

"In an age of universal deceit,  
telling the truth is a revolutionary act."

—George Orwell

# COURAGE

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Taking A Stand On A Defining Issue:  
Women's Ordination

**SAMUEL KORANTENG-PIPIM, PH.D.**

*Author, *Must We Be Silent?* & *Receiving the Word**



## **Courage: Taking A Stand On A Defining Issue (Women's Ordination)**

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*Courage: Taking A Stand On A Defining Issue (Women's Ordination)*

1. Spiritual Leadership in the Church—Christianity
2. Women's Ordination/Seventh-day Adventist Church
3. Biblical Authority & Interpretation, & Ecclesiology—Apologetics

I. Title

# Dedication

*To My Wife*

**Becky**

Thank you for your love and courage.  
You are a true sister, friend, & mother

&

*To All*

**The Faithful Women—Young & Old**

Unlike “restless modern Eves,”

You exemplify the grace of godly womanhood, selfless and  
sacrificial service in both the home and the church, and the  
Biblical model of women in ministry.

You are the true “Mothers in Israel.”

Judges 5:7; Romans 16:1, 2.

## WHO IS A MOTHER?

Getting pregnant and giving birth doesn't necessarily make a person a mother. Nor does loving and caring alone (as does a step-mother, adoptive mother, guardian, grandmother, aunt, nurse, teacher, or social worker). Motherhood is more than biology (nature) and sociology (nurture); it's also theology (Scripture). Jesus explains: "Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My ... mother" (Matthew 12:50). Correctly understood, a true mother is any godly woman who lovingly and caringly leads others to usefulness AND a saving relationship with Christ. The world is most indebted to such "mothers-in-Israel"—and is in dire need of such "mothers of thousands of ten thousands" (cf. Judges 5:7; cf. Genesis 24:60). Thank you, Mothers!

—**Samuel Koranteng-Pipim**  
(Thought Nugget for 2013 Mother's Day)

## YOU SEE & SEE THROUGH

Mothers meet a need that no other can. They see what a thousand eyes might miss, hear the inaudible sighs, and touch our broken spirits. Though our neon smiles confuse the rest of the world that all is well, mothers know when our worlds are falling apart. The light they represent might grow dim in the rough rides of life, but mothers keep ours lit, breathing hope and love into every minute on our behalf. Our joys are theirs, just as they inhabit our sorrows. Mothers see through our pretenses: They hear the well-masked pain behind our words, the frustration behind our restlessness, and the confusion behind our orderliness. God honors mothers, whether their ties are rooted in biology (nature), sociology (nurture), or theology (Scripture). And the world owes mothers a huge debt for their sacrifices (Proverbs 23:25; cf. Isaiah 66:13). So, from the depths of very grateful hearts, we say "Thank you, Mothers!"

—**Samuel Koranteng-Pipim**  
(Thought Nugget for 2015 Mother's Day)

# Table of Contents

“For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.”  
(2 Corinthians 13:8)

<b>1. Where Are the Leaders?</b> <i>(The Piercing Question That Occasioned this Work)</i> .....	7
<b>2. A Defining Issue</b> <i>(What’s the Issue &amp; What’s At Stake?)</i> .....	13
<b>3. In the Days of Our Pioneers</b> <i>(The Position of Our Pioneers &amp; Its Basis)</i> .....	21
<b>4. In the Days Of Our Lives</b> <i>(Our Current Position: Will It Stand?)</i> .....	35
<b>5. The Evolving Arguments</b> <i>(The New Light on Women’s Ordination)</i> .....	45
<b>6. Clarifying the Issues</b> <i>(What the Issues Are &amp; Are Not)</i> .....	61
<b>7. On Solid Ground</b> <i>(The Case for Gender-Role Differentiation)</i> .....	73
<b>8. Why Be Concerned?</b> <i>(The Tip of An Iceberg)</i> .....	97
<b>9. An Orchestrated Strategy</b> <i>(How We Got Stuck in This Hole &amp; How To Get Out)</i> .....	105
<b>10. Restless Eves or Reckless Adams?</b> <i>(A False Dilemma)</i> .....	131
<b>11. The Moment of Truth</b> <i>(What It Boils Down To)</i> .....	153
<b>12. The Speech from Silence</b> <i>(A Response to Passionate Pleas)</i> .....	173
<b>Appendix</b> .....	197
<b>Selected Works By Author</b> .....	201
<b>About the Author</b> .....	207



# Chapter 1

## Where Are the Leaders?

*(The Piercing Question That Occasioned this Work)*

*“An army of sheep led by a lion can defeat  
an army of lions led by a sheep.”  
(Ghanaian Proverb)*

### Sheep Leadership

wish I didn't have to say any further word on this volatile issue of women's ordination. My reason is best captured by the words of E. G. White:

“I know that which I now speak will bring me into conflict. This I do not covet, for the conflict has seemed to be continuous of late years: but I do not mean to live a coward or die a coward, leaving my work undone. I must follow in my Master's footsteps.”<sup>1</sup>

I fully identify with the above statement. I am not new to conflict, having been embroiled in it for the most part of my life and ministry—past and present. But I also do not want to live or die like a coward. “I must follow in my Master's footsteps.”

The second reason why I have reluctantly embarked upon this particular assignment is as a response to the compelling urgings of a dear brother.

Very early on Sunday morning of May 3, 2015, I was roused out of my sleep by a desperate phone call from a dedicated and biblically-informed Seventh-day Adventist lay professional in Africa. He was deeply troubled about the intense campaign for women's ordination, with just about two months left for the GC Session in San Antonio, Texas (July 2015).

Though the campaign is most evident in “the Church of the West,” it was also having an impact on “the rest of the Church”—including

Africa. The person on the other line of the phone specifically cited the recent release and worldwide circulation of a pro-women's ordination material by some non-African "Adventist Elder Statesmen." He then asked:

"Where are our African leaders on this issue? When will they likewise release their own statement, even as their counterparts have done?...Shouldn't they educate our churches on what is at stake? Shouldn't our African leaders also boldly declare their stand on what we have always known to be the truth? Why their silence? Where are the leaders—vis-à-vis their counterparts in the Western world—on the question of women's ordination?"

He posed that question to me because he felt he was not receiving a positive response from the African leaders he had previously contacted. It is from his question above that I have extracted the title—"Where Are the Leaders"—for this chapter.

Of course he was specifically referring to *African* church leaders. But the urgent call for courageous leadership echoes beyond the shores of Africa. Bold and courageous leadership is needed everywhere. For as explained by a Ghanaian proverb, "*An army of sheep led by a lion can defeat an army of lions led by sheep.*"

Where are the leaders? The lions? Where can we find "lion leadership" to replace the "sheep leadership" around us? I just couldn't shake off that piercing question: "Where are the leaders?" It almost sounded like God asking Adam after his Fall: "Adam, where are you?"

This work is a revised version of the reply I sent to him, explaining my position on the specific question he posed. I will refer to him as Bro. Emmanuel. But he could have been anyone—male or female—and could have come from any region of the world church, not just Africa. I pray that my response will be useful to other Emmanuel's out there who are equally frustrated by the lack of courageous leadership in times of crisis.

### It's Time To Take A Stand

Dear Bro. Emmanuel

Thanks for your phone call today regarding your concerns about the women's ordination issue, which in just two months, will come up for vote at the upcoming General Conference (GC) session in San Antonio, Texas, July 2-11, 2015.

You asked an important question: "*Where are our African leaders ... on the question of women's ordination*"? And you stated your settled conviction on what our leaders should be doing.

I agree with you that our Church leaders in Africa ought to educate our members about the theological issues at stake in the debate. They shouldn't only declare where they stand, they should also explain why they intend to vote on the issue in a particular way. Your phone call was because you felt that I, as an African, and other African leaders, owe an obligation to address the issue.

Like you, I believe that church leaders must take an objective and Biblical stand on important issues that impact the church's identity and mission. The trust and respect reposed in them demands nothing less. And, instead of straddling the fence with a politically-correct "I'm neither-for-nor-against" response, they must take a stand by offering sound biblical reasons for their position—one way or the other. Martin Luther once said:

*"If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every position of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved; and to be steady on all the battle field besides, is more flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."*

—**Martin Luther**

I am taking the time to respond to you for two reasons. First, because you want to hear from me what I personally think is wrong or right about ordaining women as elders/pastors (the Bible makes no distinction between elder or pastor).

Second, because “It Is Time”—borrowing the words from the title of the “Adventist Elder Statesmen” who have publicly declared their stand. But unlike them, who argue that it’s now time for our worldwide Church to say “Yes” to women’s ordination, I believe that now is the time for the church to emphasize its “No” to the practice—and even insist on a “No more” to such biblically questionable practices.

While I cannot speak for our leaders in Africa (or anywhere else), I can definitely speak for myself on what I can and cannot do with respect to your request. This is what I intend doing in this reply to your penetrating question. But I hasten to add that, though I’m an African by birth, I am not in any way speaking on behalf of any African or African leader. I am speaking for myself alone. And I write as an individual member not employed by the church.

Let me begin with a brief background—a background that will put a context to what I am about to share. It will explain “where I’m coming from.”

### **Advice from A Wounded Soldier**

You may recall that about four years ago I resigned from denominational employment on account of spiritual failure. I subsequently submitted myself to discipline in my local church, having earlier made a case for why I had to be disciplined. Then, last year, (some three years after my being disciplined), I was duly baptized and accepted into full membership of a local congregation in North America.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, although I am no longer a minister in denominational employment, as an ordinary member, I have the same rights and responsibilities to express my views, just as all others who are baptized Seventh-day Adventists.

Though you may already know the above facts, knowingly or unknowingly, my spiritual failure was the “Trojan Horse” that some tried to use to pursue their personal, ideological, political, and even racial agendas. At the appropriate time in the future, I will address

## Where Are the Leaders?

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the theological, ethical, missiological, and legal issues that were involved in the unprecedented attempt to silence my voice on account of my past sins.<sup>3</sup>

The above background will, perhaps, help you to understand the response I'm about to give you with respect to your request for me to speak out on the issue of women's ordination.

But first, let me make it clear that, whereas some are more preoccupied with the women's ordination issue, this is not my priority. My focus is evangelism. Not anyone's ideological pet, but the all-important work of soul-winning.

