that it is an inspired point.

### **Eve's curse ended at the cross.**

In the first section, we addressed the idea that there is no gender distinction in Christianity since the cross. But then that argument, as worded here, loses all its redemptive features. Do women still have pain in childbirth? Do men still sweat to earn their bread? The idea that the gospel takes away the curse of Genesis 3 misses an important aspect of that curse: It is a blessing. God changed the world as a discipline that was for our betterment. And, no, that discipline was not taken away at the cross.



## CHAPTER 4

### A Few Good Reasons

#### The Bible's teachings on this topic are worded in distinctly universal language.

No one can deny that Paul's writings regarding women and church mean something. In the King James Bible, there are 38 passages written by the apostle that contain the words "women," "woman," or "female." Whatever these passages mean, they don't appear to harmonize with a feminist agenda.

- ✓ Two of them are a condemnation of lesbianism or prostitution (Romans 1:26, 27; 2 Timothy 3:6).
- ✓ Two others enforce the marriage vow on women who might, for some reason, want to be free from it (Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:13).
- ✓ The next one forbids extra-marital sex or even the physical aspects of flirting (1 Corinthians 7:1, 2).
- ✓ Seven of them regulate woman's dress, even to the point of addressing hair length (1 Corinthians 11:5, 6, 10, 13, 15; 1 Timothy 2:9, 10).
- ✓ Another indicates that man is the head of the woman (1 Corinthians 11:3).<sup>7</sup>
- ✓ Seven of them mention Genesis facts: Four remind us that woman was taken out of man and made for man (1 Corinthians 11:7, 8, 9, 12). One alludes to the pain related to childbirth (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

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7 Paul has many more statements on the headship of the husband, but those use the words "wife" or "wives."

Paul also refers to the fact that Eve was the one deceived in the garden of Eden (1 Timothy 2:14).

- ✓ And twice he writes that the ideal state for a young woman is that of a home keeper, birthing children, and raising them (1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:4).

However, not everything that Paul says relative to women would irritate a feminist. Christ was born of a woman (Galatians 4:4). Men and women are equally obliged to care for their widowed mothers (1 Timothy 5:16). Paul had female fellow workers (Philippians 4:3). Female church members should be treated as family (1 Timothy 5:2). Elder women should be well behaved (Titus 2:3). Women were the beneficiaries of the incredible miracle of life being restored to their deceased children (Hebrews 11:35). Paul even goes so far as to affirm the legitimacy of lifelong singlehood for a woman (1 Corinthians 7:34).

Mixed among Paul's writings are a few statements that put men and women on some sort of even playing field (1 Corinthians 11:11, 12; Galatians 3:28). But these nine verses (among a total of 38) hardly soften the blow of the four we haven't mentioned yet. And those four are the reason for the debate over women's ordination.

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence (1 Timothy 2:11, 12).

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34, 35).

Feminists have never been very fond of Paul, despite his "neither male nor female" statement. But what did Paul mean by these four verses above? I'll discuss later that the statement to Timothy is, in fact, a prohibition against females being entrusted with the teaching authority of overseers.

But leave that idea alone for a moment. Whatever these verses mean, they do mean something. And before you say, “They were written because of the times in which Paul lived,” listen to the apostle himself.

Does he ground his arguments on culture? Or does he ground them in universal principles? The truth is, these verses are some of the most creation-oriented statements that Paul makes. They are grounded on distinctly universal realities. The first two are buttressed by these arguments: “For Adam was first formed, then Eve” (1 Timothy 2:13), and “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (v. 14). Even verse 15 is a reference to Genesis 3. And what about 1 Corinthians 14? It makes reference to the law of Genesis 3, where Eve’s desire was to be to her own husband.

We can’t get around the fact that Paul’s arguments are universal in scope. And that means that his conclusions, like those of other Scriptures, are universally applicable to humankind. This means we should not allow a woman to usurp teaching authority over her husband in the church. So also she shouldn’t be ordained to the position of overseer in the church.

Other things that Paul writes about women, e.g., praying and prophesying in public, prevent us from taking the extreme view of these passages that would mute all female sharing. This leaves us with the simple and plain application that women are not to be the overseers. In the context of 1 Corinthians 14, they are not the ones to establish order in the disorderly worship services. And in 1 Timothy they are not to aspire to the office of overseer. Want more evidence? See the upcoming chapter on Gender Issues and Ordination.

What you have here is one good reason not to ordain women. We have four biblical statements; we don’t want to try to explain at the great white throne why we didn’t think they were relevant.

### **The Bible’s examples regarding priests, apostles, elders, and birthright holders are all masculine.**

While it is understood that God has always used gifted women to teach, prophesy, and minister, the Scriptures do make a clear distinction in the spiritual roles of men and women. This list of Bible facts is not meant as a complete argument against the ordination of women, but rather to provide a panorama of benchmarks to help those researching the matter for themselves.

1. Following sin in Eden, God established male spiritual leadership within the family and church. See Genesis 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:13.
2. Only men were ever authorized to officiate in the offering of sacrifice. See Genesis 8:20; Job 1:5; Hebrews 11:4.
3. While the Lord called on the entire nation of Israel to be a kingdom of priests, only men were appointed to serve as priests for the sanctuary. See Exodus 12:3; 29:10.
4. According to Moses, a husband could overrule a vow made by his wife but a wife could not overrule the vow of her husband. See Numbers 27:15–17.
5. Only men were anointed by God to serve as kings of Israel and Judah. One woman tried to forcibly install herself as a queen by killing her grandsons; she was later executed. See 2 Kings 11:1–13.
6. The New Testament begins by tracing the genealogy of Jesus through the male lineage. (Four famous women are mentioned in connection with their husbands.) See Matthew 1:1.
7. While Jesus desired that women share the gospel, He called only men to serve in the capacity of apostle. When Judas died, his replacement was chosen from among two men. See Mark 3:14; Acts 1:21.
8. While both men and women were baptized, only men are recorded as performing baptisms. See Acts 8:12; Acts 8:38.
9. The first seven deacons ordained to administrate and preach were all men. See Acts 6:3.
10. As Paul went from town to town appointing/ordaining elders, he chose only men. See 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:5.
11. While two books in the Bible are named after women, most commentators agree all the books in the Bible were written by men. See 2 Peter 1:21.
12. There are seven examples of women in Scripture that give birth in connection with a miracle. All these miracle babies were male children who typified Christ. The women are Hannah, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachael, Manoah's wife, the Shunammite woman, and Elizabeth.

13. All patriarchal blessings were passed down from the fathers to the sons. See Genesis 27:4; Genesis 48:9.
14. The names of the 12 tribes and 12 apostles in the gates and foundations of the New Jerusalem are the names of males.

Jesus could have chosen anyone He desired to be apostles. (He had no qualms with being accompanied in the daytime by supportive women.) Jesus could have led Paul to acknowledge female elders. (Paul had no qualms regarding acknowledging the good of female workers.)

God could have set the daughters of Aaron as priests. (Pagan nations at the time had female priests, and God chose Moses' sister to compose inspired verses.) God could have directed that the birthright would be passed to the eldest child regardless of gender.

But when culture would allow it, when opportunity made it possible, God kept to the pattern established in Genesis. Every priest was a male. Every apostle was a male. Every elder was a male. And these men were not generally celibate. They were heads of their homes just as they were spiritual heads of God's people.

The example of God is a second good reason not to ordain women to the position of overseer in God's church. The first good reason was God's *written revelation*. The second is His written *example*.

**A man is head of his home even at church. And so his wife should not be over him there. That is Paul's reasoning, and it is sound.**

Man is the head of the home. All parties that hold a high view of Scripture agree on this point. Many good persons who support the ordination of women still recognize this truth. It is just too plainly revealed to be denied by a studious believer. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23).

When a man is at church with his family, is he still the head of the family? Of course, the answer is yes. Walking through the church doors does not dissolve the gospel order established in the home circle. Then can it be that when he walks through those doors that his baptized children now answer first to their mother? Or in church questions, can they appeal

to her from his decision? No such embarrassing scenario will cloud the sanctuary where the biblical rule reigns unchallenged.

The force of the logic in this important point is largely lost, though, on persons who cannot see any real authority existing in the overseer's position. Are you one who does not see any real executive function in the role of the minister? Then there is a note for you in the appendix addressed to one "Mary" who had just such a problem. But even before you read it, you must see that some sort of authority does exist in the church. And that authority draws from the experiences gained by a man acting as head of his family:

For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? (1 Timothy 3:5).

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine (1 Timothy 5:17).

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation (Hebrews 13:7).

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

So there you have it—three good and simple reasons not to ordain women to the authoritative position over the local church. The first reason is that God said, through Paul, that women should not take the teaching authority in the church that belongs to their husbands. The second is that God's example is consistent from Genesis to Revelation. When He has appointed people to spiritual guardianship of congregations or communities, He has appointed men to do it.

And His example is one worth imitating. In Genesis He was not subject to cultural considerations. He created the cultural considerations. But there is far more that could be said. And some of it should be said. So for a deeper understanding of what is involved in the Bible doctrine of ordination, read on.

## CHAPTER 5

### A Bible Study

**Y**ou have come to the section of this book that is essentially a Bible study on the issue of ordination and, in particular, women's ordination. There might be some redundancy here from earlier sections, but I am confident that you will learn something new regardless. To highlight what I'm trying to accomplish with this section and to get an idea of where things currently stand, let's start by considering the role of ordination in the Adventist church today.

#### *Ordination in the Adventist Church Currently*

Ordination services in the Adventist church either ordain a person for a position in a local church or for a position in the worldwide church. Ordinations for local positions are conducted in the local church by all presently appointed elders<sup>8</sup>. Ordination for worldwide service is generally conducted in a camp meeting venue by select presiding persons who have been ordained to the same level of service.

On the local level, persons are ordained to the position of elder, deacon, and occasionally to other positions. On the global level, persons are ordained to the position of elder and are called ordained ministers. No such ordination of deacons happens above the local level.

The worldwide church has established basic protocols for all ordination services. These include gender-specific guidelines for ordination to the worldwide level of church governance. Some congregations and even unions have established their own protocols for ordination that differ from those of the worldwide church.

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<sup>8</sup> A person ordained as a local elder need not, typically, be ordained a second time for local service, even if he should move to a different location. His ordination is for local service but not for a particular local service.

## *Disambiguation: Biblical Use of the Word “Ordination”*

In the Scripture, persons, regulations, places, and even objects are “ordained.” When a person is ordained, he becomes a priest or an elder or some other worker. When a regulation is ordained, it becomes an ordinance and is legally binding. When an object or a place is ordained, it is dedicated to its intended use.

In the Bible, there are 43 verses in the King James that include some form of the word “ordain.” In these “ordain” passages, there are no less than 25 different Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words behind the English use of “ordain.” Why are there so many words? The idea of ordaining is related to several fundamental ideas. To set, to establish, to choose, to command, to make, to cause, to determine—all of these infinitives are in the range of ideas expressed by the English words “to ordain.” And so a great many words in the original languages have been translated as “ordain” in the King James.

We will consider closely nine of these 25 biblical words. These nine are, in Scripture, sometimes related to the ordaining of persons to religious service. This study is not about the ordination of the law or of the sanctuary (or even of Jesus as high priest). These and numerous other ordination-related topics will not be addressed. We are studying chiefly about the ordination of persons to religious service.

### *Ordination in the Old Testament*

#### **Ordination by God**

God ordained Jeremiah to the role of prophet. That ordination involved no ritual at all, for it happened even before the prophet was born. The prophet’s ordination was based on his qualities, for it is written that God “knew him.” And the ordination was part of a process that set Jeremiah aside, or “sanctified” him, for holy service. “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5).



God's ordination of Jeremiah illustrates the difference between prophets and priests. The former are chosen by God. The latter are chosen by men, but under God-given guidelines.

### **Ordination by Man**

King David believed in ordination. He ordained men to perform various functions in connection with the sanctuary. Even "porters" were ordained (1 Chronicles 9:22). Some of the king's Levitical appointments were ordained "by hand." (That is the meaning of the Hebrew *yawd*.) These Levitical appointments were done in harmony with the law given by Moses (2 Chronicles 23:18). Even some of the king's musical instruments were ordained for God's service in the same way that the Levites were set aside (2 Chronicles 29:27).

Other uses of "ordain" in the Old Testament are references to the ordination of God's laws (including natural law), God's judgments, and human enactments. One other particularly interesting use is in Isaiah. "LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us" (Isaiah 26:12).

### **Ordination, the Priesthood, and the Throne**

We learn from the New Testament that the sanctuary had been ordained for use (Hebrews 9:6). From this we can deduce that the consecration rituals in Exodus and Leviticus were ordination services in the sense of the word "ordained" in Hebrews 9. That is even clearer in Hebrews 5:1 and 8:3, where we find that the Old Testament high priests were "ordained." How does the New Testament describe this ordination? Hebrews 5:1 says that every high priest "taken from among men" is ordained "for men" in things relating to God. When did God take the priests "from among men"? He did so when Aaron and his sons were consecrated to their office.