I have a God-given mission to engage in outreach to the world. This is the same obligation as any Seventh-day Adventist member who chooses to listen and obey God's call to every redeemed child of His. At the moment, I have chosen not to get myself distracted from this important mission. It is the primary call for which I, and indeed every single one of us, will give account personally before God.

The main reason I am spilling ink on this issue is because I was convicted by the searching question you posed when you called early this morning—and the timing of it. (Your early morning phone call came after a very impactful Sabbath sermon outside my local congregation in another State.) I was convicted to offer you an explanation because, ultimately, the issue of women's ordination has to do with the faithfulness and witness of the Church. It concerns our fidelity to God's Word and the truths He has entrusted to our care to be passed on to the world.

But I also need to emphasize that, although I have a right and obligation to speak on issues dealing with the Church, I approach this task very reluctantly—and with a sense of deep personal pain. I am writing to you as a wounded soldier—one, whose spiritual wounds were self-inflicted. And, though the wounds have been healed, on account of the scars from the self-inflicted wounds, I do not consider myself qualified or fit to be at the frontlines of today's battle. I can only offer advice to you—and to all able-bodied soldiers like you—who are called to these frontlines of the battlefield.<sup>4</sup>

### Endnotes

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- 1 *The Southern Work*, p.10. E. G. White made the above comment in the context of the Black/White racial issue in her day. For a detailed discussion on this issue, see Section 3 of my *Must We Be Silent: Issues Dividing Our Church* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Berean Books, 2001), pp.299-441.
- 2 For more facts on this, visit my personal website ([www.drpipim.org](http://www.drpipim.org)). On the left panel (headed “Contemporary Issues”) click on “Resignation” subject, and read the links under “Highlights Of Dr. Pipim’s Spiritual Failure & Journey” (<http://drpipim.org/resignation/191-highlightsofpipimsspiritual-failureandjourney.html>).
- 3 Much has been said by certain individuals, interest groups, organizations, and church administrators about my failure and baptism. But as we say in Africa, “until lions write their own history, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.” It’s why I state that, “at the appropriate time in the future, I will address the theological, ethical, missiological, and legal issues that were involved in the unprecedented attempt to silence my voice and slander my name on account of my past sins.”
- 4 I give my advice from the perspective of one who used to support women’s ordination, but who has since changed my mind on the strength of the evidence from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy as reflected also in the understanding and example of the Adventist pioneers, including Ellen G. White. See, for example, my *Searching the Scriptures: Women’s Ordination and the Call to Biblical Fidelity* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventists Affirm, 1995), my articles in *Prove All Things: A Response to ‘Women in Ministry’* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventists Affirm, 2000), and Part II of my book *Must We Be Silent: Issues Dividing Our Church* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Berean Books, 2001). See also articles on “Women’s Ordination” available on my (DrPipim.org) website: <http://drpipim.org/womens-ordination-contemporaryissues-46.html>.

# Chapter 2

## A Defining Issue

(*What's the Issue & What's At Stake?*)

*"A problem clearly stated is a problem half solved."*

—Dorothea Brande

*"Intellectuals solve problems; geniuses prevent them."*

—Albert Einstein

A defining issue is that by which a generation, nation, or organization is judged by subsequent ones for its action or inaction. Such an issue is of a nature that determines the very survival or shape of that entity in terms of its identity, mission, or effectiveness.

For the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the question of women's ordination will be one such defining issue that will come up at the forthcoming General Conference session in San Antonio, Texas. The issue is more than merely whether or not women can legitimately serve as elders or pastors. More importantly it concerns *the basis* upon which that decision is to be made and how *the outcome* of that decision is likely to affect the identity, mission, and unity of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Let me explain.

Basically, the ordained ministry is an oversight (leadership or headship) and teaching function within the church ("pastors and teachers," Ephesians 4:11). In governing the church (Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24), ordained ministers have special responsibilities to shepherd the flock by ensuring that the physical, social and spiritual needs of the church are well taken care of.<sup>5</sup> They are also to "teach," "beseech," "exhort," "reprove," and "rebuke"<sup>6</sup>

To the extent that the ordained ministers faithfully discharge their responsibility as "pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11), church members are to "obey" or "submit" to their authority.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, as models of the Christian faith, these elders or pastors are to be esteemed “very highly” and are to be “counted worthy of double honor.”<sup>8</sup>

In light of these things, Ellen G. White wrote that the ministry is “a sacred and exalted office,” “the highest of all work.” Those “who belittle the ministry are belittling Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

The issue of ordination of women raises the question whether women should exercise the spiritual leadership or headship functions of the ministerial office by being ordained as elders or pastors. To address this question calls for a correct understanding of the nature of the problem. For, as it is said, understanding a problem is half the solution.

### 1. What Is the Problem?

The church faces a decision over ordination of women because, in the face of calls for it from some quarters today, the Seventh-day Adventist church has—and until very recently—always argued that (1) there is no biblical *precedent* for the practice, and (2) some explicit biblical *prohibitions* seem to militate against the practice.<sup>10</sup>

**(a) Absence of Biblical Precedent.** The Bible teaches that, despite their significant role in ministry, women in Old Testament times were not ordained as priests. Also, though they made major contributions to the ministry of Christ, He did not appoint a single one of them as an apostle; further, when a replacement apostle was sought (Acts 1:15-26), even though women were present and surely met most of the requirements set (vv. 21-22), it was a male who was chosen. In addition, we have no record of any woman being ordained as an elder or pastor in the New Testament church. Why was this so?

**(b) Biblical Prohibition of Women Elders/Pastors.** Despite the active involvement of women in ministry in the apostolic church, Paul’s pastoral epistles to Timothy and Titus (letters specifically written to pastors and laity) contain instruction that only men may aspire to the office of elder or pastor. “I permit no woman to teach

or to have authority over men” (1 Tim 2:12 RSV); “a bishop [or elder] must be ... the husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6).

These passages all use the same Greek word for “man” and “husband.” It is not the generic term *anthropos*, from which the English word “anthropology” derives and which refers to human beings, male or female, without regard to gender.<sup>11</sup> Rather, Paul employed the specific word *aner*, a term that means an adult male person in distinction from a woman (cf. Acts 8:12; 1 Timothy 2:12), one capable of being a husband (see Matthew 1:16; John 4:16; Rom 7:2; Titus 1:6).<sup>12</sup> Why did Paul prohibit women from exercising the headship/leadership role of elder or pastor?

**Questions Demanding Answers.** The lack of biblical precedent for ordaining women to the headship role in the church, combined with the Bible’s prohibitions of the practice, raises some questions:

- Were the Old Testament writers, Jesus Christ, and Paul sexist or biased against women?
- Should the male headship role be explained away as an accommodation to the Bible writers’ culture and times? If so, how can we account for the fact that at the same time, the Bible also noted the significant role of women in ministry, including prophesying, praying, teaching, etc.?
- Could it be that women’s exclusion from the Old Testament priesthood and from the New Testament roles of apostles and elders/pastors is not based on mere sociological or cultural factors but is rather rooted in God’s divine arrangement established at creation? If so, does this divine arrangement mean that (i) men and women are not equal—i.e. men are superior to women (ii) men and women, though equal, have different roles?

Conflicting answers to these questions fuel the debate over the ordination of women as elders and pastors.<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, the issue of ordination of women raises questions about the Bible’s authority and the appropriate method for biblical interpretation.

### 2. The Church's Response

Thus far, the Seventh-day Adventist church has responded by: (1) granting women most of the functions of ordained ministers while refusing to ordain them as pastors; and (2) permitting ordination of women as elders but not as pastors.

This biblically inconsistent position has generated debate, confusion, and divisiveness in many Adventist congregations, contributing in some cases toward eroding confidence in leadership. Many earnest Adventists wonder whether the church still considers itself obliged to follow Bible principles.

At two recent General Conference sessions (1990, and 1995), the Church upheld the position of the early Adventist pioneers (1881) by rejecting women's ordination.<sup>14</sup> Today, another attempt is being made to vote for women's ordination at the upcoming General Conference session in San Antonio, Texas (July 2015), by making ordination to the gospel ministry "gender-neutral or gender-inclusive" in certain regions of the world Church.

The motion that will be debated and voted upon by the delegates at the 2015 GC session is that, based on their understanding of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy: *Is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No.*

The significance of this request should not be missed. Beyond the immediate issue of women's ordination and the pragmatic basis for the proposal (i.e., "*as they may deem it appropriate in their territories*"), if approved, the decision would represent a historic shift in our understanding of the role of ordination in Seventh-day Adventist church government.

Historically, our church has recognized "the equality of the ordination of the entire ministry." In other words, the ordination of a minister automatically qualifies him to serve anywhere in the world field.<sup>15</sup>

However, if the motion at the GC session is approved, for the first time in Seventh-day Adventist history, the ordination of a minister will not be equal everywhere, but may only be recognized within certain territorial boundaries. This situation opens the door to independent national churches and to congregationalism. Ultimately, it is an affirmative decision that will rupture the unity of the worldwide Church.

### 3. The Challenge Facing the Church

The current turmoil in the churches and the threat of division and congregationalism within the worldwide church indicate that the Seventh-day Adventist church can no longer waffle on this issue. As the church takes up the matter it must speak clearly, unambiguously, and definitively at the next General Conference session in San Antonio, Texas.

In order for the Church to do so, however, it must understand what the *theological* issues are and what they are not. At issue are biblical authority and the nature of Seventh-day Adventist church government (ecclesiology).

Over the years, I have attempted to address these issues. Notable among my works are *Searching the Scriptures* (1995), *Receiving the Word* (1996), and *Must We Be Silent* (2001). Though these works are readily available, in some quarters of the church, attempts have been made to ban them.<sup>16</sup>

#### Endnotes

- 5 Acts 20:28-35; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Pet 5:3; Acts 6:8; 8:5-13, 26-40; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9.
- 6 Titus 1:9; 2:15; 1 Tim 5:20; 2 Tim 4:2.
- 7 Hebrews 13:17; 1 Corinthians 16:16.
- 8 1 Thessalonians 5:13; 1 Timothy 5:17.
- 9 *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:615; 6:411.