And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, *from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office*, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons (Exodus 28:1, my emphasis).

The purpose of their ordination was that they might “offer gifts and sacrifices” (Hebrews 8:3). While the ordination did not procure for them any new physical abilities, it did grant them spiritual rights. They could legitimately act as priests.

Their ordination did involve ritual. They were set aside in Exodus 28:1. But unless they were wearing the special clothes made for their office, they could not officiate. That is, they were to wear the ritual items so that they might be able to do their work (Exodus 28:2–4). The “curiously wrought” breastplate was part of the ritual, showing that the priest represented the people (Exodus 28:5–30). So sacred and significant was this illustration that God made wearing the outfit into a life-and-death issue. To not wear it was to warrant death “before the LORD” (Exodus 28:31–35).

After donning their ceremonial clothing, the next step in the ordination of the priests was an anointing service. “And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest’s office” (Exodus 28:41). This was done with special spiced oil (Exodus 25:6).

This ordination by anointing is part of the Old Testament predecessor to the New Testament laying on of hands. Both human rituals represent God’s part in the consecration of a minister. His part is to fill the individual with His Spirit. The Lord performed this service not only for priests, but also for kings. And so both were anointed with oil.

Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah (1 Samuel 16:13).

## Reversing Improper Ordination

Jeroboam, the ringleader in national apostasy, believed in ordinations too. They were part of his political program. Since Levites would have a devotion to the worship center in Judah, Jeroboam ordained his own priests (2 Chronicles 11:15). His “against-orders” ordination was a large part of his spiritual downfall. From his experience, we can observe how God views an ordination program that conveniently overlooks politically incorrect

aspects of God's directions (such as, that only Levites were qualified to act as priests).

Good King Josiah showed, as part of his general revival program later, how to go forward after such a setback. He "put down" badly ordained priests, setting each one back into his proper role of private citizen.

And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven (2 Kings 23:5).

This was not the only time that priests were put out of office in the Old Testament. One of the most interesting stories regarding the reversal of ordination to the priesthood is found both in the books of Nehemiah and Ezra. When the captives were numbered by genealogy, it was found that some of the priests were unable to establish their priestly ancestry.

No one in the passage expressed doubt that they were sincere. No one suggested that their priesthood was the result of fraud. But God's people were not willing to continue the risk of having an unqualified person serving as priest, even if it was possible that God would approve. They took the reforming stand of removing the questionable persons from the priesthood until such time as God would speak directly to the issue by inspiration.

And of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai, which took one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife, and was called after their name. These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim (Nehemiah 7:63-65). [Compare to Ezra 2:61-63.]

This work of reform was part of a broader reform going on at the time that involved bringing God's people back up to a biblical standard on

several other issues, including mixed marriages, keeping of the ceremonial and moral Sabbaths, and payment of tithe. These workers undoubtedly had value and skill. They would feasibly suffer hardship being defrocked for they would lose their food supply. Their families would be both embarrassed and likely hungry. None of these sentimental considerations, however, weighed one moment against the practice of principle. God required careful attention to detail. Anytime that God desired to raise up someone to resolve the issue, God could do so.

### *Ordination in the New Testament*

#### **Events**

Jesus has been ordained by His Father. He has been appointed to be the judge of all the earth (Acts 10:42; 17:31). As men did not choose prophets in the Old Testament, so they had no liberty to appoint their own judge in the New Testament. And where men's choices are not involved, man's ordination is not needed. In other words, prophets have authority regardless of whether men choose to recognize it. And for that reason an ordination service of a prophet would be a confusing ritual if it were viewed as establishing the authority of that prophet.

In regard to our topic in this book, there are two primary ordination events in the New Testament: The first is Christ's ordination of the 12 apostles; the second is the work of the apostles in organizing the Christian church and ordaining men as elders over churches.

#### **Ordination of the Apostles**

Jesus called disciples to spend time with Him during His ministry. It was in connection with His baptism by John that Jesus made first contact with several men who would later become the apostles.

Not everyone who followed Jesus during the first few months of His work was later ordained as one of the 12 apostles. Jesus spent an entire night in prayer before selecting the men that should, after His death, carry forward His work.

The apostles were ordained by Jesus in two simple senses. First, He "made" them to be apostles. That is the idea behind "ordained" in Mark 3:14. Second, He "set" them in that position. That is the meaning

behind “ordained” in John 15:16. The work of Jesus made the men into apostles and set them aside for that work.

When one of those apostles proved unworthy, he was replaced by an ordination that involved selection by the remaining faithful apostles (Acts 1:22). Like the first 12, however, Paul was set as an apostle by the work of God (1 Timothy 2:7). The apostle did not, however, consider His divine calling to give him precedence over other apostles. Rather, he viewed himself, because of his past life of opposing the truth, to be unworthy to be titled apostle. “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Corinthians 15:9).

## **Ordination of Elders and Deacons in the Churches**

The word “elder” (and “elders”) appears 66 times in the New Testament. The first 28 times, bringing us up to Acts 10, are all references to the Jewish elders who opposed the truth. The final 12 times, from Revelation 4 onward, are all references to the “24 elders” in heaven. Except for a few references to the Jewish elders again in Paul’s trial story, the remaining New Testament references are to Christian elders.

Interestingly, deacons show up in the New Testament church (in Acts 6) before elders do (in Acts 11). The ritual ordination of elders shows up later yet (in Acts 14). Deacons were chosen to relieve the apostles of business responsibilities. They were to be men “full of faith” and of the Holy Spirit. (One of the initial deacons, Philip, was also an evangelist and administered the rite of baptism.) We will speak more of their qualifications in the next section.

How were the first deacons ordained? The apostles did not appoint the men, but rather instructed the believers to look among themselves for appropriate persons to fill the office. The elders were chosen by the “multitude of the disciples” (Acts 6:2).

After being chosen by the local equivalent of our business meeting or constituency meeting, they were ordained by the laying on of hands of the apostles. From later events we conclude that the elders would have been part of this service if they had, before this time, appeared on the scene of church history.

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them (Acts 6:1–6).

### Ordination of Elders in the Church Planting Cycle

Paul raised up churches in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. But when he raised up those churches, they were left for a time without local elders. It was on his return trip, when he came to encourage and strengthen them, that his ministerial team “ordained elders” in these cities.

The Greek word used here, *cheirotoneo*, is a verb that means to vote by hand. Notice that verse 23 doesn't say that Paul personally appointed elders in every church. Rather, “they ... ordained,” or they chose by vote “elders in every church.” The choice of the brethren in council was ratified by a period of prayer, fasting, and an exhortation to faithfulness. Though this passage gives no information regarding what other ritual might have been involved in the ordination process, we do learn more about that from other passages.

And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed (Acts 14:21–23).

Why wait some time before encouraging the churches to select elders from among their members? This gave opportunity for character to develop and for the new believers to become acquainted with one another. Their character became known during this time. Then, when they were visited for the second time by the workers, they were ready to be encouraged to establish local leadership.

These elders were then chosen by their peers with guidance from the church planters. Though the evangelists were present to encourage and guide the process, the credit for the choice went to the believers as a whole.

*Cheirotoneo* is translated “was ... chosen” in the following verse. Here some brother (perhaps Luke, a worker who was known “throughout all the churches”) was chosen by vote to “travel” with Paul “with this grace” —

And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind (2 Corinthians 8:18, 19).

## Elders as Bishops and Issues of Rank

Both Titus and Timothy were chosen by vote also. From these two verses, we learn that elders had, even in the first century, a type of rank. These faithful young men were voted to be the chief elders in their region.<sup>9</sup>

The second epistle unto Timotheus, ordained [*cheirotoneo*] the first bishop of the church of the Ephesians, was written from Rome, when Paul was brought before Nero the second time (2 Timothy).

It was written to Titus, ordained [*cheirotoneo*] the first bishop of the church of the Cretians, from Nicopolis of Macedonia (Titus 3:15).

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<sup>9</sup> Both of the passages quoted here are of doubtful origin and were likely added to the Bible sometime after the first century. Various early editions of the Scripture differ in some details. Nevertheless, the premise that Titus and Timothy were presiding elders is substantiated both by their calling to organize churches (Titus 1:5) and to ordain elders in each city. Ellen White says regarding the ordination of Paul and Barnabas that they were “invested with full ecclesiastical authority” both to “baptize and to organize churches” (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 160). This is the type of work that a candid reading of Titus and the epistles to Timothy shows to have belonged to these young men.

What were the duties of the chief elder<sup>10</sup> of the Cretians? Titus was instructed that he was to perfect the church order that Paul had been building. Titus was to oversee the ordaining of elders “in every city.” These organizational duties had been “appointed” to Him by the apostle.

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee (Titus 1:5).

Interestingly, the Greek verb for ordain in Titus 1:5 is the same one used by Paul for the Old Testament ordination of the high priests in Hebrews 5:1 and 8:3. In most of the New Testament, it is translated as some form of the words “make ruler.” A typical usage is Luke 12:44<sup>11</sup>: “Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler [*kathistemi*] over all that he hath.” It is the same word used in Acts 6:3 regarding the first deacons. As the elders were set over the spiritual affairs of the church, so the deacons had been appointed over the business affairs.

Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint [*kathistemi*] over this business (Acts 6:3).

## Summary of the Ordination Events

In the New Testament, apostles were ordained first. These then oversaw the ordination of men to handle the business side of the church's work, the deacons. As the church grew, men were chosen by the churches to act as elders. These were overseers, or bishops, of the churches. The local elders were organized under a chief elder for a city or district. Titus and Timothy were such chief elders. They were responsible for perfecting church order

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10 When Paul called the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:17), he exhorted them that they had been called to be overseers of the church (Acts 20:28). The Greek word for overseers, *episkopos*, is the same word translated “bishop” in its six other New Testament occurrences. Bishops are elders in their capacity as overseers. They are not two different positions. There were two, not three, positions in the local church, “the bishops and deacons” (Philippians 1:1). See also Titus 1:5–7, where elders are obviously bishops.

11 In all fairness, it should be noted that this word has a more generic use as “make” or “set” that is occasionally even translated as weakly as “is.” See, for example, James 3:6 and 4:4.



in their field and assuring that faithful men occupied sacred office. It is for this reason, sensibly, that we find the criteria for the positions of elder and deacon in the epistles to Titus and Timothy.

## *Criteria*

### **Honor for All Delegated Workers**

When we speak of the criteria established in the Bible for the positions of elder and business director (deacon), we should be careful not to lightly estimate men holding these positions who might lack the specified criterion. While someone who rules well is worthy of double honor, everyone who rules is worthy of some. “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine” (1 Timothy 5:17).

Why are other elders worthy of some honor? Because God has ordained that mankind organize itself. Anarchy, whether political or spiritual, is contrary to growth and prosperity. For that reason, God authorized men to form governments at all levels of human interaction. And the powers that exist in these levels of government are “ordained” of God.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation (Romans 13:1, 2).

When authority is poorly handled, effective systems have legitimate protocols for holding rulers accountable. The early church had such protocols, but they are not the subject of this book.

Again, when we speak of the criteria for ordination, we are not speaking of the criteria for showing respect and deference. Even poorly qualified men, if they have been chosen by the church duly, ought to be respected for their position of delegated church authority. On the flip side, there is a limit to the level of respect and obedience that should be given to any man. (See the article “Forbid Them Not” from the *Adventist Affirm* archives for more on this topic.)

Titus had the job of ordaining men in every city. Our current object is to know what he was looking for when he was searching for candidates for this position.

## Criteria for the Ordination of Persons to the Gospel Ministry

### Timing

Elders were not ordained at the same moment that a church was first organized in a heathen land. After Paul and Titus were instrumental in raising a church in Crete, Titus was left behind with the twofold assignment of perfecting the organization of the new congregations and of ordaining elders in each of those cities to preside over those congregations. “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5).

### Family

Elders were to be model members. The Greek for “blameless” in Titus 1:6 and 7 is very well translated. It describes one who cannot be well accused or reproved. It is very similar to the Greek for “blameless” in 1 Timothy 3:2. In particular, his family administration must be above reproach. Bigamy, whether serial or otherwise, disqualified a man from the holy office.

The children of the man must be faithful. Like their father, they must live in such a way as to repel accusations that they are rebellious or are troublemakers. If they are out of control, how can the church trust the father to be able to guide the larger family of the church?

If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly (Titus 1:6).

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife ... [one] that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) (1 Timothy 3:2, 4, 5).

There is a connection between being the husband of one wife and having faithful children. The following is my paraphrase of Malachi 2:15, 16.

God only made one spouse for Adam, right? That wasn't because He was running low on the breath of life. Then why only one wife? So that the children would be godly. So watch your attitude and don't be a traitor against the woman you married when you were young. For the Lord, the God of Israel, says that he hates divorce. [And another thing God hates] is the physical abuse of a woman by her husband. This is because God has been seeking to produce godly children.

### Finances

Elders are not required to be rich as were Abraham and Job. Nor are they necessarily to be poor as was Jesus. But they are required to be good stewards. "For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God" (Titus 1:7). Gambling and speculative investments, the promotion of tiered-marketing "opportunities" and of get-rich-quick schemes, reveal poor judgment. Such judgment, which cannot manage personal possessions well, is not qualified to be entrusted with the care of the flock. In the history of the church, poor stewards have often used their influence as church leaders to lead unwary members to join them in their foolish investments, resulting in loss and embarrassment.

### Temper

Elders should be chosen from among men who are neither arbitrary in manner nor easily provoked. They are not to be "self-willed, not soon angry ... no striker" (Titus 1:7). They are to be "patient, not a brawler" (1 Timothy 3:3). This criteria would banish from office the spirit that gave rise to the papacy among the elders of Ephesus (see Acts 20) and would, even today, prevent much of what goes wrong in the local church. An explosive temper reveals a heart that lacks self-control. Such a heart, incapable of managing itself under duress, cannot well manage a church. A "striker" is a quarrelsome person, a fighter. Such people often rise to administrative positions during times of conflict. But in the church they should not rise at all, and especially during times of conflict.

### Temperance

Elders must not be chosen from those who are addicted to either substances or to materialism. If their lives are “given” to such low aims as inebriation or wealth, how can they be devoted to prayer and to the preaching of the Word? They should not be “given to wine” or to “filthy lucre,” but be “temperate” (Titus 1:7, 8). Paul adds in Timothy, “not covetous” (1 Timothy 3:3). Also, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4).

### Hospitality

Elders are not to be studious hermits. Their model homes should be open to the needs of others. Those who would not bring someone else into their homes are not the men who will enter into the heart needs of their flock. Paul says they are to be “a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men” (Titus 1:8) and “given to hospitality” (1 Timothy 3:2).

### Serious Minded and Well Behaved

Elders are not to be chosen from the jovial joking crowd. The work of an elder is too serious to be handled by someone lacking gravity. It requires more attention than will be given by someone who treats sacred things lightly. Paul uses the words “sober, just, holy” (Titus 1:8) and “vigilant, sober, of good behavior” (1 Timothy 3:2).

### Faithful and Able to Teach and Correct Erroneous Persons

Elders are to be “apt to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2). Their work is educational in nature and only persons who are adapted to the work ought to be chosen to do it. These teachers must not be original. They are to teach as they have “been taught.” They are to be equipped to counter false teachers for there are “many” of them in every age.

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision (Titus 1:9, 10).

## **Having Sufficient Experience in the Things of God, Not a Novice**

In the church-planting program of Paul and his helpers, it must have been tempting to ordain persons to be local elders in newly planted churches full of brand-new Christians. But this was not wise. Paul indicated that such a practice would put the ordained person in the sight of the devil's artillery. And if the man was practicing sins that were yet undiscovered for lack of sufficient time of observation, the one ordaining the person would share in the responsibility for his bad behavior as an elder. And so he instructs, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6). So also, "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure" (5:22).

### **Having a Good Reputation Among Unbelievers**

Finally, Paul instructs, "Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:7). In other words, elders need to have a good name and character in the community.

## **Criteria for Ordination of Persons to the Office of Deacon**

The word in Paul's counsel regarding the criteria for choosing deacons is "likewise." The deacons were not of an inferior mold, not a second-class category of spirituality. They were not men more qualified to do maintenance than to preach. They were to be carefully chosen.

Serious and consistent (not "double-tongued" or two-faced on issues), sober and content, the deacons were every whit as spiritually mature as the elders. Their families were to be models of Christian order. If their wives were gossipers, or otherwise unfaithful, the husbands were disqualified from the position of deacon. Doctrinally they were to be accurate. Spiritually they were to be pure and conscientious.

Interestingly, just as an elder was not to be a "novice," so deacons were to be subjected to a period of test and trial before their ordination.

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of

the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well (1 Timothy 3:8–12).

While the deacons were not required to be “apt to teach,” they were required to be skilled at handling the business of the church. They were to be recognized and respected by the local church as men who could well conduct the business of the church. They were to be intelligent, sensible, and Spirit-filled persons with a reputation for honesty. “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3).

### *Duties of Ordained Persons in the New Testament*

#### **Regular Elders**

##### **Feed the Flock with Solid Bible Teaching**

The responsibility of elders is to feed the congregation wholesome Bible food. This is illustrated by the work of a shepherd both in the Old and New Testaments. Ezekiel faulted elders for feeding themselves while neglecting the flock. Peter, who calls himself an elder, exhorts all elders to feed the “flock of God.”

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind (1 Peter 5:1, 2).

##### **Oversee the Flock, Watching for Their Spiritual Well-Being and Safety**

The elder is responsible to take “the oversight” of the congregation. He is a shepherd motivated by his own love and interest in the sheep. Money does not make him work. His own overseeing elders don’t need to force

him to labor. He is responsible to be ready and willing. This oversight of the flock comes with solemn responsibilities. In the judgment the elders will be held accountable for how they cared for the flock.

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

Peter uses the term “chief Shepherd” for Jesus and, by using it, suggests the term “under shepherd” as applying to elders. The under shepherd is not a lord. His oversight is neither the work of a CEO nor of a general. He guides by example and teaching, not by forbidding and restraint.

Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Peter 5:3, 4).

### **Regulate the Teaching in the Congregation**

Elders have the responsibility of preventing large-scale apostasy by closing the church meetings to the teaching of heresy. They are responsible to prevent heretics from presenting their causes in the meetings of the church. Paul instructs, “Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake” (Titus 1:11).

### **Rebuke Those in Need of Rebuke**

Elders must sharply rebuke those needing sharp rebukes and patiently instruct those needing patient instruction. Their aim is to produce reliable and stable believers.

One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith (Titus 1:12, 13).

## **Delegate the Business Affairs of the Church to the Deacons**

The elders were to be neither CEOs nor CFOs. Their function required such attention and work that it was unreasonable for them to carry an additional burden of church finance.

It should be noted that the New Testament does not describe any position of a presiding deacon. And as the work of ordaining deacons is given to the presiding elder, it is sensible to assume that a presiding elder takes cognizance of both the deacon-oriented and elder-oriented functions of the church. This is what the apostles did when they established the position of deacon in the first place. They took oversight of the business sufficiently to delegate it to representative men.

Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business (Acts 6:2, 3).

## **Devote One's Self to Bible Study and Prayer**

The purpose of the delegation was to free up the elders (presiding apostles in the case of Acts 6) so that they could devote themselves thoroughly to spiritual pursuits. "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4).

## **Presiding Elders**

The work of presiding elders, such as Titus and Timothy, can be ascertained by reading Paul's instruction to these men. They were to oversee a region of the church and answer to what would be our conference presidents today, men tasked with prospering the church regionally.

## **Guide the Community by Teaching Behavioral and Doctrinal Norms**

Presiding elders provided a service of normalcy. Undistracted by local and messy issues, they could approach local churches with a message regarding the ideal. They were to speak of the proper behavior



of the constituent parts of the church: older men, older women, young women, etc. And by their teaching they were to defend orthodox doctrine with the soundest of reasoning. This involves more than saying what is true; it involves teaching the truth by appealing only to the best hermeneutics.

But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth (Titus 2:1–5, 14).

### **Properly Encourage Aspiring Elders**

They were also to encourage qualified men that aspired to the office of elder. Such a desire was not to be viewed as an evil ambition but as a noble aim. “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Timothy 3:1).

### **Evaluate the Merits of Potential Elders and Ordain Qualified Persons**

To be able to properly encourage qualified persons, a presiding elder must be able to identify them. He must be able to use the Bible criteria to discriminate among potential local elders. Just before Paul gave Titus directions on how to qualify potential elders, he instructed him to choose “elders” in “every city.” This is one of two reasons he was appointed to his oversight position. “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ... ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5).

### **Organize Churches and Insist on Perfection of Their Order**

The presiding elder is not to let the churches determine what level of order they are anxious to establish. One church is not to be a democracy

while another is a kingdom. Rather, whatever machinery of order is lacking from a local church is to be remedied by a visit from a presiding elder. “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting ... as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5).

### **Elders Have No Authority to Dictate**

Peter showed, by example, in 1 Peter 5:1–4 that it is the work of a presiding elder to mentor the elders under him and to teach them that they are not lords or dictators. Their work is to guide by example, not by force.

### **Deacons**

The delegated work of deacons is to handle the business of the church. But the qualifications for the position of church servant (that is what *deacon* signifies) were so high that we cannot be surprised that deacons were part of a vibrant lay movement that expanded the boundaries of the cross. One of the original seven eventually become known as “Philip the evangelist.” He was the one who successfully took the gospel to Samaria.

Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business (Acts 6:3).

For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 3:13).

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did (Acts 8:5, 6).

And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him (Acts 21:8).

## *The Ritual of Ordination*

Our tendency is to undervalue spiritual events and blessings. Consequently, ceremonies are often used to solemnize moods and to focus participants on the value of the unseen. Baptism, communion, and marriage are all familiar scenes of ritual intended to deepen a sense of significance.

### **Forms of the Ritual**

The Bible gives abundant attention to a fourth ritual event—anointing. The head of the recipient is anointed with oil or with touch (the laying on of hands). These rites represent investiture, the granting of both responsibility and power to carry out the responsibility. They are the ritual of ordination.

In the Bible, ordination is not reserved for offices of gospel ministry. Men and women are gifted by the Spirit to fill many different roles. Sometimes these gifts by the Spirit follow a ritual of ordination by men. That is the relation between ordination and the Spirit. We receive the former in harmony with God's plan of giving us the latter in larger measure.

Samuel anointed David, "and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward" (1 Samuel 16:13). More than a thousand years later, the newly converted Saul was filled with the Spirit after waiting for the anointing from a church representative.

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 9:17).

We all need more efficiency in our work for the Savior. This is why the Spirit is given, so every man can profit more efficiently in God's work (1 Corinthians 12:7). The Spirit's gifts range from "prophecy" to "helps." The Spirit aids kings in their rule, as David above, even before he took the throne. And the Spirit aids seamstresses "I have filled with the spirit

of wisdom” (Exodus 28:3), and metal workers: “And I filled him with the spirit of God ... and in all manner of workmanship” (Exodus 31:3).

Jesus anointed His chosen apostles at the Great Commission by the singular act of blowing on them. He communicated to them, by this gesture, that in the fact of their being sent rested the guarantee of the Spirit's power. Jesus had been sent by the Father and this was why He received the Spirit.

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost (John 20:21, 22).

For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him (John 3:34).

The early church could not be satisfied to have believing converts if they were not gifted and ready for service. When Samaria “received the Word of God” amidst “signs and great miracles,” two apostles were dispatched from Jerusalem that they might “receive the Holy Ghost.” They “prayed for them” and laid “their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8:5–17).

Though the Samaritan believers differed individually from each other in their knowledge of truth and beauty of character, the Holy Spirit fell on “none of them” prior to the ritual hand-laying. As if to emphasize the hollow character of membership without the Spirit's power, the Scripture says of the not-yet-gifted Samaritans: “only they were baptized” (Acts 8:16). Even the converted Saul, in becoming the apostle Paul, had to wait (see Acts 9:17 above) for the laying on of hands before being filled with the Spirit.

The earnest disciples of John the Baptist, having forgotten (Acts 19:2) John's testimony to the Spirit's descent on Jesus, possessed a sincere love for truth. Yet they had not been filled with the power of that Spirit of whose mission they were ignorant. They were rebaptized and, in the same service, anointed with hands. “And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied” (Acts 19:6).

## Who Could Perform the Ritual of Ordination?

Throughout the New Testament, the rule is modeled that elders ordain elders. Jesus started the process by ordaining the apostles, who themselves claimed to be elders. (See 1 Peter 5:1.) Paul writes, “Be not careless of the gift in thee, that was given thee through prophecy, with laying on of the hands of the eldership” (1 Timothy 4:14 YLT).

## Effects Following the Ritual

When the Holy Spirit came upon missionaries in multilingual areas, they spoke with tongues. When the Spirit filled seamstresses, they made Aaron’s beautiful garments. When the Spirit touched Bezaleel, he became supremely skillful in metallurgy. When the Spirit descended on the boy David, he became a gifted poet and king. When the Spirit came upon Samson, he was able to escape impending destruction by super strength. *The Spirit gives the very gifts needed by an individual to execute his responsibility.*

Having the Spirit working inside us is not evidence that we have no need to be “filled.” Already-spiritual men are anointed to be granted an even greater measure of the Spirit as required by their larger responsibilities. Joshua was chosen for anointing because he was “a man in whom is the Spirit” (Numbers 27:18). Moses “laid his hands” on him and he was filled with “the spirit of wisdom” (Deuteronomy 34:9).

In the case of Titus, the ritual of ordination led to his spiritual giftedness for ministry. The ordination, unless followed up by a diligent use of the gifts, would not accomplish its purpose. Titus was not to “neglect” the use of the gift. “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery” (1 Timothy 4:14).