- 10 The above stated argument has been the longstanding position of the Seventh-day Adventist church—until recently, i.e., until the 1970s. However, since the 1970s, several arguments have been employed in the church in an attempt to overthrow the church’s longstanding position against ordaining women as elders or pastors. For more on this, see chapter 5 of this present book (“The Evolving Argument”). See also, my online article “Does the Bible Support Ordaining Women As Elders or Pastors?—Part 1 (“The Evolving Arguments For Women’s Ordination”): <http://www.drpipim.org/womens-ordination-contemporaryissues-46/42-1-does-the-bible-support-ordaining-women-as-elders-or-pastors-part-1.html>.
- 11 For examples using the generic term *anthropos*, see Matthew 4:4, 12:35, and John 2:25, where the word refers to human beings, male or female, irrespective of gender. *Anthropos* means a person—whether man or woman (Acts 19:16; Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16; Jas 1:19; 2:24; 3:8). To date, the most detailed discussion of the meaning of *aner* that I know of is “Analyzing the Meanings of Words: ‘Man’ for *Aner*,” found as Appendix 2 in Vern S. Poythress & Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy: Muting the Masculinity of God’s Words* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), pp. 321-333. They conclude their exhaustive analysis of the occurrence of the word *aner* in the New Testament and argue that, although the meaning of the word should be determined by the context, “in all of these cases the meaning ‘man’ makes sense and is not foreign to the context... We are not arguing that *aner* could never lose its male semantic component in specialized idioms, but only that the argument that it loses its male marking in any New Testament examples is based on very doubtful evidence and is not sound lexicography” (p. 333).
- 12 *ibid.*, p. 324.
- 13 The ordination question is not the only area affected by one’s understanding of roles. Controversy over the Bible’s presentation of role distinctions has led some to question the Bible’s teaching about relationships within marriage, and a few even to question the validity of the marriage institution itself. Furthermore, minimizing the differences in gender roles may, in some cases, contribute to confusion of sexual identity and the acceptance of unisex roles and clothing, and of homosexuality as a morally acceptable lifestyle.
- 14 See the next two chapters—namely, chapter 3 (“In the Days of the Pioneers”) and chapter 4 (“In The Days of Our Lives”).
- 15 The *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Manual*, published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Silver Spring, Md.: Ministerial Association 1992, understands ordination to be a call “to serve as a minister of the gospel *in any part of the world*,” and as the investment

of the ministers with “full ecclesiastical authority to act in behalf of the church *anywhere in the world field where they may be employed by the church*” (pp. 75, 77). Again, “*Workers who are ordained to the gospel ministry are set apart to serve the world church*, primarily as pastors and preachers of the Word, and are subject to the direction of the church in regard to the type of ministry and their place of service . . . . Ordination to the ministry is the setting apart of the employee to a sacred calling, not for one local field alone but for the world church and therefore needs to be done with wide counsel” (p. 79).

- 16 The Statement was issued, when on account of my spiritual failure an unprecedented statement was issued to the “Leadership of North America and World Divisions,” urging them to “not support my ministry such as speaking invitations, the use of my materials, or any ministry activity.” In spite of this however, the works are still available for purchase at: [www.store.EAGLESONline.org](http://www.store.EAGLESONline.org). In addition, *Searching the Scriptures* and *Receiving the Word* are available as free downloads on my apologetic website ([www.drpipim.org](http://www.drpipim.org)). See the “Free Books Online” link: <http://drpipim.org/free-books-online-sermons-and-videos-96.html>.



# Chapter 3

## In the Days of Our Pioneers

*(The Position of Our Pioneers & Its Basis)*

*“In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! ... We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”*

—E. G White

**T**he next General Conference session in San Antonio, Texas, might be a watershed event for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It can mark the evidence of true revival and reformation, or it might confirm us in our patterns of apostasy and rebellion. It all depends on how we address the looming crisis of women’s ordination. Let me explain.

### GC Session Actions

The General Conference (GC) *at session* is the highest authority in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Decisions taken at GC sessions are the official positions of the church. A GC session regularly meets every five years. These sessions address matters of global importance that impact the entire world Church. Among the issues addressed at GC sessions are: the election of world leaders, revision and approval of Fundamental Beliefs, amendments to the *Church Manual*, amendments to the General Conference Constitution and Bylaws, appointment of the General Conference Auditing Service leaders and board, etc.

When a GC is not in session, it delegates authority to the General Conference Executive Committee—comprising mainly of General Conference and Division officers, presidents of all the Unions worldwide, as well as selected representatives who are recommended

by Divisions from laity, pastors and frontline employees within each Division. Unlike the GC sessions that meet once every five years, the GC Executive Committee meets twice a year, Spring and Fall, at “Annual Councils.”<sup>17</sup>

Major issues to be discussed at GC sessions are first dealt with at Annual Councils. Then the Annual Council refers its recommendations to the GC session to be voted upon. The decisions taken at a GC session on any issue is binding on all Adventists worldwide. Here’s how E.G. White states the binding authority of GC session decisions:

In 1909 she wrote: “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 invested in His church in the judgment and voice of the General Conference assembled to plan for the prosperity and advancement of His work.”<sup>18</sup>

In 1911 she wrote: “God has invested His church with special authority and power which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising, for he who does this despises the voice of God.”<sup>19</sup>

Because the issue of women’s ordination is a matter of global importance that impacts the entire world Church, it can only be addressed at a GC session. This is why, at the forthcoming General Conference (GC) Session in San Antonio, Texas (July 2-11, 2015), delegates will be asked to vote on the following seemingly-innocuous motion:

*THEREFORE, The General Conference Executive Committee requests delegates in their sacred responsibility to God at the 2015 General Conference Session to respond to the following question:*

*After your prayerful study on ordination from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the reports of the study commissions, and;*

*After your careful consideration of what is best for the Church and the fulfillment of its mission,*

*Is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No.*

In the next chapter, we shall look carefully at the above recommendation that is to be voted upon at the 2015 GC session and its far-reaching implications. For now, however, it's important to note the following:

1. In the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church there have been three GC session actions on the issue of women's ordination. One took place in 1881, in the days of the early Seventh-day Adventist pioneers. This took place in Battle Creek when Ellen G. White was alive. As will become evident, the 1881 GC *session* rejected women's ordination.
2. The other two GC actions recently took place—over one-hundred years after the Adventist pioneers rejected the practice. The two *recent* occasions that the issue came up at General Conference sessions were in Indianapolis (1990), and Utrecht, Netherlands (1995). On both occasions, the overwhelming majority of the Church worldwide voted “No” to requests to ordain women.

Because of the misinformation and misleading interpretation of the 1881 GC session action that took place in Battle Creek in the days of E. G. White and our pioneers, in the remainder of this chapter we shall briefly take up a discussion of this event—what took place in 1881 and explain why our pioneers rejected women's ordination. In the next chapter, we shall look at the recent decisions of 1990, 1995, and the upcoming vote in 2015.

### 1881 GC Session Action

Here's the statement of the 1881 "resolution," as recorded in *Review and Herald*, December 20, 1881, p. 39):

*Resolved*, That females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry.

This was discussed ... and referred to the General Conference Committee.

Adopting a revisionist interpretation of SDA history, some pro-ordination scholars and leaders often mislead people into believing that "resolution" at the GC session meant the delegates "voted" in favor of the motion. Or that when the GC session referred the matter to the committee for further study, it was intended for the committee to implement the decision; but unfortunately that positive "resolution" was "killed" by the three-member, all-male GC Committee, comprising George I. Butler, Stephen Haskell, and Uriah Smith.

But the idea that the 1881 GC session approved women's ordination is an interpretation that is based on ignorance of the facts— if not a calculated attempt to deceive—as is often the case with the revisionist scholarship within the pro-ordination camp (I have devoted a whole chapter to this in *Must We Be Silent*, chapter 15).

The fact is, in the nineteenth century, items were brought to the General Conference session as "resolutions," in the appropriate debating form: "Resolved that. ..." To untrained modern ears, this sounds like the decision (i.e., the resolution of the matter), when in fact it was only the *starting point* for discussion of the proposal.<sup>20</sup>

After the "resolution" (i.e., the proposal) was brought to the floor, it was discussed. In fact, eight individuals are listed as speaking to this resolution prior to it being "referred to the General Conference Committee," who never sent it back to that session or to any subsequent GC Session.<sup>21</sup> As I have shown elsewhere, the fact that the "resolution" (i.e., the proposal brought to the floor) was "referred to the General Conference Committee" means that the

1881 General Conference delegates *did not accept* the women's ordination proposal.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, contrary to some widely held assertions, the 1881 General Conference session actually *declined* to approve the proposal to ordain women! For whatever their reasons (we are not told in the minutes of the session), the delegates referred the matter to the General Conference Committee and it died there. No one brought it to the General Conference delegates again until 1990 (Indianapolis GC session) and 1995 (Utrecht, at the request of the North American Division).

### Why They Said “No”

Why did the General Conference in 1881 turn away from women's ordination? Was it because, in the words of some pro-ordination scholars, the delegates were not bold enough, or open-minded enough, or even prudent enough to act “with perfect propriety” to ordain women who were “serving as gospel ministers”? This suggestion is another one of the pro-ordination speculative interpretations that is firmly planted in thin air. How could the committee be asked to implement a supposed “approval” decision that never took place?

For an answer to why the 1881 delegates turned away from ordaining women, it is best to read the *published* theological position and practice of the leading Seventh-day Adventist pioneers (including EGW) on the subject—both before and after the 1881 session. We must, for example, look to see if the editorials by resident editors of our official papers *Review & Herald* and *Signs of the Times*—have any light to shed on the pioneers' view on the question of women serving in the headship roles of elder or pastor. (The resident editors were Uriah Smith, J. H. Waggoner, James White, J. N. Andrews).

When we do, we shall discover that, for them, because of God's “divine arrangement, even from the beginning,” women could not serve in the headship roles as husbands in their homes or as elders

or pastors in the church. To do so, according to our Adventist pioneers, would be to disregard and abuse God's divine arrangement.

### 1878 Editorial on Women's Ordination

Here's how J. H. Waggoner stated their position in an 1878 editorial in the *Signs of the Times*:

The divine arrangement, even from the beginning, is this, that the man is the head of the woman. Every relation is disregarded or abused in this lawless age. But the Scriptures always maintain this order in the family relation. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. Eph. 5:23. Man is entitled to certain privileges which are not given to woman; and he is subjected to some duties and burdens from which the woman is exempt. A woman may pray, prophesy, exhort, and comfort the church, but *she cannot occupy the position of a pastor or a ruling elder*. This would be looked upon as usurping authority over the man, which is here [1 Tim 2:12] prohibited (Editorial (J. H. Waggoner), *The Signs of the Times*, December 19, 1878, p. 320; emphasis mine).