## CHAPTER 6

# Gender Issues and Biblical Ordination

### The Issues and the Issue<sup>12</sup>

**S**ilence can be eloquence. And on the issue of women's ordination to the gospel ministry in the Adventist church, too much has already been said. Books have been written on both sides of the issue. The anti-ordination camp has urged that the Bible settles this issue decidedly. The pro-ordination camp retorts that the Bible writers conformed to cultural norms in their day when they limited the role of women in local church administration.

I, of course, have highly oversimplified the issue by making such a summary. Complicating matters, somewhat, are two facts: the Bible abounds with evidence of women prophets, but never of a female priest. Nevertheless, I agree with many who argue that the real issue at stake here is the question of scriptural authority versus higher critical naysaying.

### The New Testament Data

When the Bible outlines the qualifications for being an elder, they are worded in distinctly gender-specific terms. The elder is to be the "husband of one wife" and to "rule" his house well. The apostle argues that if he is not able to rule his house, how can he be expected to rule the church well?

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that

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12 Part of this section of the book initially appeared as an article on the website [www.advindicate.com](http://www.advindicate.com).

ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) (1 Timothy 3:1–5).

If we ask the question, “Who is authorized in the Bible to rule the home?” we have a simple answer—even in Genesis 3:16. Paul makes reference to this fact also in the verses just before the ones above.

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve (1 Timothy 2:11–13).

These three verses are located just between an exhortation to women to adorn themselves with meekness and the announcement that if a “man desire the office” of an elder, that he does well. What kind of teaching, then, did Paul have in mind in verse 12? He certainly didn’t mean that a woman could never teach anyone under any circumstance. After all, he commanded older women to teach younger women and children (see Titus 2:3–5).

The “teaching” in verse 12 is united to the idea of “authority” in the same verse. Now teaching authority in the church belongs to the elders. So this passage is about the issue of women’s ordination to the position of “elder.” And that is plain simply by the fact that, after commenting on the perils of giving birth, Paul next addresses who should be permitted to teach with authority.

The reason that a woman is refused such a position is plain in the passages above. She ought to be subject to her own husband. And how, then, can she be in authority over him? She ought to submit to his headship. How then can she rule well her own home? These same arguments are used by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians.

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God (1 Corinthians 11:3).



Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34, 35).

The “speaking” here cannot be a reference to speaking in general. Earlier in the same book, Paul laid down regulations for females to pray and prophesy in assembly. Rather, the speaking and silence and obedience referenced here must be the same as those mentioned in the 1 Timothy verses. These speeches are the *authoritative teaching of elders*.

The idea of gender distinction in family government is plainly present in several other New Testament passages. (See Colossians 3:18; Ephesians 5:22–24; 1 Peter 3:1, 5, 6.) Some persons can see no light in extrapolating the male headship in the home into the realm of church governance. Nonetheless, the home is the training ground for church governance. That is the logic behind Paul’s statements on the qualifications for being an elder.

But what about the issue of prophets? We mentioned earlier that female prophets were present in Corinth. Even these prophets, by the way they kept their hair, were to show their submission to their husbands. “Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven” (1 Corinthians 11:5). This is not, of course, the only New Testament reference to women praying or prophesying. Acts 21:9 records that Philip had four daughters that were prophets. The assembly by the river was a meeting place for women and a place where prayer was routinely made (Acts 16:39).

Were women refused the position of elders because of cultural norms? If this was the case, Paul had opportunity to either argue this way or to give no reasons at all. So how *did* he found his argument? In his writing, he based it on the order of creation, the origin of sin, the teaching of nature regarding gender, and the model of ancient holy persons. Never once did he place it on the customs of the Jews, the Romans, or the varied peoples among whom he established churches.

To ignore his reasoning while countering his conclusion is to discount his authority. As I said in the introduction, this is the *primary* issue. Were women involved in ministry in the New Testament? Indeed. Even Jesus had

women who ministered to Him and that, to at least some extent, traveled with Him.

There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem (Mark 15:40, 41).

And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance (Luke 8:3).

Acts records the work of a husband-wife team that worked hand-in-hand with Paul, the author of the anti-ordain passages (Acts 18:2,3). Why would God allow women to minister to Jesus, to plant churches, to prophesy and pray in public, and yet refuse to them the position of elder? Prophets have no personal authority associated with their gift. They speak for God. Socially, if they are daughters (as were Philip's four prophets), then they still are daughters. They are still subject to their father. And when God speaks through them, they are as subject to those words as are the others who hear them. So Ellen White can be a prophet and James White can be an elder and theirs can be a happy home. (And it was for most of their married life.)

By way of contrast, the position of elder carries personal authority with it. Let me explain: When men organize themselves into any type of group and choose one of their own number to be a director, they are choosing to submit part of their individual independence to each other and to the leader. They do this for efficiency. Even angels are ordered in such a way.

Are such men saying that one is fundamentally superior to themselves in strength or intelligence? No. All they are really doing is saying that things will work better if there is order. And as order requires that someone do the delegating, they choose one of their own for that purpose. That is what the church does. The choosing of only men to the position of elder is no statement of male superiority. It is only acting in harmony with a divine policy established to maintain efficient and orderly action.

So women may teach Sabbath School classes. They may conduct VBS. They may lead a stewardship drive. They may help their husbands plant a church. They may even do pastoral work in the fullest sense of caring for the flock. But may they be placed in headship over the flock? No. That would upset the order of the family. But what if she is single? No, that won't fix it. To put her in the elder's position would be to forbid her to marry. And that would be too similar to a doctrine of devils.

## Old Testament Data

Women figure prominently in the Old Testament. Huldah the prophet was probably a professor in the "college." Deborah was the courage behind Barak's success. Miriam won the hearts of her nation and led them in anthems. Women, elsewhere, show up most often in their positions as significant mothers. But never, in all the history of the Old Testament, do we find a female priest.

"Wait!" says one. "Wasn't it a whole nation of priests?" Oh, yes, that is true. But that was part of Korah's argument when he wanted to be exalted to an administrative position. And it didn't hold much theological weight by the end of Numbers 16. (It did seem to hold some at the beginning of the chapter.)

The fact is that when we select a man to be an elder, he is our peer. We are not obliged to believe what he says despite the dictates of Scripture. He is not our prophet. We are not obliged to do what he says despite the dictates of conscience. He is not our king. But we are to respect his headship for order's sake. We expect him to take the lead, and we need him to do so.

In like manner, when God chose an Old Testament person to be a priest, he was a peer of his wife and relatives and fellow Israelites. They were, after all, a kingdom of priests. But they pooled their priesthood and conferred it on someone who could exercise it for their mutual benefit. And so they respected their God-chosen priests.

This is how Luther explained it when he preached about the priesthood of believers. He wrote that the priesthood belongs to everyone but that not everyone can exercise it. So the body chooses who will exercise the authority that they all possess. (If they didn't possess it, he reasoned, they wouldn't be able to give it to their pastor.) And so, as long as a woman has a voting right in choosing the elders for the local church, she shows that she

is a true possessor of the priesthood. For order's sake, she gives her part of it to the man chosen to represent the whole.

## Ellen White and Adventist History

While Ellen White lived, the issue of woman's suffrage was a hot political one. Women in the United States had taken the lead in many social issues, from nursing to the care of mentally ill persons to the advocacy of temperance. And in the Adventist church itself, a group of women led out in one of the most successful and pervasive of all revivals, the introduction of the Tract and Missionary Society. Often a woman presided over that organization. The directorship of the organization was one of the most significant positions in the denomination.

But women were not ordained to the gospel ministry. We were the people of the Book. And the Book spoke clearly on this issue. We had a woman prophet, and the Book smiled on that. It did not smile on the idea of having women elders. Ordaining women was suggested once in meeting. It didn't get as far as a vote.

## Summary

The Bible isn't confusing. If it takes long arguments to make it that way, the arguments are at fault rather than the Bible. Nearly all the primary verses used in biblical studies of this topic could fit on two pieces of paper.

## CHAPTER 7

### Adventist Practice

**I**n the Bible, the directions regarding qualifications for ordination are all given in regard to the ordination of local elders. It is presumed that regional presiding elders also meet these qualifications.

In the Adventist church, the stress and controversy over who should be ordained is primarily aimed at the ordination of regional presiding elders. Already, local elders are ordained by local churches that more or less ignore the Bible standards for such ordination. In particular, many churches already have women elders. The General Conference decision to allow women to function as local elders was inconsistent with the decision by the same body to refuse that role to regional presiding elders.

In the past and again in the present, local conferences (and even higher levels of church governance) have set qualifications for being ordained to the position of regional presiding elder that have been contrary to the church's interest. In 1888 one such decision was made by the General Conference. It was voted, in view of the need for better vetted and qualified persons in the ministry, that only persons who had been successful canvassers should be added to the ministerial ranks. God let it be known, nearly six years later, that this had not been His will.

Let us consider the proposition presented at the Minneapolis meeting. Some who did not receive their counsel from God prepared a resolution, which was carried, that no one should labor as a minister unless he first made a success in the canvassing field. The Spirit of the Lord did not indite that resolution. It was born of minds that were taking a narrow view of God's vineyard and His workmen. It is not the work of any man to prescribe the work for any other man contrary to his own convictions of duty. He is to be advised and counseled, but he is to seek his directions from

God, whose he is, and whom he serves (Testimony 4, Aug. 3, 1894) (*Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 2, p. 62).

This decision was accordingly rescinded. But since that time, similar resolutions have also “carried” that are the same in principle, albeit, not in point. Some of these stipulate that before a man may be ordained above the local level, he must have some level of formal schooling, usually in the form of a degree. No such proposition has been ratified “by the Lord.” God’s stipulations are better, higher, and different. If a man is qualified spiritually and intellectually, if he is apt to teach and is accurate in doctrine, if he is well behaved and his family too, and if his work for God has been marked by evidence of God’s power, if he possesses enough experience to say that he has been proved, then he would make a good elder even if he has no formal educational qualifications.

Conversely, by requiring the formal educational attainments, these have served to usurp the role of the biblical qualifications. The result has been that a man with a M.Div. degree and with good recommendations from his professors may be entertained as a candidate for ministry, yet he may lack a good many of the practical and spiritual qualifications established by God. In this way the errors of Ford spread more quickly through the ministerial ranks than they did even through the ranks of the laypeople. Currently, and embarrassingly, Jesus would not be permitted to become an ordained elder in some places because of His lack of formal training.

Also, the practice of hiring men (or women) to serve as local pastors who have never been ordained in any sense (not even at the local level) is contrary to the New Testament pattern. The hired pastor is an overseer in the biblical sense and should be ordained to serve in that capacity. His period of testing should precede his appointment to the position of overseer.

Using the phrase “commissioned pastor” is a source of ambiguity. The verb “commission” carries all the weight of most of the Hebrew and Greek words translated “ordain.” In other words, all New Testament elders were nothing more than commissioned ministers.

On the local level, it is often the case that persons are elected to be elders because of their pillar-like status as supporting the church financially. But as generous moneyed persons are not necessarily more likely to

possess other essential qualifications, this practice has been unfortunate wherever it has resulted in unqualified persons acting as elders.

### *Recommendations Regarding Adventist Practice*

The Adventist system of ordination, gospel commissioning, and ministerial employment needs an overhaul to be brought into line with the biblical data. The value to be attained by such an overhaul is great. An increase in the quality and spirituality of the workforce would harmonize well with the church's need for revival and reformation.

### **Some Simple and Plain Recommendations for the World Church**

1. Prepare a document to be distributed to all congregations that explains in simple and practical ways what they should be looking for at their next period of electing persons to local office.
2. Vote a policy that precludes local conferences and unions from making their own qualifications for the office of ministry and that specifically repudiates the idea that only formally educated men may hold that position.
3. Consider how to best invite spiritual-minded, successful businessmen to take on a large part of managing the church's finances and relieve speakers and writers so that they may attend "few committee meetings" involving such business and do a work for which they are more fitted. (See "Ellen White on Committee Meetings" below.)
4. Repudiate the denominational use of commissioning as differing from ordaining. In the spirit of Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7, ask all local churches and conferences to remove the "commission" or local "ordination" of persons not meeting denominational qualifications for elders. This would mean that no female persons would be considered local elders, nor would female persons be considered commissioned ministers.

## **Suggested Qualifications to Be Written into the Document Mentioned in Point 1**

An elder should be a man who has evidence of having well governed a family or of well governing some other body of persons if he has no children of his own.

He should be a gifted and ready teacher. He should be a good steward of his personal finances, whether he has little or much. He must not be a user of any form of tobacco, caffeine, alcohol, or illicit drugs. He should not appear to be a glutton. He should have a good reputation with unbelievers who know him personally.

A deacon should have similar spiritual qualifications to an elder, excepting that he need not be apt to teach. But in place of that gift, he should be able to handle the business of the church successfully.

## **Ellen White on Committee Meeting Business and the Work of Ministers**

I have been instructed in regard to the importance of our ministers' keeping free from responsibilities that should be largely borne by businessmen. In the night season I was in an assembly consisting of a number of our brethren who bear the burden of the work. They were deeply perplexed over financial affairs and were consulting as to how the work could be managed most successfully. Some thought that the number of workers might be limited and yet all the results essential be realized. One of the brethren occupying a position of responsibility was explaining his plans and stating what he desired to see accomplished. Several others presented matters for consideration. Then One of dignity and authority arose, and proceeded to state principles for our guidance.

To several ministers the Speaker said: "Your work is not the management of financial matters. It is not wise for you to undertake this. God has burdens for you to bear, but if you carry lines of work for which you are not adapted, your efforts in presenting the word will prove unsuccessful. This will bring upon you



discouragement that will disqualify you for the very work you should do, a work requiring careful discrimination and sound, unselfish judgment.”

Those who are employed to write and to speak the word should attend fewer committee meetings. They should entrust many minor matters to men of business ability and thus avoid being kept on a constant strain that robs the mind of its natural vigor. They should give far more attention to the preservation of physical health, for vigor of mind depends largely upon vigor of body. Proper periods of sleep and rest and an abundance of physical exercise are essential to health of body and mind. To rob nature of her hours for rest and recuperation by allowing one man to do the work of four, or of three, or even of two, will result in irreparable loss (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, pp. 246, 247).

### *Ordination and Gender-Preaching Issues in Adventist Church History*

This brief survey of highlights in our denominational history should not be viewed as being representative of all the data available or of being well rounded. Rather, it is a simple collection of points discovered by the author that might be interesting to those interested in the subject. It represents a few hours of searching rather than a few years.

#### **Millerism**

Adventism in its Millerite phase started as a non-church entity. It had no membership and no discipline. Even its most active persons were members of other denominational churches. Ellen Harmon’s family, famously, were Methodists. Miller was a Baptist. James White belonged to an interesting evangelical church called the Christian Connection.

As such, Millerite congregations and practices were not homogenous. LeRoy Froom documents several Millerite workers who were, in fact, women preachers. As Millerism did not exist as a denominational structure at this time, these ladies were certainly not ordained as Adventists. And as

other denominations did not begin ordaining women until more than a decade later, we can be confident that they were not ordained at all.

Two of these preacher women even edited a Millerite paper (one of many scores existing) that was, itself, aimed at female readership.<sup>13</sup> “The paper for women—The Advent Message to the Daughters of Zion—was edited by Mrs. Clorinda S. Minor, of Philadelphia, and Miss Emily C. Clemens, of Rochester.”<sup>14</sup>

Later in his book, Froom gives the names of seven female Millerite preachers. Both of the editors mentioned above are listed among the workers. Clorinda, in particular, was apparently somewhat prominent in Millerite circles. “[Her] articles for the *Midnight Cry* appear on the editorial page over her initials. She was also gifted as a poet, but ably discussed doctrinal, prophetic, and chronological matters.”<sup>15</sup>

Froom concludes his page-long discussion of these ladies and their special work with an interesting gender-oriented conclusion. Whether it was an opinion based on common sense and a knowledge of the times, or whether it was based on documentation, I cannot say. But Froom presents these workers being laborers for their “own sex”—“So women preachers held a unique place in Millerism, and were effective heralds in reaching those of their own sex.”<sup>16</sup>

## Sabbathkeeping Adventists

Early Sabbathkeeping Adventists were few in number and far between. And yet Adventists did, when there was enough of them, associate in congregations. Those groups did not, however, have settled ministers. The local members made what they could of a Sabbath service and rejoiced when, occasionally, a visiting minister would take the service or do a weekend series.

Congregational Adventism provided a poor framework for reliably supporting the traveling ministers. (Tithing had not yet been generally taught.)

13 LeRoy Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1954), p. 621.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 623.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 706.

16 *Ibid.*

This lack of structure provided a great opportunity for false teachers to impose on congregations by presenting themselves as Adventist ministers.

When the church became organized in the 1860s, it was largely to resolve these two issues (ministerial support and ministerial recognition) as well as the problem of the ownership of church property. At this time the ordination procedures of the Adventist church had a low level of formality that matched the small nature of the organization. Traditions that began then have continued, with some refinement, to the present time. Ministers carried a card signed by “leading” workers that indicated they were trusted teachers of the Advent people.

Ellen White eventually carried one of these cards with the words “ordained” generally crossed out neatly. Long before she carried it, she was in the habit of addressing Adventist congregations as the messenger of the Lord. Those taking an extreme view that women should not say anything in church were, understandably, not able to harmonize their views with the practice of Ellen White or with the church that let her do as she did. Just over 20 years after the church organized, interesting articles related to women preaching began to show up in the *Signs of the Times*. Hints can be found in the first of these that are probably a veiled defense of the work of Ellen White already mentioned.

### ***Signs of the Times* Recognizes Ordination Issues in Other Denominations**

During the years 1888 to 1890, the magazine *Signs of the Times* carried articles related to a controversy then taking place in the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches. Each of these organizations was facing agitation over the issue of the ordination of women to the gospel ministry.

These references in the Adventist paper hint at the position of the editor. But while several statements in *Signs* make relevant comments on key New Testament passages, the articles deal more with the issue of higher criticism than with the role of women in ministry. The first of them also exposes a threat, as it were, that the women of Methodism, if refused rights to ordination, might “take matters into their own hands.” Portions of the three articles are quoted here.

**June 8, 1888, *Signs of the Times*, Editorial by Waggoner**

In an article in *Our Day*, on “Woman as Preacher,” Miss Willard says:

“We stand once more at the parting of the roads; shall the bold, resolute men among our clergy win the day, and give ordination to women, or shall women take this matter into their own hands? Fondly do women hope, and earnestly do women pray, that the churches they love may not drive them to this extremity.”

Professor Townsend, of New York, a prominent Methodist clergyman<sup>17</sup>, advises women to knock only once more at the doors of the General Conference, and, if their signals are again disregarded, never to knock again, but to take the matter into their own hands. The *New York Christian Advocate* says concerning this thing:

“Professor Townsend uses bold words. The church will be amazed at them. Our Methodist readers will naturally begin to inquire, ‘Whereunto will the thing grow?’ ”

And well they may make such inquiry.

**July 7, 1890, *Signs of the Times*, Editorial by Waggoner**

The Independent and the Congregationalist have had a little friendly dispute in regard to women taking part in meeting. Both assume that the apostle Paul positively condemned everything of the kind, forgetting that his statement, “Let your women keep silence,” etc., is to be read in connection with his directions as to how they shall appear when praying or prophesying in meeting. But assuming that Paul absolutely forbids women to speak in meeting under any circumstances, the Congregationalist says that

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17 Two years later, in a reference quoted in this paper, Prof. Townsend is identified as a Presbyterian.

to disregard the injunction is to impair the revelation of which it is a part. But the Independent retorts as follows:

“Hardly so. ‘In six days the LORD made heaven and earth;’ that is quite as definite as what Paul said. And when it comes to the Sabbath, there is not only the injunction for the seventh day, as definite as words can make it, but reason given also, in the ordination of the week and the Sabbath as a memorial of creation, as definite as any reason given by Paul for the subjection of women. And yet the whole church has given it up, with no repeal and no history of the change, simply because time and conditions had altered.”

But the conditions have not changed. It is still a fact that God created the heavens and the earth in six days, and rested upon and blessed and sanctified the seventh day, and the seventh day is still the only memorial of creation, and it is just as important to remember God’s power now as it ever was. The commandment is unrepealed, and is as definite as it ever was. Only the people have changed.

**Dec. 29, 1890, *Signs of the Times*, Editorial by Waggoner**

It is doubtless well known that the great question which is agitating the Methodist Church at the present time is the admission of women as delegates to the General Conference, and their ordination as ministers, which would soon follow. With this controversy we have nothing to do, and do not care at present to express our opinion as to its merits. We simply wish to show how the Bible is regarded by many persons high in church authority and influence. The extracts given will show a general casting off of the authority of the Scriptures (December 29, 1890, EJW, *Signs of the Times*, 602).

Prof. L. T. Townsend, of New York (Presbyterian), contributes a chapter to Miss Frances E. Willard's book, *Woman in the Pulpit*, and on page 153, after quoting 1 Tim. 2:11 and 1 Cor. 14:34, 35, he says: "It must be perfectly apparent that if the prohibition in these passages is infallible, ... then Miss Willard and her friends may as well first as last retire from the controversy." But Professor Townsend does not think that these texts affect Miss Willard's case, therefore he does not regard them as infallible.

Take another passage from the same pen, and the disregard, not to say contempt, of the Scriptures will be still more apparent:

The pastoral epistles were addressed, not to Presbyterians in America, but to two young Jews. The writer of these epistles did not have in mind a thought of American Presbyterians. Why, therefore, do Presbyterians—we include not a few Methodists—speak and act as though they must heed the admonitions of these epistles, going so far as to enforce against women the supposed injunctions of these epistles? Why are they meddling in these affairs? (*Woman in the Pulpit*, pp. 146, 147).

Right glad are we that many Presbyterians and Methodists can be accused of regarding the epistles of Paul as authoritative even in these days. It shows that the spirit of the Reformation has not entirely died out.

The following two statements are from Methodists, published without signature in the *New York Christian Advocate*. It should be stated that the *Advocate* strongly condemns such utterances:

Paul, who definitely believed when he wrote those scriptures that the world would not even see the second century, much less the nineteenth, was ordering the churches for his own age.

So it must be remembered that Paul was a bachelor, and he was writing in the first century, in the midst of heathen surroundings, and endeavoring to be all things to all men, and not infringing upon local laws and customs more than he had to at a time when, as a rule, women had no rights that men were bound to respect.

Anyone can see that the same line of argument would rule out all the epistles, as well as the words of Christ, and then what have people to guide them? Simply their own perverse wills. But let us read another statement from the pen of Miss Willard, whose every utterance is taken as gospel by several hundred thousand professed Christian men and women. She says:

Whoever quotes to the intelligent and devout women of the American church to-day, the specific instructions given by Paul to the illiterate and immoral women of Corinth, does so at the expense of sound judgment, not to say scholarship (*Women in the Pulpit*, p. 50).

So it seems that the test of the value of any portion of Scripture is to be the intelligence of men and women, and their idea as to the necessity for it. If it suit them, it is all right; if it does not, they reject it. Of what value is the Bible to such people? Their own wills are their standard of right and wrong.

One more quotation must complete the view of the picture for the present. It is from a correspondent of the *Christian Union*, of July 24, and passes in that paper unchallenged. It is as follows:

I have been interested in reading a criticism of Lyman Abbott, by his brother Edward, and I am impelled to jot down a few thoughts as they have occurred to an outsider. I could not but be surprised that, of the nineteen texts quoted by Edward Abbott, to establish an important, and one generally regarded as an essential, doctrine of

Christianity, only one is from the sayings of its Founder, and in that one, the language is unquestionably figurative. Will not a higher and truer criticism, before long, come to regard the writings of the apostles to be just what they are, namely, the expression of their personal opinions? May they not have been sometimes mistakes? What warrant have we for assuming that Paul, Peter, James, or John were able to draw any truer conclusions from the contents of the four gospels than Lyman Abbott, H. W. Beecher, Dr. Channing, and a thousand others—especially if we accept the claim of Edward Abbott, that the spirit of truth is now, as well as has been, in the church?

There you have the result to which all the others are tending if they have not already arrived. It is open infidelity of a large part of the Bible, and virtual rejection of the remainder, since it all stands on the same foundation. It is terrible to contemplate the gross deceptions into which the church will plunge when such ideas become prevalent; and they are rapidly spreading, for they are entrenched in high places. The book from which the most of these quotations are made, is indorsed in the highest terms by Dr. Joseph Parker, of London, Dr. Talmage, and Joseph Cook. Is this not evidence that the church is on the “down grade”?

But we have not written this simply to expose the infidelity of these men and women. We have written in order that every reader may stop and answer carefully the question. ... Do you believe the Bible implicitly, or do doubts steal across your mind as you read? The foundation for all this infidelity exists in the mind of everyone who holds the words of Peter, Paul, James, John, Moses, David, Isaiah, or Solomon, recorded in the Scriptures, as of any less authority or truth than those uttered by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Note the surprise of the writer last quoted, that out of nineteen texts in support of a Christian doctrine, “only one is from the sayings of its Founder.” Is a scripture any less the word of God if written by one of the apostles or prophets than if spoken



with an audible voice by the Lord himself? Are you, dear reader, in the habit of attributing “degrees” to inspiration, and of considering one passage as more valuable than another, according as it meets your approbation? If so, you are in great danger. You say you believe that it is all true, although of varying authority and importance. Very well, we accept your statement that you believe the Scriptures, and ask you to accept the following as true: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

And please remember that in this Bible, all of which you profess to believe, the apostle Paul’s epistles are classed with “the other scriptures.” 2 Peter 3:16. They were given by inspiration too.

We ask you to believe the statement contained in this verse: “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” 1 Thess. 2:13.

Here is another: “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” 1 Cor. 14:37.

That is, the man who does not acknowledge Paul’s writings as the commandments of the Lord, is unspiritual. He cannot discern spiritual things. How many are putting their own unspiritual doubts in the place of the holy word of God.