The important point to note is that our studious Seventh-day Adventist pioneers understood that the issue of women's ordination was a theological issue, not a cultural one. They understood that there are gender role-distinctions in both the home and the church. Thus, despite the many roles women can play in the church, "a woman...*cannot occupy the position of a pastor or a ruling elder.*"

This was their stated position in 1878, four years *before* the 1881 GC session that rejected the proposal to ordain women. The reason they rejected women's ordination was based on what the pioneers believed to be a clear biblical teaching on role-distinctions in both the home and the church (what theologians call the spiritual "headship" principle). In other words, having concluded that ordaining women as elders or pastors is theological, not cultural, it was not surprising that they REJECTED women's ordination when the item was brought to the 1881 GC session.

This *theological* basis of the Adventist pioneers' position on women's ordination—namely, God's divine arrangement of gender role-differentiation at Creation—was once again articulated a few years later, in 1895.

### 1895 Answer To Question

Fourteen (14) years after the 1881 GC session that rejected women's ordination (and 18 years after the editorial of 1878 that clearly offers the theological basis against women's ordination), a reader of *Signs of the Times* (our official denominational magazine) asked the following question of the editor, Milton Wilcox:

*“Should women be elected to offices of the church when there are not enough brethren?”*

Here's the editor's response:

“If by this is meant the office of elder, we should say at once, No. But there are offices in the church which women can fill acceptably, and oftentimes there are found sisters in the church who are better qualified for this than brethren, such offices, for instance as church clerk, treasurer, librarian of the tract society, etc., as well as the office of deaconess, assisting the deacons in looking after the poor, and in doing such other duties as would naturally fall to their lot. The qualifications for church elder are set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:7-9. We do not believe that it is in God's plan to give to women the ordained offices of the church. By this we do not mean to depreciate their labors, service, or devotion. The sphere of woman is equal to that of man. She was made a help meet, or fit, for man, but that does not mean that her sphere [or role] is identical to that of man's. The interests of the church and the world generally would be better served if the distinctions given in God's word were regarded.” (*Signs of the Times*, “Questions & Answer #176: Who Should Be Church Officers?” January 24, 1895 [Resident editor: Milton C. Wilcox].)

Again, observe that for our pioneers, the women's ordination issue was a *theological* issue—not a cultural one to be settled by culture or personal opinion. The reason why the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers rejected women's ordination is *not a question of inequality or inability*. They believed in the equality and ability of men and women. Here's a summary of their position:

1. Women are equal with men and are capable (“oftentimes there are found sisters in the church who are better qualified for this than brethren”). And they can perform a wide variety of roles in the church (e.g., “church clerk, treasurer, librarian of the tract society, etc., as well as the office of deaconess, assisting the deacons in looking after the poor”). In other words they believed that women had been called to ministry—the soul-winning ministry of the church.

2. Women have different roles. Though women are equal to men, they have different roles. Within the equality and complementarity of men and women (“she was made a help meet, or fit, for man”), there are gender role-distinctions between them. The equality of women with men “does not mean that her sphere [or role] is identical to that of man’s.”

3. Women cannot be ordained as elders/pastors. They stated: “We do not believe that it is in God’s plan to give to women the ordained offices of the church.”

4. The pioneers asserted that upholding the biblical teaching is the best way to serve the interest of *both* the church and its witness to the world: “The interests of the church and the world generally would be better served if the distinctions given in God’s word were regarded.”

It was this *theological* understanding that governed how women—including E.G. White—served in ministry during the days of the pioneers. The Adventist women of the past typically understood that while they had been called to do the work of soul-winning, and while it was biblically legitimate for them to preach, teach, counsel, minister to the needy, do missionary work, serve as Bible workers,

etc., the Scriptures prohibited them from exercising the headship responsibility of elder or pastor.

These dedicated Adventist women did not view their non-ordination as elders or pastors to be a quenching of their spiritual gifts or as an arbitrary restriction on the countless functions they could perform in gospel ministry. As they labored faithfully within the biblical guidelines of what is appropriate for men and women, the dedicated women of old discovered joy in God's ideal for complementary male-female roles in the church.

Though no woman served as elder or pastor, they were actively engaged in ministry and several of them were given *licenses* to do their work.

Because of the misleading and creative re-interpretations in certain quarters of the church, it is important to explain the difference between ministerial *licenses* and ministerial *credentials*. The “licenses” were given to all full-time workers (male and female, without regard to ordination) and the “credentials” were only given to those ordained as pastors.

### **Women Issued Ministerial Licenses, Not Ministerial Credentials**

In the days of our Adventist pioneers, women were actively involved in the soul-winning ministry of the church. They preached, taught, conducted evangelistic outreach activities, etc. For this reason they were issued with ministerial *licenses* (NOT *credentials*) that recognized their legitimate roles in the church. However, none of them was ever ordained. And because none of them was ever ordained, none was issued with a ministerial *credential*, which was reserved solely for those who were ordained ministers of the gospel.<sup>23</sup>

Regrettably, sometimes advocates of women's ordination confuse the two and mislead readers into thinking that there were several women pastors (or leaders). But there is a difference between ministerial *licenses* (which was for all workers—both male and female—actively involved in the soul-winning ministry of the church,

but not ordained) and ministerial *credentials* (which was exclusively reserved for the gospel ministers who had been ordained.).

To leave no doubt in anyone's minds, in March 5, 1899, the distinction between the two has been clarified by the chair of the General Conference ministerial credentials and licenses committee:

“Ministerial credentials are granted to ordained ministers in good standing, and engaged in active labor. Ministerial licenses are granted to licentiates—those who are engaged in preaching, but who have not yet been ordained to the gospel ministry.” (March 5, 1899 *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 147.50)

Indeed, we have yet to see any of our faithful and dedicated women in the past referred to as ministers in the writings of Mrs. White or the other pioneers. There is, therefore, no valid justification for some contemporary writers to suggest or to create the impression that women listed as “licentiates” or even occasionally as “licensed ministers” performed the functions of ordained ministers or were generally thought of as “woman ministers.” Nor does the history of those days support the idea that women today seeking to do full-time work in gospel ministry must be ordained as elders or pastors. The facts from the “historical heritage of the Seventh-day Adventist Church” do not support such a conclusion.

**Summary:** In short, in the days of Ellen G. White, there is no record of any of the following:

1. No record of any woman, other than EGW, that carried ministerial credentials.
2. No record of any woman being ordained as church pastor.
3. No record of E.G. White or any woman performing ministerial functions such as baptism, Lord's supper, organizing churches, and performing marriages.
4. No record of women who were pastors of local churches or districts.

5. No record of women who served in the local church in the office of elder.

The reason they did not do any of these was not cultural, but theological. It was not because women at that time were not equal to men or incapable. They were. It was simply because of God's arrangement from creation, assigning different roles to men and women. *Gender role-differentiation, within the partnership of male-female equality, was the reason the pioneers rejected women's ordination at the 1881 GC session:*

1878: "The divine arrangement, even from the beginning, is this, that the man is the head of the woman. Every relation is disregarded or abused in this lawless age"

1878: "A woman may pray, prophesy, exhort, and comfort the church, but *she cannot occupy the position of a pastor or a ruling elder*. This would be looked upon as usurping authority over the man, which is here [1 Timothy 2:12] prohibited."

1895: "The interests of the church and the world generally would be better served if the [gender-role] distinctions given in God's word were regarded."

Thus, the claim or implication by some latter-day advocates of women's ordination about the 1881 GC session action and the reason behind it is clearly wrong. Instead of recycling misinformation, half-truths, and errors, we must honestly and accurately state the facts regarding the position and practice of our pioneers on women's ordination. Having done so, we may then be at liberty to: (1) debate the rightness or wrongness of their action or (2) decide either to follow their theological understanding and practice or chart our own course. It is irresponsible, however, to attempt to inject our biases and self-interests into a historical fact or reinterpret it in order to push our ideological agenda.

Even if there is no intent on the part of pro-ordination authors to mislead, neither the church nor her Lord are well served by "scholarly research" and authoritative pronouncements by leaders that distort the history it purports to tell.

Now that we know that the delegates at the 1881 GC session (Battle Creek) rejected a recommendation to ordain women, we shall turn to two *recent* GC sessions—Indianapolis (1990) and Utrecht (1995). We shall briefly look at these before considering the issue that will come up at the San Antonio (2015) GC session.

### Endnotes

- 17 Compared to a local church situation, a GC at session is like a church at business meeting; and an “Annual Council” like a church board meeting). Should the “Annual Council” take a decision of major importance (e.g., something dealing with doctrinal issues), it must submit its decision to be voted upon or rejected at a GC in session. This is because Annual Councils can be easily manipulated (as was the case in 1975 and 1984, when church leaders at Annual Councils took a biblically compromising decision to ordain women as elders).
- 18 *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:260, 261; this and similar statements can be found in Last Day Events, pp. 55, 56.
- 19 *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 164; also in Last Day Events, p. 56. For further reading, see George E. Rice, “The Church: Voice of God?” *Ministry*, December 1987, pp. 4-6, available at the Ellen G. White Estate: <http://drc.whiteestate.org/files/4483.pdf>).
- 20 Once a “resolution” was presented, it would be debated from the floor, after which it could either be voted on (“Approved” or “Rejected”) or handled in some other way appropriate to parliamentary procedure. For example, (a) sometimes a motion was made and passed that the resolution (the issue being discussed) be “tabled,” which meant that the members would stop deliberating on it then and take it up at a later time; (b) the delegates could vote to “refer to committee,” which meant that they would not take the matter up again until the designated committee had considered it and returned it with a recommendation, after which it could be debated again and a decision reached on it (a process illustrated by another resolution appearing on the same page of minutes); (c) in some cases, referral to committee (then and today) is a polite way of killing a motion—handing it off to another group that is not expected to do anything with it.
- 21 Minutes of the 1881 General Conference Session, 197 GCS 63-88, published in *The Review and Herald*, vol. 58, no. 25 (Dec. 20, 1881), p. 392.