## **Call Them “Teachers” Instead of “Preachers”**

Nine years after these three allusions to the gender-ordination issue, an interesting appeal was made to the 1899 General Conference. Missionaries were wanted, not,

[T]eachers right out of the colleges, who know nothing except class work. We want practical teachers, who have had experience, and who can not only teach the children, but do anything that needs to be done; who will take hold and lift in the Sabbath-school, and help in the public meetings; so that our ministers need not have to visit organized churches so often.<sup>18</sup>

The writer was aware of the prejudice in some against “women preachers” and he gave a practical suggestion for how to get around that prejudice so as to have the benefit of the ladies’ work without the opposition that it might otherwise raise.

There is a feeling against women preachers: but let us call them women teachers. They can do a great work in this field. ... Not only do we want teachers, but we want families. Especially do we want some to go into British Guiana, and teach these Indians how to make a living, instead of roaming the forests.<sup>19</sup>

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18 General Conference Daily Bulletin, February 26, 1899, p. 84.

19 Ibid.

## CONCLUSION

Once possessed a volume that attempted to prove the immortality of the soul. My examination of it led me to suppose that it was written partly as a scholarly reply to the pernicious teachings of Seventh-day Adventists! It was full of biblical arguments: The Rich Man and Lazarus, Paul's "desire to depart and be with the Lord," Elijah's experience when "the soul of the boy left him," the psalmist's testimony that "we fly away," the Revelator's declaration that "they shall burn forever and ever," the statements of Jesus and Paul regarding "everlasting destruction," and Isaiah and Jesus on the immortal "worm." The author quoted Solomon, "the spirit returns to God who gave it," and the promise of Jesus that those who drink of the water of life "shall never die," etc.

It was a large book. Learned men were cited. Seemingly persuasive arguments were built on the Hebrew and Greek syntax. But it was all for naught. The dead know not anything. And when fire comes down out of heaven, it will consume sinners. The Bible speaks plainly on the issue of death. Uriah Smith wrote a book that answered all the troublesome texts, and it was much smaller than the book in my collection. Smith called it, *Here and Hereafter*. You would find it delightful. The reason it was shorter is simple: It is easier to defend truth than it is to defend error.

In a similar way, many arguments have been written to prove the propriety of ordaining women to the gospel ministry. But they have all been written for naught. The Bible says that the apostle would not allow a woman to bear the teaching authority of the church lest she have authority over her own husband. ("A man" in 1 Timothy 2:12 could be justly translated, "a husband." And this rendering, that of the Young's Literal Translation, matches better the teaching of the rest of Scripture. Women are not obliged to submit to men generically. They are to submit to their "own husbands." See 1 Peter 3:5.)

The example set by God on this point is unequivocal. Priests, apostles, elders—all of them established by divine mandate—were to be the roles of men.

Of course, prophets of both genders were chosen by God. Some of the female prophets were married. Others, as Philip's daughters, were likely minor children when their ministry began, as was Ellen Harmon. Their personal will and opinions, their personal decisions, were no more authoritative than that of any other youth. But when they spoke for God, they spoke with His authority. So James and Ellen White could be happily married to each other, the church's chief executive officer and the movement's beloved and respected prophetic voice.

But the roles could not have been reversed without confusing the Bible rule, "wives, submit yourselves to your husbands." And so it is still true today, as it was long ago, that "if a man desire the office of an overseer, he desires a good thing." But if he rules his home poorly, he is yet unqualified for the position of elder.

A woman, as long as she is biblically married, or qualified to be that way, is by that same qualification disqualified to rule the church. Let everything be done decently, and in order.

The powers that be are ordained of God. He that resisteth the power, resists the ordinance of God, and they that resist receive unto themselves damnation (Romans 13:1, 2).

It wasn't so long ago that the representative authority of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the highest delegated authority on earth, decided not to ordain women to the gospel ministry. How is it that some are resisting that authority? Are they willing to resist God's "ordinance" to accomplish their ordination agenda?

I hope not.

# APPENDIX I

## Greek and Hebrew Words Translated as Ordain<sup>20</sup>

**Words translated into some form of the word  
ordain in the King James Version include:**

*asah* <06213> To do or make. [Used of God's ordinances, Nu 28:6; of man's, 1 Ki 12:32, 33]

*nawthan* <05414> To set or put. [Used of idolatrous priests, 2 Ki 23:5; of Jeremiah's prenatal call to be a prophet, Je 1:5]

*yawsad* <03245> To fix or establish. [Used of porters, 1 Ch 9:22; of childlike praise, Ps 8:2]

*soom* <07760> To set or put or appoint. [Used of a place, 1 Ch 17:9; of the Feast of Trumpets, Ps 81:5; of the doom of the wicked, Hab 1:12]

*awmad* <05975> To set or confirm. [Used of idolatrous priests, 2 Ch 11:15]

*yawd* <03027> By hand. [Used of Levitical appointments by King David, 2 Ch 23:18; of consecrated instruments, 2 Ch 29:27]

*koom* <06965> To confirm or establish. [Used of Purim, the commemorative feast, Es 9:27]

*pawal* <06466> To do or make. [Used of God's arrows of Judgment, Ps 7:13]

*koon* <03559> To establish or make up. [Used of the heavenly bodies, Ps 8:3]

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<sup>20</sup> Ordain. (1995). In *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance: King James Version*. (Updated ed.). Retrieved from <http://www.biblestudytools.com/concordances/strongs-exhaustive-concordance/>

*arak* <06186> To set or put in order. [Used perhaps of David's offspring, Ps 132:17; of Tophet, Is 30:3]

*shaphath* <08239> To set or ordain. [Used of our peace, Is 26:12]

*menaw* <04483> (a) To set or ordain. [Used of the appointment of Ariocho to execute the wise men, Da 2:25]

*poieo* <4060> To do, or to make. [Used of the 12 apostles, Mr 3:14]

*titheme* <5087> To set or establish. [Used of the 12 apostles, Joh 15:16; of Paul as an apostle, 1 Ti 2:7]

*ginomai* <1096> To cause to be. [Used of the replacement apostle, Ac 1:22]

*orizo* <3724> To determine, ordain. [Used of Jesus' appointment to be Judge, Ac 10:42; 17:31]

*proirizo* <4309> To predetermine. [Used of God's wisdom for our benefit, 1 Co 2:7]

*tasso* <5021> To ordain, determine. [Used of persons chosen to be saved, Ac 13:48; of rulers chosen by God, Ro 13:1]

*diatasso* <1299> To ordain, determine. [Used of Paul's teachings that he ordained for all churches, 1Co 7:17; of God's tithing system, 1 Co 9:14; of the Law, Ga 3:19]

*cheirotoneo* <5500> To elect, choose by hand. [Used of elders, Ac 14:23; 2 Ti 4:22; Ti 3:15]<sup>21</sup>

*krino* <2919> To judge to be, to establish. [Used of church regulations, Ac 16:4]

*proetoimazo* <4282> To preordain. [Used of good works, Ep 2:10]

*kathistemi* <2525> To set or place. [Used of elders, Ti 1:5; of High Priests, He 5:1, 8:3]

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21 See the notes on pages 78, 79 regarding the latter two of these three passages, both of which include doubtfully inspired material that does not appear in most Bibles. The word "chosen by vote" falls in this doubtful section in both cases.

*kataskeuazo* <2680> To make ready, to prepare. [Used of the Holy and Most Holy Place, He 9:6]

*prographo* <4270> To write beforehand. [Used of the lost as ordained to be lost, Jude 1:4]

**Regulations that were ordained** include the “continual burnt offering” (Num. 28:6), Jeroboam’s substitute Day of Atonement (1 Kings 12:32, 33), Purim (Esth. 9:27), the decrees of Acts 15 (Acts 16:4), the law of God (Rom. 7:10<sup>22</sup>; Gal. 3:19), Paul’s teachings regarding marriage (1 Cor. 7:17), the tithing system (1 Cor. 9:14), and that we should “do good works” (Eph. 2:10).

**Persons that were ordained** included the idolatrous priests (2 Kings 23:5; 2 Chron. 11:15), porters for the sanctuary (1 Chron. 9:22), various sanctuary Levitical workers (2 Chron. 23:18), perhaps David’s offspring (Ps. 132:17), the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5), Arioch as executioner (Dan. 2:25), the wicked as doomed (Hab. 1:12), the 12 apostles (Mark 3:14; John 15:16), Paul as an apostle (1 Tim. 2:7), Jesus as judge (Acts 10:42; 17:31), converts (Acts 13:48), civil rulers [o. by God] (Rom. 13:1), and elders in the church (Acts 14:23; 2 Tim. 4:22; Titus 3:15).

**Places that are ordained** include a future place of rest for God’s people (1 Chron. 17:9), Tophet, a place of destruction (Isa. 30:33), and the two apartments of the sanctuary (Heb. 9:6).

**Objects ordained** include the instruments invented by King David (2 Chron. 29:27), metaphorical arrows of judgment (Ps. 7:13), children’s praises (Ps. 8:2), the heavenly bodies or their motions (Ps. 8:3), and our peace (Isa. 26:12).

22 The verb “be” is understood; it’s not present in this sentence. It is supplied as the word “ordained” in the translation.





## APPENDIX II

### Miscellaneous Statements by Ellen White on Ordination

#### The Twelve Ordained by Prayer and the Laying on of Hands

The apostles differed widely in habits and disposition. There were the publican, Levi-Matthew, and the fiery zealot Simon, the uncompromising hater of the authority of Rome; the generous, impulsive Peter, and the mean-spirited Judas; Thomas, truehearted, yet timid and fearful, Philip, slow of heart, and inclined to doubt, and the ambitious, outspoken sons of Zebedee, with their brethren. These were brought together, with their different faults, all with inherited and cultivated tendencies to evil; but in and through Christ they were to dwell in the family of God, learning to become one in faith, in doctrine, in spirit. They would have their tests, their grievances, their differences of opinion; but while Christ was abiding in the heart, there could be no dissension. His love would lead to love for one another; the lessons of the Master would lead to the harmonizing of all differences, bringing the disciples into unity, till they would be of one mind and one judgment. Christ is the great center, and they would approach one another just in proportion as they approached the center.

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

#### Church Issues Decided by Representative Men Ordained to Teach, Not by a Democracy

The council which decided this case was composed of apostles and teachers who had been prominent in raising up the Jewish and Gentile

Christian churches, with chosen delegates from various places. Elders from Jerusalem and deputies from Antioch were present, and the most influential churches were represented. The council moved in accordance with the dictates of enlightened judgment, and with the dignity of a church established by the divine will. As a result of their deliberations they all saw that God Himself had answered the question at issue by bestowing upon the Gentiles the Holy Ghost; and they realized that it was their part to follow the guidance of the Spirit.

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

## **Men Ordained with Too Great Haste Cause Grievous Problems**

The apostle Paul writes to Titus: “Set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God.” It would be well for all our ministers to give heed to these words and not to hurry men into office without due consideration and much prayer that God would designate by His Holy Spirit whom He will accept.

Said the inspired apostle: “Lay hands suddenly on no man.” 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.

The gospel net gathers both good and bad. It takes time for character to be developed; there must be time to learn what men really are. The family of the one suggested for office should be considered. Are they in subjection? Can the man rule his own house with honor? What character have his children? Will they do honor to the father's influence? If he has no tact, wisdom, or power of godliness at home in managing his own family, it is safe to conclude that the same defects will be carried into the church, and the same unsanctified management will be seen there. It will be far better to criticize the man before he is put into office than afterward, better to pray and counsel before taking the decisive step than to labor to correct the consequences of a wrong move.

In some churches the leader has not the right qualifications to educate the members of the church to be workers. Tact and judgment have not been used to keep up a living interest in the work of God. The leader is slow and tedious; he talks too much and prays too long in public; he has not that living connection with God which would give him a fresh experience (*Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 5, pp. 617, 618).

## **Ideas for Choosing Men in Small, New Congregations and for Larger Responsibilities**

Such arrangements should be made for the little companies accepting the truth as shall secure the prosperity of the church. One man may be appointed to lead for a week or a month, then another for a few weeks; and thus different persons may be enlisted in the work, and after a suitable trial someone should be selected by the voice of the church to be the acknowledged leader, never, however, to be chosen for more than one year. Then another may be selected, or the same one may be re-elected, if his service has proved a blessing to the church. The same principle should be followed in selecting men for other responsible positions, as in the offices of the conference. Untried men should not

be elected as presidents of conferences. Many fail to exercise proper discernment in these important matters where eternal interests are involved (*Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 5, p. 619).

## A Man Ordained Miraculously Endowed to Be Able to Reach the Lost

Bro. Butcher then spoke particularly of Suisun, Vacaville, and Dixon. The miracle of his tongue being loosed, had created great excitement in these places. He states that when he was ordained elder of the church he objected because of impediment in his speech, saying that he could neither read nor speak on account of stammering so badly. Eld. Healey told him that Moses made the same excuse, but the Lord told him, "I will be with thy mouth and teach thee what to say." Bro. B. decided that if the Lord had chosen him for the place he would help him to fill it. He felt the power of truth and longed to talk it to his neighbors. He prayed most earnestly that God would remove the stammering and help him to talk the truth. He received the assurance that this would be done, and upon the strength of his faith he invited his neighbors, not of our belief, to come out to the meeting. They came, and he was able to talk with great freedom and convincing power. Those who have known Bro. Butcher for years are filled with astonishment at the great miracle wrought. He has had many invitations to talk the truth, and has done so with joyfulness. He believes quite a number are convinced that we have the truth, and if some laborer could come with the tent a good work might be accomplished. Another in pleading for Vacaville, says the case of Bro. B. has stirred the whole community, and individuals who had not attended church for years have come out to hear him explain the Scriptures, and now they want to hear more on these subjects (*Signs of the Times*, May 13, 1880, par. 5).

## Extent of the Activity of a Minister's Wife

The light which the Lord has given me in regard to minister's wives is, If their life is kept in close consecration to God, as is the duty of all who are laborers together with Him, they will find so many souls to

minister unto that they will have no opportunity to be lonesome or to cultivate selfishness. . . . Jesus says, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” Those who heed this invitation will have no thought of repining, no thought of loneliness. Their work is to do the will of Christ. As they do this, they will have sweet peace (*Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 14, p. 307).

### **Remuneration for Ministry to Be Commensurate with Work, Not with Ordination or Authority or Gender or Marital Status**

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

I know that the faithful women should be paid wages as it is considered proportionate to the pay received by ministers. They carry the burden of souls and should not be treated unjustly. These sisters are giving their time to educating those newly come to the faith and hire their own work done and pay those who work for them. All these things must be adjusted and set in order and justice be done to all. Proofreaders in the office receive their wages; those who are working at housework receive their wages, two dollars and a half and three dollars a week. This I have had to pay and others have to pay. But ministers’ wives, who carry a tremendous responsibility, devoting their entire time, have nothing for their labor (*Daughters of God*, p. 106).

The ministers' wives join their husbands in this work, and accomplish that which their husbands could not possibly do. In order to do the work, these sisters have to hire someone to do their housekeeping. It takes the very best talent to do this class of missionary work, and the women who do it should receive a suitable amount for their work. But because of the dearth of means, our sisters have received very little pay, yet they have faithfully worked on, without any definite provision being made for them. Less qualified workers, who are receiving instruction by precept and example, are paid one pound a week, out of which they pay their board. But as yet the ministers' wives have been paid nothing (*Daughters of God*, p. 109).

### **The Heavenly Reward of Minister's Wives if They Bear Sacrifice Sensibly**

The minister's wife who is not devoted to God is no help to her husband. While he dwells upon the necessity of bearing the cross, and urges the importance of self-denial, the daily example of his wife often contradicts his preaching and destroys its force. In this way she becomes a great hindrance, and often leads her husband away from his duty and from God. She does not realize what a sin she is committing. Instead of seeking to be useful, seeking with true love for souls to help such as need help, she shrinks from the task, and prefers a useless life. She is not constrained by the power of Christ's love, and by unselfish, holy principles. She does not choose to do the will of God, to be a co-worker with her husband, with angels, and with God. When the wife of the minister accompanies her husband in his mission to save souls, it is a great sin for her to hinder him in his work by manifesting unhappy discontent. Yet, instead of entering heartily into his labors, seeking every opportunity to unite her interest and labor with his, she often studies how she can make it more easy or pleasant for herself. If things around them are not as agreeable as she could wish (as they will not always be), she should not indulge homesick feelings, or by lack of cheerfulness and by spoken complaints harass the husband and make his task harder, and perhaps, by her discontent, draw him from the place where he could do good. She should not divert the interest

of her husband from laboring for the salvation of souls, to sympathize with her ailments, and gratify her whimsical, discontented feelings. If she would forget herself, and labor to help others, talk and pray with poor souls, and act as if their salvation was of higher importance than any other consideration, she would have no time to be homesick. She would feel from day to day a sweet satisfaction as a reward for her unselfish labor; I cannot call it sacrifice, for some of our ministers' wives do not know what it is to sacrifice or suffer for the truth's sake.

In former years the wives of ministers endured want and persecution. When their husbands suffered imprisonment, and sometimes death, those noble, self-sacrificing women suffered with them, and their reward will be equal to that bestowed on the husband. Mrs. Boardman and the Mrs. Judsons suffered for the truth—suffered with their companions. They sacrificed home and friends in every sense of the word, to aid their companions in the work of enlightening those who sat in darkness; to reveal to them the hidden mysteries of the word of God. Their lives were in constant peril. To save souls was their great object, and for this they could suffer cheerfully (*Gospel Workers*, 1892 edition, pp. 210, 211).

### **Ellen White's Only Direct Reference to a "Female Preacher"**

Our testimony was rejected, and they clung tenaciously to their errors. Elder Dammon and several others were baptized many times and frequently by the hand of a woman, Mrs. Ayers, a female preacher who had drunk deep of fanaticism. We had done our duty, and with hearts filled with sorrow we turned from these our brethren, whom we had loved, reluctant to leave them in error and delusion. These souls that I had warned turned from me because I had told them they were in error and in darkness. Many of this company went on further and further in delusion and deception, following impressions and impulse rather than the Word of God, until they became disgusted with their own wicked course (*Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 8, p. 237).

## Not All Women Have Home Responsibilities

Our sisters can show by their self-denial and self-sacrifice, and their willingness to work to the best of their ability, that they believe, and are being sanctified through, the truth. Many need a work of this kind to develop the powers they possess. Our sisters should in no case neglect their husbands and their children, but they can do much without neglecting home duties; and there are many who have not these responsibilities. In the various branches of the missionary work, the modest, intelligent woman may use her powers to the very highest account. Who can have so deep a love for the souls of men and women for whom Christ has died as those who are partakers of his grace? Who can represent the truth and the example of Christ better than Christian women who are practicing the truth in their earnest efforts to bring souls to the light? Who so well adapted to be teachers in the Sabbath-schools? With a heart imbued with the love of Christ, teaching the children of her class, praying with them and for them, she may see souls converted. The true mother is adapted to be the true teacher of children. I do not recommend that woman should seek to become a voter or an officer-holder; but as a missionary, teaching the truth by epistolary correspondence, distributing tracts and soliciting subscribers for periodicals containing the solemn truth for this time, she may do very much. In conversing with families, in praying with the mother and children, she will be a blessing (*Review and Herald*, December 19, 1878, par. 15).

## Members to Be Subordinate to the Properly Organized Elders and Deacons<sup>23</sup>

The Thessalonians were greatly annoyed by persons coming among them with fanatical ideas and doctrines. The church had been properly organized, and officers had been appointed to act as ministers and deacons. But some would not be subordinate to those

23 See the article "Forbid Them Not" in the *Adventists Affirm* archives at [www.adventistsaffirm.org](http://www.adventistsaffirm.org). This article explores the extent and limits of legitimate church authority. It demonstrates biblically that God authorizes individuals and supporting organizations to act without seeking permission from even duly qualified administrators.



who held authoritative positions in the church. Ardent, self-willed persons claimed not only the right of private judgment, but to be heard publicly in urging their views upon the church. Paul, therefore, earnestly called the attention of his brethren to the respect and deference due those who had authority in the church, and who had been intrusted with the responsibilities connected with it (*Sketches from the Life of Paul*, p. 115).

## **A Limit to the Authority of Even Properly Elected Officials**

At times, when a small group of men entrusted with the general management of the work have, in the name of the General Conference, sought to carry out unwise plans and to restrict God's work, I have said that I could no longer regard the voice of the General Conference, represented by these few men, as the voice of God. But this is not saying that the decisions of a General Conference composed of an assembly of duly appointed, representative men from all parts of the field should not be respected. God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority. The error that some are in danger of committing is in giving to the mind and judgment of one man, or of a small group of men, the full measure of authority and influence that God has vested in His church in the judgment and voice of the General Conference assembled to plan for the prosperity and advancement of His work.

When this power, which God has placed in the church, is accredited wholly to one man, and he is invested with the authority to be judgment for other minds, then the true Bible order is changed. Satan's efforts upon such a man's mind would be most subtle and sometimes well-nigh overpowering, for the enemy would hope that through his mind he could affect many others. Let us give to the highest organized authority in the church that which we are prone to give to one man or to a small group of men (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 9, pp. 260, 261).

## The First Deacons

The disciples of Jesus had reached a crisis in their experience. Under the wise leadership of the apostles, who labored unitedly in the power of the Holy Spirit, the work committed to the gospel messengers was developing rapidly. The church was continually enlarging, and this growth in membership brought increasingly heavy burdens upon those in charge. No one man, or even one set of men, could continue to bear these burdens alone, without imperiling the future prosperity of the church. There was necessity for a further distribution of the responsibilities which had been borne so faithfully by a few during the earlier days of the church. The apostles must now take an important step in the perfecting of gospel order in the church by laying upon others some of the burdens thus far borne by themselves.

Summoning a meeting of the believers, the apostles were led by the Holy Spirit to outline a plan for the better organization of all the working forces of the church. The time had come, the apostles stated, when the spiritual leaders having the oversight of the church should be relieved from the task of distributing to the poor and from similar burdens, so that they might be free to carry forward the work of preaching the gospel. "Wherefore, brethren," they said, "look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." This advice was followed, and by prayer and the laying on of hands, seven chosen men were solemnly set apart for their duties as deacons.

The appointment of the seven to take the oversight of special lines of work, proved a great blessing to the church. These officers gave careful consideration to individual needs as well as to the general financial interests of the church, and by their prudent management and their godly example they were an important aid to their fellow officers in binding together the various interests of the church into a united whole.

That this step was in the order of God, is revealed in the immediate results for good that were seen. "The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great

company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” This ingathering of souls was due both to the greater freedom secured by the apostles and to the zeal and power shown by the seven deacons. The fact that these brethren had been ordained for the special work of looking after the needs of the poor, did not exclude them from teaching the faith. On the contrary, they were fully qualified to instruct others in the truth, and they engaged in the work with great earnestness and success (*Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 88, 89).



# APPENDIX III

## Responses to Inquiries Made to Me by Others

### To “Mary”

You ask a good question regarding what authority a church elder has in the church. I am not sure whether you are asking, “What authority should he have?” or “What authority does the church give him to exercise?” They are not the same question. As my writing is in regard to the ideal, let me address the first question.

In the New Testament, elders do have authority. Their authority is not a kingly one, and I think that is a point you are making. But it is a teaching authority. They regulate the doctrinal teaching of the church. (See the disputed passage in 1 Timothy 2, as well as Titus 1:11.) “Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity” (1 Timothy 2:7). Again, this is a delegated authority. Yes, as you say, it rests ultimately with the whole church and, more particularly, with the church business meeting that chooses its elders.

Responsibility and authority always come together. You cannot have one without the other. When a person is given a responsibility, he or she must be given sufficient authority to carry it out.

So what real authority does an elder have? The elders can say, “Joe will not be teaching in this sanctuary.” The elders can call a meeting and explain that Laura is a futurist and that her teachings are not to be countenanced. Anyone else could, feasibly, do these things, but the elders are responsible to do them. And for that reason, their teaching is considered authoritative. They answer to God for the words of instruction that they allow to come to the ears of their charges.

This teaching authority is best possessed by those who can handle it impersonally. Joe is wrong, not because he is mean, but because his facts are skewed. Jim is right, even though he is a lousy communicator, because his facts are right. While this might seem like it is neither here nor there, it is a hint at God’s reasoning in the gender distinctions given regarding local

church administration. Some issues are best handled relationally, others are best handled objectively.

Gender uniqueness matches the work well for another reason. The trade skills of an elder are passed on through mentoring. (See 2 Timothy 2:2.) And gender A to gender B mentoring is a moral liability.

The business of the church (how to handle the budget, where to build the addition, whose project to fund) was never intended to be in the domain of the elders. It was to be the work of deacons. There is no human authority over other humans in the business authority of the church.

In other words, while we might think of the ability to fire the janitor as a much higher level of authority than the ability to shush an errant teacher, we would be thinking wrongly. The church is the body of believers, not the body of property holders. Regulating the teaching of the body is the highest level of authority God has given to the church.

## Regarding Gender and God's Plan

There are some things so obvious that it is almost embarrassing to mention them by way of argument, as if it were below an intelligent person to say something that a four-year-old would know. One such item is this: Men are stronger, pound for pound, than women. Adam was even larger than Eve on that first-ever Friday.

As Adam came forth from the hand of his Creator, he was of noble height, and of beautiful symmetry. He was more than twice as tall as men now living upon the earth, and was well proportioned. His features were perfect and beautiful. His complexion was neither white, nor sallow, but ruddy, glowing with the rich tint of health. Eve was not quite as tall as Adam. Her head reached a little above his shoulders. She, too, was noble—perfect in symmetry, and very beautiful (*Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 1, p. 24).

Why was Adam stronger than Eve? And why do women, when selecting a marriage partner, generally prefer a man that is taller than them? And why do we have different metrics for measuring the strength and weight of the genders? The fact is obviously true, muscle women and frail men notwithstanding, that masculinity among humans includes an element of

comparative physical power. Conversely, being female includes an element of physical weakness. God didn't have to make us this way.