- 22 On pages 259-260 of *Must We Be Silent?* I offer the following explanation about the facts regarding the 1881 resolution:
- (1) An item was brought to the floor proposing that women be ordained.
  - (2) After discussion, the resolution was not “approved,” as was almost every other resolution on that page, but was “referred to the General Conference Committee,” who never sent it back to that session or to any subsequent General Conference session.
  - (3) In order for an item to be “referred to [any] committee,” those present at the session had to vote in favor of referring it to committee. Referral does not happen just because one person calls for it.
  - (4) The fact that the “resolution” (i.e., the proposal brought to the floor) was “referred to the General Conference Committee” means that the 1881 General Conference delegates *did not accept* the women’s ordination proposal.
  - (5) Therefore, contrary to some widely held assertions, the 1881 General Conference session actually *declined* to approve the proposal to ordain women! For whatever their reasons (we are not told in the minutes of the session), the delegates referred the matter to the General Conference Committee and let it die there. No one brought it to the General Conference delegates again until 1990 (North American Division request at Indianapolis) and 1995 (North American Division request at Utrecht).
  - (6) The minutes of the meeting, published in the *Review and Herald*, reveal that prior to the matter being “referred to committee,” it was discussed by at least eight of the delegates. After that discussion came the decision to refer to committee. Thus, contrary to some pro-ordination scholars, the “resolution” *was* entertained on the floor. And having discussed it, the delegates voted that it be “referred to the General Conference Committee.”
- 23 In early Adventist records, full-time workers carrying ordained ministers’ *credentials* were listed as “Ministers,” while the term “Licentiates” was used for unordained workers (men and some women) with ministerial *licenses*. Not until 1942 would the *Yearbook* of the church employ the terms “Ordained Ministers” and “Licensed Ministers” for these two categories of church workers. Yet, both the early and later distinctions between the two groups of workers ensured that unordained laborers in the soul-winning ministry would not be confused with ordained ministers.



# Chapter 4

## In the Days of Our Lives

*(Our Current Position: Will It Stand?)*

*“It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it”*

—Joseph Joubert

**A**s mentioned earlier, there have been three General Conference session actions on women’s ordination. In the days of the pioneers, the 1881 GC session rejected it. Similarly at the 1990 and 1995 GC sessions, delegates voted against women’s ordination. At the 2015 General Conference session in San Antonio, Texas, a fourth attempt would be made to ordain women.

Before looking at the proposition that will be brought before the delegates, it’s important to briefly summarize the recent GC session action—in Indianapolis (1990) and Utrecht, Netherlands (1995).

### Recent GC Session Actions

Regardless of one’s position on women’s ordination, this one fact is incontrovertible: Ordaining women as elders or pastors is new light which the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist church is being urged to embrace. Until recently, Adventists have been unanimous in their view that no precedent for the practice of ordaining women can be found in Scripture, nor in the writings of Ellen G. White and the early Seventh-day Adventist church.

By the 1970s, however, this established position began to be reversed in favor of ordaining women as elders and pastors.

This new trend was created by the converging interests of:

- feminism,
- liberalism,

- North American Division (NAD) church leaders' desire to enjoy United States tax law benefits to ministers,<sup>24</sup>
- questionable church policy revisions and *Church Manual* alterations allowing women to serve as elders,
- calculated attempts by some influential North American churches unilaterally to ordain women as pastors,
- the relative silence of leadership to this defiance of two General Conference session votes against women's ordination,
- a well-orchestrated strategy by influential thought leaders and pro-ordination groups to domesticate the practice in the church,
- a determined effort by some church scholars to reinterpret the Bible and early Adventist history to justify the practice, and
- ignorance, indifference, or silence on the part of church members on the issues at stake.

Initially, the campaign to overthrow the long-standing biblical position of the Seventh-day Adventist church was spearheaded by a relatively few, but influential, liberal and feminist thought leaders within the church. But today, as a result of the converging interests identified above, and as a result of a wide range of arguments being employed, an increasing number of church members are not sure what the real issues are in the debate over women's ordination, nor about the biblical correctness of the practice.

But despite the aggressive campaign, proponents have been unable to convince the world church of the biblical soundness of their arguments to ordain women as elders or pastors. Thus, on the two *recent* occasions that the issue has come up at General Conference sessions (Indianapolis, 1990, and Utrecht, 1995), the overwhelming majority of the Church worldwide voted "No" to requests to ordain women.

We shall briefly summarize the two recent GC session actions before we focus on the upcoming 2015 proposal.

### **1990 GC Session (Indianapolis) Action on Women's Ordination**

*Motion:* The recommendation “NOT to approve ordination of women to the gospel ministry” came from the Role of Women Commission, through the 1989 Annual Council of Church leaders.

*Vote:* In favor of the recommendation: 1,173;  
In opposition to the recommendation: 377

*Summary:* By a margin of 75% to 25%, the session voted not to ordain women as pastors.<sup>25</sup>

### **1995 GC Session (Utrecht) Action on Women's Ordination**

*Motion:* The recommendation to “vest each division the right to authorize the ordination of individuals within its territory” came from the North American Division, through the 1994 Annual Council.

*Vote:* In favor of the recommendation: 673;  
In opposition to the recommendation: 1,481.

*Summary:* In other words, 66% voted against women's ordination while some 34% voted for it.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, despite the strong campaign by some influential individuals and pressure groups, officially the Seventh-day Adventist church does not support ordaining women to the gospel ministry. Thus, on the two *recent* occasions that the matter of ordaining women came up for discussion, the worldwide Church resoundingly REJECTED it. They did so on the grounds that there was no

*theological* consensus to do so, as any such attempt to introduce the practice in our Bible-believing church will risk dividing the unity of the church.

But now, 20 years after the rejection of women's ordination, the worldwide Church will once again be invited to look at the issue. Advocates seem to believe that the more they put pressure on the church, the more chances the error that was twice rejected by the world body has to suddenly become truth!

It is this issue that will come up at the 2015 GC session—in about two months time. Let's now look at the motion that will be debated and voted upon.

### **The Action To Be Taken At the Next GC Session**

Last year, on October 14, 2014, on a vote of 243-44, the Seventh-day Adventist Annual Council decided to send the following question to the GC Session in San Antonio, Texas (July 2-11, 2015), for the delegates to decide:

*THEREFORE, The General Conference Executive Committee requests delegates in their sacred responsibility to God at the 2015 General Conference Session to respond to the following question:*

*After your prayerful study on ordination from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the reports of the study commissions, and;*

*After your careful consideration of what is best for the Church and the fulfillment of its mission,*

*Is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No.*

### A Sacred Responsibility

Observe carefully the duty enjoined upon the delegates and what is at stake in the issue to be settled at the 2015 GC session:

1. The delegates are to recognize that their vote is “*their sacred responsibility to God.*”

- Not a responsibility to any nation, political party or ideology; not a responsibility to any church leader or Administrator;
- Not a responsibility to any “Adventist Elder Statesman”—whether a retired or active Adventist leader;
- Not a responsibility to any individual—whether or not their ministries have been on a local scale or on a “global scale, with impact on the church throughout the world.”

Instead, the delegates are to recognize that it is their “sacred obligation to God.” Loyalty is not to some church politician or any other human being, but to God—to Christ, the Church’s legitimate Head. But in order for delegates to faithfully discharge their sacred obligation, it behooves them to know the mind of God—*as clearly revealed in His Word*, otherwise they risk God’s displeasure or forfeit His full blessings.

2. The decision at the GC session will assume that the delegates had made effort to do a “prayerful study of the ordination question *“from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the reports of the study commissions.”* Of the three sources of authorities listed, it must be emphasized that

- Since the SDA Fundamental Belief #1 makes the holy Scriptures the sole-authoritative norm for our beliefs and practices, the vote at GC session assumes that we shall let the Bible alone be our standard;
- Since the SDA Fundamental Belief #18 affirms the Spirit of Prophecy as a continued guide of God’s will, the vote should assume that whatever is decided will not conflict with the writings of EGW.

- Since the SDA Fundamental Belief #12 affirms the Church as the body of Christ, the vote assumes that the delegates have familiarized themselves with “the reports of the study commissions,” the different bodies selected to present their findings to the world body.

3. Finally, the motion to be made at the forthcoming GC assumes that the delegates’ decision will not in anyway undermine the identity and witness of the church. Rather, the decision must be what is “*best for the Church and the fulfillment of its mission.*”

- Observe that it is “the Church” (capital “C”), not “the church” (small “c”) in any local area of the world church.
- The decision must be what is in the best interest of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church to accomplish its reason for existence—“its mission” of proclaiming the Three Angels’ Messages (Revelation 14:6-16).

It is on the basis of the above considerations that members will be asked:

*Is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No.*

Again, observe clearly that the primary basis of the motion to be presented to the delegate is *theological* (it must have the support of Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy), and the secondary reason is pragmatic (what is best for the Church to fulfill its mission).

### **Why We Must Say “No”**

Perceptive readers would immediately recognize that a Yes vote is illogical, meaningless, and utterly ridiculous. For it allows some division executive committees to go ahead with what a worldwide majority views as a violation of biblical and Spirit of Prophecy teaching. This would essentially be voting to endorse the practice of error in some regions of the church, a situation that would undermine the very mission of the church to proclaim truth. In effect,

a Yes vote is contrary to “what is best for the Church and the fulfillment of its mission.”

Let me state it differently: According to the wording of the motion, the decision confronting the delegates should be based on Scripture and the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy—as it ought to be. Never before in Seventh-day Adventist history, has a Biblical issue been settled on a regional basis. To attempt to do so now, when unity and cohesion of the body of Christ is more crucial, is a No.

Secondly, the motion before the delegates addresses only “Division executive committees” as the body to consider the appropriateness of such ordinations in their territories. The truth is, in our Church it is *Union* committees, not Division committees, that actually do the ordaining. And presently, it is at Union committees that the unauthorized, illegal ordinations during the past several years have occurred.

I don’t want to be cynical. But having been around for a while, and knowing how folks can be elastic with words, the current wording of the 2015 motion (referring to Division committees, instead of “Union” committees) will allow a loop hole for pro-ordination campaigners who seem to be intent on having their own way—under any pretext. Why should the world church leave room for doubt? This fact alone (not being explicit about the “Union”—the name of the entity that does the ordination) requires a No vote—if rebellious Divisions are not to argue in the future (even after a No vote) that their action is in harmony with the letter of the 2015 vote.

Also, in the Seventh-day Adventist system of church governance (polity), ordination to the gospel ministry in one part of the world field is an ordination to the entire worldwide church. An ordained minister in one part of the world can go and serve in another part. Therefore, if we allow one territory of the worldwide church to ordain women, it wouldn’t be long before such ordination will begin to be imposed on other territories. In fact, the forced importation of this has happened in some regions, causing unnecessary and sharp divisions. How could our world Church make so fundamental a change unless it can find biblical support? How can it allow itself to be divided on something so essential to its unity and function?

Again, it should be noted that this very issue that delegates will be asked to vote on was settled by the worldwide Adventist body at Utrecht, 20 years ago. Here's the wording of the 1995 Utrecht motion, that:

“The General Conference vests in each division the right to authorize the ordination of individuals within its territory in harmony with established policies. In addition, where circumstances do not render it inadvisable, a division may authorize the ordination of qualified individuals without regard to gender. In divisions where the division executive committees take specific actions approving the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, women may be ordained to serve in those divisions.” (see *Adventist Review*, July 11, 1995, p. 30)

The above recommendation in 1995 was defeated by only 673 (in favor) and an overwhelming 1,481 (in opposition). Now let's compare the 1995 recommendation with the 2015 motion that is to be voted upon in San Antonio:

Is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry?  
Yes or No.

The two motions mean the same thing. So one may ask: Why is it being raised again? What has changed since Utrecht? Has truth changed? Does truth change with time? Or it is we who have changed?

As will be evident in a later chapter, during the intervening 20 years (1995-2015), there had been an orchestrated and carefully choreographed strategy by some church leaders to domesticate the practice of ordaining women. In bringing up the issue again at the 2015 GC session, the promoters seem to believe that their campaign has matured enough for their agenda to be embraced by the world church.<sup>27</sup>

Brother Emmanuel, you can see that the issues at stake in this seemingly-innocuous recommendation to the 2015 GC session

delegates require more than superficial attention on the part of every leader or lay delegate that will vote on the issue. Therefore as their “sacred responsibility to God” and in the “interest of what is best for the Church and its mission,” they dare not vote on this issue with any shred of factual ignorance or ideological arrogance.

You come to me as an African. The truth is that God expects every delegate—Africans and non-Africans—who knows what he or she has been called to do at the GC session to vote with full understanding of God’s clear guidelines, so as to be able to detect contemporary attempts to modify that in our Church.

You wanted to know where I stand on the issue of women’s ordination coming up at the GC session? It should be obvious by now—solely on the basis of the wording of the motion. In other words, since the motion clearly spells out that the basis upon which the decision is to be made must be the Word of God (as informed by the writings of Ellen G White), there can only be one logical decision to the “territorial ordinations”: A “No” vote.

But there is a fundamental reason why the vote should be No. It is the fact that there’s absolutely no iota of sound biblical or Spirit of Prophecy support for it. This is why the arguments for women’s ordination keep mutating and getting recycled in different garbs. To help shed some light on this fact, the next chapter will briefly summarize the evolving arguments that have been employed over the years in defense of women’s ordination, identifying the crucial theological and hermeneutical (or interpretational) issues in the campaign to ordain women as elders or pastors.

### Endnotes

- 24 For how the desire to enjoy US tax money got us into this theological crisis over women’s ordination, see C. Mervyn Maxwell’s “A Very Surprising (and Interesting) History,” in Mercedes H. Dyer, ed., *Prove All Things* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Adventists Affirm, 2000), pp. 225-230.
- 25 Here’s the actual 1990 GC session action as reported in *Adventist Review*, July 13, 1990, p. 15:

### **Ordination of Women to the Gospel Ministry**

*Voted*, To accept the following report and recommendations of the Role of Women Commission as recommended by the 1989 Annual Council:

“1. While the commission does not have a consensus as to whether or not the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen G. White explicitly advocate or deny the ordination of women to pastoral ministry, it concludes unanimously that these sources affirm a significant, wide-ranging, and continuing ministry for women, which is being expressed and will be evidenced in the varied and expanding gifts according to the infilling of the Holy Spirit

“2. Further, in view of the widespread lack of support for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry in the world church and in view of the possible risk of disunity, dissension, and diversion from the mission of the church, we do not approve ordination of women to the gospel ministry”

In favor of the recommendation: 1,173

In opposition to the recommendation: 377.

- 26 Here’s the actual wording of the 1995 Utrecht GC session action as stated in *Adventist Review*, July 11, 1995, p. 30:

### **North American Division Request—Ordination**

*Voted*, To refer to the 1995 General Conference Session the North American Division request that the General Conference in Session adopt provisions on ordination as outlined below:

“The General Conference vests in each division the right to authorize the ordination of individuals within its territory in harmony with established policies. In addition, where circumstances do not render it inadvisable, a division may authorize the ordination of qualified individuals without regard to gender. In divisions where the division executive committees take specific actions approving the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, women may be ordained to serve in those divisions.”

In favor of the recommendation: 673

In opposition to the recommendation: 1,481.

- 27 See chapter 9 of this book, where I detail the 12-point strategy that was put in place to ensure that women’s ordination will become the practice of the Church.

# Chapter 5

## The Evolving Arguments

*(The New Light on Women's Ordination)*

*“The historical-critical and higher critical methods of Biblical interpretation negatively affect a clear understanding of the themes and topics of the Bible. As we seek to know God’s will through a study of His Word, we must not place strange interpretations and employ interpretive gymnastics to draw out conclusions that are not evident from a plain reading of the word.”*

—Ted N.C. Wilson (2014 Annual Council)

**A**s we have shown, the 2015 GC session motion on women’s ordination is essentially the same as the 1995 motion that was soundly rejected at Utrecht. The question is: What has changed between 1995 and now? Are there new discoveries from the Bible and Spirit of prophecy to overthrow the 1995 decision?

Addressing this question calls for an understanding of the different types of pro-ordination arguments that have been employed in the years leading to 1995 and in the 20 years after, culminating in 2015.

This chapter of our book will show that since the 1970s, several arguments have been employed in the church in an attempt to overthrow the church’s longstanding position against ordaining women as elders or pastors. During this period, two major pro-ordination works have come to embody the most reasoned defense of women’s ordination: (i) *The Welcome Table* book and (ii) *Women in Ministry* book.

Phase I of the women’s ordination debate (symbolized by *The Welcome Table*) involved the use of a *wrong* methodology (namely the use of contemporary higher criticism). On the other hand, Phase II of the debate (embodied in *Women In Ministry*) is an example of an *inconsistent* use of a right methodology (namely, a flawed

attempt to use our long-held approach to Scripture as expressed in the “Methods of Bible Study” document).<sup>28</sup>

These two works—*The Welcome Table* and *Women in Ministry*—essentially summarize the two major hermeneutical (interpretative) phases of the women’s ordination debate. Much of the arguments used today are essentially the same or slight variations of what are contained in these two books. It is therefore important that we know what the “best” arguments are in favor of women’s ordination.<sup>29</sup>

### Phase I:

#### **Liberal-Egalitarian Feminist Arguments (1970s-1995)**

In 1995, fourteen (14) pro-ordination thought leaders produced the 408-page book, *The Welcome Table: Setting a Table for Ordained Women*.<sup>30</sup> Published shortly before the 1995 General Conference session in Utrecht, this volume was designed to convince the world church to approve the request by the North American Division to ordain women.

In this work, some of the authors argued that Bible passages (like Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:1-7; 1 Corinthians 11:3, 11-12; 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-14; 3:2; and Titus 1:6), which Adventists historically understood as having a bearing on male-female role relations in both the home and the church are the product of the Bible writers’ faulty logic or mistaken rabbinic interpretations in vogue in their day.

Reasoning along feminist and higher-critical lines, some of the writers maintained that the apostle Paul erred in his interpretation of Genesis 1-3 when he grounded his teaching of role distinctions between male and female in Creation and the Fall. They claimed that the apostle Paul’s statements were merely expressions of un-inspired personal opinions—opinions that reflect his culture and hence do not apply to us.

To these authors, Paul was “a man of his own time.” He occasionally glimpsed the ideal that Jesus established during His time

on earth; yet he never fully arrived at “the gospel ideal” of “full equality” or complete role interchangeability in both the home and the church.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the wide publicity given it, *The Welcome Table* (1995) did not gain much credibility among thoughtful Adventists because its conclusions were based on liberal/feminist and revisionist interpretation of the Bible and Adventist history. Thus, at the 1995 Utrecht General Conference session, the world church overwhelmingly voted to reject the request to ordain women.

### **Key Liberal-Egalitarian Feminist Arguments (Leading up to the 1995 GC Session)**

The arguments in this book, together with other pro-ordination arguments up till 1995 failed to convince the world church. These can be summarized as follows:

1. The Bible is “silent” or “neutral” on the women’s ordination issue (that is to say, the Bible is “neither for nor against” women’s ordination).
2. The lack of biblical precedence for women in spiritual leadership (as priests in the Old Testament, and as apostles and elders in the New Testament) and the presence of biblical prohibitions against women serving in those roles is due to the nature of the Bible as “culturally conditioned” (that is to say, the Bible is the product and a reflection of its unenlightened or patriarchal culture).
3. Ordaining women as elders or pastors is a “power” issue (this argument transformed the biblical teaching of male “headship” in both the home and in the church into a symbol of male oppression of women).
4. Ordaining women as elders or pastors in the church is a “cultural” issue (in the sense that it has to do with the “cultural readiness” of groups or regions of the world Adventist church).
5. Women’s ordination has to do with “equality,” “capability,” and “ability” of male and female (this argument transformed

the women's ordination issue into a "fairness," "justice" or civil-rights issue).

6. The issue of women's ordination is not theological but "ecclesiological" (by this argument proponents meant that the issue of women's ordination could not be settled by the Bible, but by administrative "policy" of church leaders).

7. The issue of women's ordination is an example of "unity in diversity" (this argument, which deals with pluralism in belief and practice, maintained that just as there is "diversity" in attitudes and practices within the church, in such areas as Sabbath observance, worship styles, dress, participation in one's tribe's/nation's war machinery, so should there also be "diversity" on the issue of women's ordination). Some argued that "diversity" or pluralism in theological belief and practice was evidence of maturity, strength and true unity, not of blind uniformity, or lockstep conformity.

8. The issue has to do with the "Spirit's leading" or "progressive revelation" (this argument seeks to make the women's ordination issue a question of "present truth" or "new light"). Not infrequently, the issues of polygamy, slavery, war, divorce and remarriage were cited as biblical examples to illustrate God's "accommodation" to sinful human situations in the Bible-writers' times—conditions which led God, under His "Spirit's leading," to later "correct" these prior revelations.