Among large mammals, this kind of size discrimination is common. A buck might weigh 40 percent more than his doe. The converse doesn't happen. A bull moose and a male grizzly out-bulk their female counterparts substantially.

In animals it is apparent that the difference in size was God's gift of matching the physique to the role. The protector (usually protecting from aggressive sexual competitors) is fitted to protect. The nurturer is fitted to nurture. The glands, from which we get the word mammal, make her vulnerable. But they also make her an ideal mother. These things that we have observed since we were young were not lost on inspired men.

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

The idea, popular in dry academic circles and echoed in learned essays galore, that men and women are equally fitted for any and all positions, will never be popular among 10-year-olds. It is just too obviously ignorant. The reality is that the Bible gives role-oriented, gender-specific counsel that matches the natural endowments of the genders.

Men, for example, are to be open in their religious exercises. They are to control their tempers. And they are to resist skepticism. "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Timothy 2:8). This verse, written to a half-Greek, half-Jewish church leader in Asia Minor, is incredibly broad in its insightfulness. Today, 2,000 years later, it is still true that men are tempted to exercise their religion privately. (And so many small congregations are full of females.) Paul tells them to pray openly.

Men beat their wives. (Wives are rarely prosecuted for beating their husbands.) Paul tells them to be religious, but not wrathful. And men revel in the feeling of independence that accompanies skepticism. Not wanting to submit their minds to another (a good thing), they fail to make a difference between the Word of God and the words of men (a bad failure). They

dare to doubt both. Paul forbids them to entertain skepticism. These are the gender-oriented counsels for the men. The next verse is gender-oriented counsel for the females.

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works (1 Timothy 2:9, 10).

Though I have visited congregations as far afield as Australia and Romania, as Botswana and Trinidad, as Germany and Japan, as Canada and Indonesia, as Russia and the Philippines, I have never found a place where the above counsel wasn't culturally sound. Everywhere, in church, the men are dressed modestly and the women are comparatively exposed. The young ladies are the ones struggling both with adornment and provocative attire.

Peter also gives gender-oriented instruction to believers. Again, the same Spirit points out that ladies must contend with adornment issues and fashion obsession. And he adds that a truly feminine aura includes a "meek and quiet spirit" that is valued by God.

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands (1 Peter 3:3-5).

Women may be children of Sarah if they live like her. And just as men must contend against a temper, so ladies must contend against fearfulness and timidity. "Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not [timidly fearful]" (1 Peter 3:6).

The male-oriented counsel in the same passage has already been partially quoted. Men are to honor their wives and relate to them as the weaker vessel, but also as an equal heir of the kingdom.



It is a good question, one worth asking, whether the endowments given by the Creator specific to gender make one gender generally better qualified for the work of leading the church. To say it another way: Were women created to be keepers at home or to be keepers abroad? “Teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Titus 2:4, 5).

To say it another way: Was the woman created for man to help him? Or was she created to be independent? Was creation subject to social norms? “For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man” (1 Corinthians 11:8, 9).

When we explore the issue of God’s purpose in creation, we open a door to a large field of knowledge inaccessible to skeptical minds. That body of knowledge points in a different direction than does the body of learned lore that passes for research.

The feminine virtue, αἰδώς, “shamefacedness” in the KJV, is not a masculine virtue. Why do we, then, when talking about the ordination issue, pretend that the genders are more similar to each other than we know them to be? It reminds me of a proverb I once read: “If only a scholar can maintain the view, chances are high it just isn’t true.”

## Is Ordination Even Biblical? A Scholarly Quibble

Dr. Darius Jankiewicz, a professor at the seminary, has given many public lectures related to the issue of ordination and, in particular, to the issue of women’s ordination. Two of these have been heard repeatedly online. They were delivered originally at the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church near Washington, D. C. He titled his lectures, “The Problem of Ordination.”

He opined that the Bible lacks sufficient evidence to warrant several aspects of commonly held views in regard to ordination. There is a distinct contrast, however, between the approach Jankiewicz takes to the Bible data and the approach of our pioneers. They differ sharply on how they deal with the scarcity of Bible data on various subjects.

Jankiewicz begins by expressing doubt that the Bible provides a “clear theology of either pastoral ministry or ordination.” He expresses six problems:

1. New Testament elders do not well parallel, in function, with modern notions of ministry.
2. Scripture evidence favors two positions (elders and deacons) rather than three (ministers, elders, deacons).
3. There is no direct evidence for the ordaining of elders by the laying on of hands.
4. The practice of only ordained persons being involved in ministerial investiture is not explicitly stated in the New Testament.
5. There is no scriptural warrant for limiting ministerial functions to ordained persons.
6. The laying on of hands in the New Testament (and wider Scriptures) is used for a much broader range of needs than ordination.

Points one and two are largely true. In the New Testament, there are elders who are full-time workers for the churches (who “labour in the word and doctrine”) and there are other elders who are not. The full-time persons were “worthy” of the honor of being supported by the tithe. “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine” (1 Timothy 5:17).

This division of elders into two categories forms a decent parallel to the three-position organization of local churches. Nevertheless, the parallel could and should be closer than it is. And Jankiewicz is correct that some aspects of ministerial functions differ from their New Testament parallels. This could and should be improved.

And he is absolutely right on the sixth point as well. Nevertheless, this observation is a distraction. Though I have been part of many ritual laying-on-of-hands, and though most of these involved sending out missionaries and prayers for healing, neither of these facts lessens the significance of the practice of ordaining men to the gospel ministry.

But Jankiewicz errs on his third point. The volume of evidence for this important point is greater than the volume of evidence for either of the following ritual aspects of the Christian church: (a) Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and (b) Foot-washing. Likewise, the

evidence that ordained persons were the ones authorized to ordain others is sufficient.

How much Bible data does it take to warrant action? On this question, as I said, Jankiewicz differs widely from our pioneers. The pioneer position is stated ably both by Ellen White and by James White.

The only safe and proper rule of biblical interpretation is to take every passage of the Book of God as meaning what it says, word for word, excepting those cases where the text and context clearly show that a figure or parable is introduced for a more clear elucidation of the subject. In the foregoing text [*1 Co 14:34, 35*] the apostle does not use a figure or a parable, therefore his words should be taken as meaning just what they say (James White, “Woman in the Church,” *Review and Herald*, May 29, 1879).

One sentence of Scripture is of more value than ten thousand of man’s ideas or arguments (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, p. 71).

The view of the pioneers, though it demanded a multiplicity of texts for public teaching, was not nearly so demanding in regard to church practice. In effect, the church policy said “one biblical hint is more worthy of adherence than is human tradition.” So when the Bible said “as often as you do it” in regard to the Lord’s Supper, that one sentence was sufficient to lead the brethren to reject both weekly and annual keeping of the Lord’s Supper.

When Jesus said, in John 13:14, “ye also ought to wash one another’s feet,” that was sufficient to warrant appending foot-washing to the Adventist communion service. No matter that this injunction is not explicitly aimed at other than the disciples or that it is unrepeated in other passages; it was for God’s people. And so, it was for us.

In a similar way, though the Bible has a multiplicity of baptism events, there is not one carefully chronicled instance of someone being baptized in the threefold names of the Godhead. Other than Matthew’s version of the Great Commission, that formula appears nowhere. But where it does appear, it is a command. And one command is worth obeying even if it is not repeated profusely.

So what does the Bible have to say about ordination?<sup>24</sup> If you start with the statement, “I won’t believe a thing unless you prove it beyond a shadow of a doubt,” then perhaps you will end up where Jankiewicz has ended up. But if you start by asking, “What data and hints can we find in the Scripture to guide us as we choose to set up a system of church order?” then you will arrive at several familiar aspects.

We find that God has placed authority in church offices. There are persons that “must give an account” and who “rule over you” and who should “take care of the church of God” and who are called “elders” and sometimes “overseers.”

We find qualifications for persons seeking this office. And we will find that while it is a valid ambition to have such responsibilities, that ambition is not sufficient to qualify someone.

We find that, in church-plant scenarios, these elders were appointed by men (as Timothy and Titus) who were themselves authorized by the apostle Paul to appoint them.

We find that such elders should be tested and should not include novices. And elsewhere we find the same idea that “hands should be laid on no man suddenly.” From this we gather that hands were to be laid on men who, after sufficient test, were found qualified to be elders.

We find that Jesus ordained the disciples by breathing on them, but that Timothy was ordained by the “laying on of hands of the overseers.”

And we find that when the church is more established, elders are chosen by vote (literally, by hand). We also find that the first deacons were chosen by the church members rather than by its leaders. From this we would know that leaders may sensibly delegate to established churches the work of choosing by vote their own elders.

When we put these together, we have elders, chosen by vote, who are ordained by the laying on of hands by other overseers. These ideas, biblical and simple, are sufficient evidence from Scripture for any person or church that is looking for answers.

This counters Jankiewicz’s primary thesis, namely that these views came to us via tradition rather than by adherence to Bible norms. But in view of the Bible data, there is no good reason to follow this reasoning.

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24 The references for the following points are found in 1 Timothy 3, 4 and Titus 1. See also Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 5:3.

The Bible data is what the pioneers wanted and needed to choose a path of direction.

I simply disagree with Jankiewicz's primary objections, numbered 3 and 4 in the introductory list. He says that there is insufficient evidence to believe that elders were ordained by the laying on of hands. I counter that it is quite apparent that that is exactly what happened. He says that there is no good evidence that ordained persons did the ordaining. I say that there is simple evidence that Timothy and Titus chose elders and gave them their responsibilities. And as Timothy was the recipient of a ritual laying on of hands, and as he should not share this "suddenly" with any insufficiently qualified person, I say there is plenty of evidence that ordination was performed by ordained persons.

Jankiewicz shows convincingly that by the third and fourth centuries, the leaders of the church, its pastors (and then its priests) were honored with more than their share of responsibility. And he correctly detects several of the root problems including the following two: (1) The church came to view clergy and laypersons as being on different spiritual levels, and (2) The church came to expect too much from ordination. For this latter point Jankiewicz gives a useful and relevant quotation from Ellen White.

At a later date, the rite of ordination by the laying on of hands was greatly abused; unwarrantable importance was attached to the act, as if a power came at once upon those who received such ordination, which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work. But in the setting apart of these two apostles, there is no record indicating that any virtue was imparted by the mere act of laying on of hands. There is only the simple record of their ordination, and of the bearing that it had on their future work (*Review and Herald*, May 11, 1911, par. 6).

What is surprising (or otherwise disappointing) is that Jankiewicz neglected to quote portions of the same article that countered his thesis. Four paragraphs earlier, in the introduction of the article, Ellen White clearly identifies Acts 13 as the formal ordination of Paul and Barnabas to the gospel ministry.

More than this, she plainly states that this ordination qualified them to teach, to baptize, and to organize churches. These ministerial functions are precisely those that Jankiewicz refers to in his fifth problematic point. He doubted that these functions were originally restricted to ordained persons. By contrast, Ellen White agrees with what we found intuitively while reading the Bible, namely that ordination did, indeed, authorize the ordained to carry out ministerial functions:

God had abundantly blessed the labors of Paul and Barnabas during the year they remained with the believers in Antioch; but neither of them had as yet been formally ordained to the gospel ministry. They had now reached a point in their Christian experience where God was about to entrust them with the carrying forward of a difficult missionary enterprise, in the prosecution of which they would need every advantage that could be obtained through the agency of the church. Therefore, before being sent forth as missionaries to the heathen world, these apostles were solemnly dedicated to God by fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands. Thus they were authorized by the church not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism, and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority (*Review and Herald*, May 11, 1911, par. 2).

Jankiewicz makes an interesting contrast in his review of the earlier Adventists. He shares that their view of ordination was that it was “thoroughly scriptural” but that it related to pragmatic concerns rather than to theological ones.

Think that through. What is a theological reason? If the reason the Bible gives for ordaining elders in every city is to pragmatically establish order in the churches, is that really just a pragmatic concern or a theological one? “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5). If you answer “a pragmatic one,” then your idea of theology might be a little skewed because the Bible, a theological marvel, was written for practical reasons. The Bible was given for practical purposes. (See *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, 20.)

I share with Dr. Jankiewicz a concern that much of the church overestimates the authority that God has granted to ministers and church administrators. That is why I wrote the article “Forbid them Not” in *Adventists Affirm* some years ago. And I concur with this dear man that the great apostasy is largely to blame for the way men think of clergy as being somehow a tier above their brethren.

But I cannot follow him when he takes these truths and adds to them such ambiguity that the ambiguity itself becomes authority to change the plainly given biblical teachings. There is order in the church. It is biblical. There is sufficient evidence. Ellen White affirms what the Bible illustrates.

Men ought to be ordained to the gospel ministry by already ordained persons. The elders present should lay their hands on the man to be ordained and, in this way, officially lend the sanction of the church to his ministerial functions of teaching, baptizing, and organizing churches. That is biblical theology, even if it does not qualify in academic circles for a systematic theology.