In this argument, biblical examples and texts that teach male-headship and female-supporting role, within the complementary relationship of spiritual equals in the home and church, were explained away as "culturally conditioned."

Despite the aggressive campaign, proponents were unable to convince the world church of the biblical soundness of their arguments to ordain women as elders or pastors. By 1995 three major books were published that exposed the biblical, hermeneutical, and theological flaws in the works of those promoting women's ordination. Against the pro-ordination works, these three books—*Women in the Church* (1987), *The Tip of An Iceberg* (1994); and *Searching*

*the Scriptures* (1995)—were instrumental in convincing the church of the soundness of its longstanding position on ordaining women as elders or pastors.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, on the two occasions that the issue of women's ordination came up at General Conference sessions (Indianapolis, 1990, and Utrecht, 1995), the overwhelming majority of the church voted "No" to requests to ordain women.

When the pro-ordination arguments (ably articulated by the 14 scholars in their 1995 book *The Welcome Table*) failed to overthrow the longstanding Seventh-day Adventist position against women's ordination, some pro-ordination church leaders in the North American urged pro-ordination scholars at Andrews University Theological Seminary to "do something about it [Utrecht's decision against women's ordination]." The result was the 1998 book *Women in Ministry*. This book has come to embody phase II of the women's ordination debate—the phase we're currently in.

### Phase II:

#### **Conservative-Egalitarian Feminist Arguments (After 1995 GC Session)**

If Phase I of the women's ordination debate culminated in 1995 with the publication of the liberal pro-ordination book *The Welcome Table*, Phase II of the debate was ushered in by a second major work which attempted to marry the liberal agenda with conservative approach to Scriptures.

The new pro-ordination book, *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (1998), was published by some 20 scholars at Andrews University.<sup>33</sup> Prepared by an Ad Hoc Committee from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, this new book was supposed to offer the much desired justification for the new light of women's ordination.<sup>34</sup>

The initial request for the *Women in Ministry* book came from "several union presidents of the North American Division" who, before and during the 1995 Utrecht General Conference session,

had urged the North American Division President that there be “no turning back” in their campaign for women’s ordination.<sup>35</sup> As the book’s editor later explained, the North American Division leadership, feeling “let down” at Utrecht, wanted the Seminary to “do something about it [the Utrecht vote].”

Because the authors of *Women in Ministry* concede that they “do not claim to speak for others, either at the seminary or in church administration,” and because they deliberately excluded dissenting scholarly views from a book published and financed by the Seminary, there have been justifiable criticisms that the Seminary’s name and resources were hijacked or misused by influential church leaders and scholars to promote the ideological agenda of women’s ordination. In response, promoters of *Women in Ministry* sometimes offer three major reasons for their action.

First, they argue that, until the publication of *Women in Ministry*, the church never had the chance of hearing the reasoned views of pro-ordination thought leaders—an assertion that is without factual merit.<sup>36</sup>

Second, in the opinion of other proponents, the 1990 General Conference session vote was not a categorical “No” to women’s ordination. Instead of a theological reason against the practice, proponents claim that the GC session simply cited pragmatic reasons—“the widespread lack of support” for it and “the possible risk of disunity, dissension, and diversion from the mission of the Church” that could result had the church gone ahead *at that time* in ordaining women as pastors. Again, there’s no merit in this argument (see note).<sup>37</sup>

Third, some other proponents of women’s ordination claim that the 1995 General Conference session addressed “only the procedural recommendation” of the North American Division, not “the theological appropriateness of women’s ordination.”<sup>38</sup>

The above justification for *Women in Ministry* is based on a creative reinterpretation of church actions on women’s ordination (see the previous three endnotes for a rebuttal). Yet, building upon these contestable arguments, advocates and promoters believe that

a pro-ordination book from the Seminary would now create the much-needed consensus for women's ordination.

Unlike the authors of *The Welcome Table*, many of whom seem to put their liberal and feminist commitments above Scripture, the authors of *Women in Ministry* consciously underscore the claim that their approach to the Bible is different. They disavow the feminist and higher critical method of their ideological cousins. Although the actual practice in the *Women in Ministry* book was inconsistent with the authors' claim, at least for the first time, a group of church scholars attempted to present *conservative* arguments to justify women's ordination.

### **Key Conservative-Egalitarian Feminist Arguments (After 1995 GC Session)**

The Seminary book presents new arguments and, in some instances articulates old arguments more carefully, to justify women's ordination. The following are the essential contours of the biblical and historical arguments advanced by *Women in Ministry*:<sup>39</sup>

- (1) Genesis 1-3 teaches that God did NOT institute headship and submission or male-female role distinctions *at creation*. Adam and Eve enjoyed "full equality" of "shared leadership" or "shared headship." Male headship and female submission were introduced by God *after the Fall*; even then, this was a non-ideal arrangement designed only for the governance of the home, not the church or covenant community.
- (2) New Testament teaching on headship and submission (Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:1-7) suggests that today Christians should aim at reaching the creation ideal of "total equality," understood to mean the obliteration of any gender-based role differentiation.
- (3) A careful study of the Bible reveals that there was actually at least one "woman priest" in the Old Testament. God Himself ordained Eve as a priest alongside Adam when, after the Fall, He dressed both as priests in the garden of Eden using animal

skins. Prophetesses Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah also exercised headship or leadership roles over men.

(4) The Bible also reveals that there were actually “women apostles and leaders” in the New Testament. Junia (Romans 16:7), for example, was an outstanding “female apostle,” and Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2) was a “female minister” with “ministerial credentials.”

(5) The New Testament teaching of “the priesthood of all believers” suggests that women may be ordained as elders or pastors.

(6) When correctly understood, biblical texts (like 1 Timothy 2:11ff., 1 Corinthians 14:34ff., etc.) which seem to preclude women from headship responsibilities in the home as husbands and fathers, and in the church as elders or pastors are temporary restrictions that applied only to specific situations during New Testament times.

(7) Careful study of early Seventh-day Adventist history reveals that women actually served as pastors in those days and were issued ministerial certificates. Ellen G. White apparently endorsed the call of such women to the gospel ministry.

(8) The 1881 General Conference session voted to ordain women. This vote, however, was apparently ignored or killed by the all-male General Conference Committee (comprised of George I. Butler, Stephen Haskell, and Uriah Smith).

(9) A landmark statement in 1895 by Ellen G. White called for ordaining women to the gospel ministry. This statement could have been spurred by the male brethren who were reluctant to implement the alleged 1881 General Conference decision.

(10) Ellen G. White was herself ordained and was issued ministerial credentials.

As I have shown elsewhere, the above assertions are based on speculative and questionable reinterpretations of Scripture as well as misleading and erroneous claims regarding Adventist history.<sup>40</sup> Yet on the basis of such “biblical, theological, and historical”

evidence, *Women in Ministry* seeks to convince readers of the “new light” of ordaining women *as elders or pastors*.

But there is also a moral-ethical argument. Emphasizing the ethical necessity of ordaining women as elders or pastors, some of the *Women in Ministry* authors argue that “it is morally reprehensible to hold back from women the one thing that formally recognizes their work within the church.” “It is imperative” that the church therefore acts “with justice, with mercy, and with courage on behalf of its women.” The failure of the church to act ethically, or a delay on its part to do so, will compel “the forces of history” (such as the churches in North America which unilaterally engaged in “congregational ordinations”) to drag the church along.

Moreover, we are told, unless the new light of women’s ordination is implemented, the witness of the church will not only be discredited in countries where it is wrong to “discriminate” against women, but it will make God “look bad.” Thus, the church’s rejection of women’s ordination will be an affront to the character of God, even as slavery was in the nineteenth century.

If the reader is not yet convinced by *Women in Ministry*’s biblical, theological, historical, and moral or ethical arguments, there is one final argument: We must listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit as He calls upon us today to change our patterns of ministry in response to the pragmatic needs of a growing church. Writes the editor in her summation chapter:

“If circumcision, based on divine [Old Testament] mandate, could be changed [by the apostles, elders, and believers, together with the Holy Spirit, at the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15], how much more could patterns of ministry [ordaining women as elders and pastors], which lack a clear ‘Thus says the Lord,’ be modified to suit the needs of a growing church?”<sup>40</sup>

Today, *Women in Ministry* has become the basis for some to see the campaign for women’s ordination as an issue of the “individual’s moral conscience” (this argument, which is another way of saying “I’ll have my own way, regardless of what others think,” offers

a *moral* basis for advocates of women's ordination to go against the decision of the world church on the matter).

The one-sided Seminary book is also the reason why some view the question of ordaining women as a “moral imperative” (in the sense that it is “immoral” for the worldwide church to refuse to ordain women as pastors). This argument offers the *ethical* arguments to silence any objection to the practice and coerce or persecute anyone who objects to the practice).

*Women in Ministry* is a calculated attempt by well-meaning church scholars to provide a much-desired biblical, historical, and ethical justification for ordaining women as elders and pastors. It is a key component to the well-orchestrated campaign to domesticate the practice.<sup>40</sup> But as some other church scholars have argued in their rebuttal volume, *Prove All Things: A Response to 'Women in Ministry,'* the Seminary book suffers from some serious shortcomings.<sup>42</sup>

Indeed, in my own *Must We Be Silent* analysis and evaluation of the pro-ordination work by the Andrews University Seminary scholars, their book *Women in Ministry* is based on: (1) ambiguity and vagueness, (2) strawman arguments, (3) substantial leaps of logic, (4) arguments from silence, (5) speculative interpretations (6) questionable re-interpretations of the Bible, (7) distorted biblical reasoning, (8) misleading and erroneous claims regarding Adventist history, (9) a seriously flawed concept of “moral imperative,” and (10) a fanciful view of the Holy Spirit's leading.<sup>43</sup>

### **Observations from the Evolving Arguments for Women's Ordination**

Perceptive observers of the Adventist theological landscape will discover that, during the past four or more decades, the arguments for women's ordination have evolved—some overlapping, and others contradictory. In recent times there have been a 180-degree change in some of the arguments that had in the past been advanced in favor of women's ordination.

## The Evolving Arguments

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For example, during the initial phase of the church debate, proponents of the practice argued that the Bible was either “silent” or “neither for nor against.” But now, since women’s ordination is believed to be a “moral imperative,” it means the Bible is *for* women’s ordination! The Bible is no longer to be seen as “neutral” on the issue of women’s ordination; Scripture is now decidedly for it!

Also, proponents in the past admitted that there was no biblical precedence for women serving in the roles of spiritual leadership as priests, apostles, and elders in Bible times. But now, under the “Spirit’s leading” (or His work of “progressive revelation”), advocates are now preaching the “new light” that there were in fact women priests, women apostles, and women elders in the Bible!

Furthermore, because it was originally believed that the Bible was “neither for nor against” women’s ordination, the decision was to be determined by each “culture” according to the “cultural readiness” of the respective divisions. In other words women’s ordination was to be settled by administrative “policy,” and the decision was not to be binding on all. But now, since women’s ordination is believed to be a “moral imperative,” it would seem to follow that, sooner or later, the practice would be urged as binding upon all, with moves to encourage it in all areas of the world church.

In view of the orchestrated attempt to impose women’s ordination on the Seventh-day Adventist church, and in view of the confusing, sometimes plausible-sounding arguments being advanced for women’s ordination, it is important that we identify the crucial issues that are at stake and find out what the Bible has to say on the issue.

As I’ve argued elsewhere, Phase I of the women’s ordination debate (symbolized by *The Welcome Table*) involved the use of a *wrong* methodology (namely the use of contemporary higher criticism). On the other hand, Phase II of the debate (embodied in *Women In Ministry*) is an example of an *inconsistent* use of a right methodology (namely, a flawed attempt to use the longstanding Adventist approach to Scripture).<sup>44</sup>

In both cases, the pro-ordination scholars resort to convoluted arguments and questionable and fanciful interpretations of Scripture to justify the ideology of women's ordination. Ellen G. White was correct when she said:

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

### Endnotes

- 28 At the 1986 Annual Council meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, church leaders representing all the world fields approved the report of the General Conference's "Methods of Bible Study Committee (GCC-A). This carefully worded document was published in the *Adventist Review* (January 22, 1987), pages 18-20. Generally, all Bible-believing conservatives embrace this report as reflective of the principles of interpretation that have been historically accepted by Seventh-day Adventists. For a discussion of how Adventist scholars have related to this document, see Chapter 4 of *Receiving the Word*. The entire text of the "Methods of Bible Study" as was approved at Rio is also reproduced as Appendix C of *Receiving the Word*.
- 29 Because of space limitations, I will keep endnote documentations to the minimum. However those interested can refer to the extensive note references I have provided in chapter 11 of *Must We Be Silent* (pp. 161-189), chapter 1 of *Prove All Things* (pp. 18-44), and in my online article "Evolving Arguments for Women's Ordination," available at: <http://www.drpipim.org/womens-ordination-contemporaryissues-46/42-1-does-the-bible-support-ordaining-women-as-elders-or-pastors-part-1.html>.
- 30 *The Welcome Table: Setting A Place for Ordained Women*, edited by Patricia A. Habada and Rebecca Frost Brillhart (Langley Park, Md.: TEAMPress, 1995). The "fourteen prominent SDA historians, theologians, and professionals" who contributed essays to the book are: Bert Haloviak, Kit Watts, Raymond F. Cottrell, Donna Jeane Haerich, David R. Larson, Fritz Guy, Edwin Zackrison, Halcyon Westphal Wilson, Sheryll Prinz-McMillan, Joyce Hanscom Lorntz, V. Norskov Olsen, Ralph Neall, Ginger Hanks Harwood, and Iris M. Yob.

## The Evolving Arguments

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- 31 For a brief evaluation of the pro-ordination arguments by some of the authors in *The Welcome Table*, see my *Receiving the Word*, chapter 5, part 2, 126-129.
- 32 Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Biblical Perspectives, 1987); C. Raymond Holmes, *The Tip of An Iceberg: Biblical Authority, Biblical Interpretation, and the Ordination of Women in Ministry* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventists Affirm and Wakefield, Mich.: Pointer Publications, 1994); Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Searching the Scriptures: Women's Ordination and the Call to Biblical Fidelity* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventists Affirm, 1995). At the time they published their works, Samuele Bacchiocchi was a professor of church history and theology in the religion department of Andrews University; C. Raymond Holmes was the director of the Doctor of Ministry Program and professor of Worship and Preaching at the Theological Seminary; and Samuel Koranteng-Pipim was a Ph.D. candidate in systematic theology at the Theological Seminary, having served there as a contract teacher in theology and ethics.
- 33 *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, edited by Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1998). The 20 scholars whose works are published in *Women in Ministry* are: Nancy Vyhmeister, Jo Ann Davidson, Richard Davidson, Walter Douglas, Jacques Doukhan, Roger Dudley, Jon Dybdahl, Denis Fortin, Robert Johnston, George Knight, Jerry Moon, Larry Richards, Russell Staples, Peter van Bemmelen, Randal Wisbey, Daniel Augsburg, Raoul Dederen, Keith Mattingly, Michael Bernoi, and Alicia Worley (the last two were MDiv. Students at the time the book were published). As far as I know, of the 20 scholars who contributed to the book, Jerry Moon is the only one on record to have changed his views since the publication of the pro-ordination work.
- 34 The generic phrase “women in ministry,” employed as a title for the book, can be misleading. For, the authors’ goal was not simply the ministry of women in the church (which has never been opposed by the Adventist church), but rather ordaining women as elders and pastors. For an insightful background into how this book came into being and its serious theological and historical defects, see *Must We Be Silent*, pp. 166-170.
- 35 See, for example, Alfred C. McClure, “NAD’s President Speaks on Women’s Ordination: Why Should Ordination be Gender Inclusive?” *Adventist Review* [North American Division edition], February 1995, 14-15; cf. Gary Patterson, “Let Divisions Decide When to Ordain Women,” *Spectrum* 24/2 (April 1995), 36-42. For responses to the above view, see the articles by Ethel R. Nelson, “‘No Turning Back’ on Ordination?” and C. Mervyn Maxwell, “Response to NAD President’s Request to Annual

Council” in *Adventists Affirm* 9/1 (Spring 1995): 42-46, 30-37, 67; cf. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Searching the Scriptures: Women’s Ordination and the Call to Biblical Fidelity* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventists Affirm, 1995), 9-14, 88-90.

- 36 For a rebuttal, see *Must We Be Silent*, pp. 186-189, note 38.
- 37 Observe, however, that the above pragmatic reasons—namely, “the widespread lack of support” for it and “the possible risk of disunity, dissension, and diversion from the mission of the Church”—were the secondary reasons stated at the 1990 General Conference session against ordaining women as pastors. Despite the contrary claims of proponents, the primary reason given by those opposing the practice of ordaining women as pastors was that it was unbiblical and out of harmony with the writings of Ellen G. White. Thus, in the opinion of those opposed to women’s ordination, to go ahead with a practice that lacked widespread *theological* support could result in “disunity, dissension, and diversion from the mission of the Church.” The following are the two recommendations from the “Role of Women Commission” that the 1989 Annual Council brought to the 1990 General Conference session: “1. While the Commission does not have a consensus as to whether or not the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen G. White explicitly advocate or deny the ordination of women to pastoral ministry, it concludes unanimously that these sources affirm a significant, wide ranging, and continuing ministry for women which is being expressed and will be evidenced in the varied and expanding gifts according to the infilling of the Holy Spirit. 2. Further, in view of the widespread lack of support for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry in the world Church and in view of the possible risk of disunity, dissension, and diversion from the mission of the Church, we do not approve ordination of women to the gospel ministry.” Notice that whereas the first reason is theological (lack of theological consensus) the second is pragmatic (lack of support and possible risks). By a vote of 1173 to 377, the world church voted against women’s ordination. (See *Adventist Review*, July 13, 1990, 15.)
- 38 In response to the so-called procedural argument, a respected North American church leader has correctly noted: “Though the issue had been presented as a policy matter, whether to allow divisions to decide for themselves about ordination, most delegates knew that they were really voting on the biblical legitimacy of women’s ordination. How could the world church make so fundamental a change unless it could find biblical support? How could it allow itself to be divided on something so essential to its unity and function? So as it had done five years earlier, the world church gave an emphatic No” (Jay Gallimore, “The Larger Issues,” in *Prove All Things*, 343).

## The Evolving Arguments

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- 39 Source references from *Women in Ministry* for each of the following points, are provided in my evaluation of the book in *Prove All Things*, pp. 179-218; 287-312; cf. *Must We Be Silent?* pp. 127-289.
- 40 See *Must We Be Silent?* pp. 127-289. See also my two articles “The Bible and the Ministry of Women” and “Early Adventists and the Ministry of Women,” available at the Adventists Affirm website ([www.AdventistsAffirm.org](http://www.AdventistsAffirm.org)), under the link “Women’s Ordination Frequently Asked Questions.
- 41 Vyhmeister, “Epilogue,” *Women in Ministry*, p. 436.
- 42 See chapter 9 of this book.
- 43 Mercedes H. Dyer (ed.) *Prove All Things: A Response to ‘Women in Ministry’*, (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2000).
- 44 *Must We Be Silent*, pp. 192-193. See also the different chapters in *Prove All Things: A Response to ‘Women in Ministry.’*
- 45 NOTE: On my apologetic website ([WWW.DRPIPIM.ORG](http://WWW.DRPIPIM.ORG)), under the “Women’s Ordination” link, I’ve taken up the continuation of the theological/hermeneutical history of women’s ordination during this current phase. In a 4-part series of articles titled “The Campaign for Women’s Ordination,” I’ve detailed the roles played by church leaders, scholars, and liberal & feminists groups in the campaign for women’s ordination. Click on this link: <http://drpipim.org/womens-ordination-contemporaryissues-46.html>.



# Chapter 6

## Clarifying the Issues

*(What the Issues Are & Are Not)*

*“If you do not ask the right questions, you do not get the right answers. A question asked in the right way often points to its own answer. Asking questions is the A-B-C of diagnosis. Only the inquiring mind solves problems.”*

—Edward Hodnett

**T**hroughout Adventist history, our women have given Bible studies, ministered to the poor, preached revivals and served as evangelists, teachers and literature evangelists. But, until recently, not a single woman was ever ordained as elder/pastor and received a ministerial credential (the lone exception being Ellen White who received an *honorary* ministerial credential but was *never* ordained<sup>46</sup>).

Besides our contemporary ambient cultures, the reason for the appeal to women’s ordination is the strategy of our friends in the pro-ordination camp to confuse people by making the ordination issue a matter of *ministry*, *equality* and *ability/capacity*. Then they portray those who are opposed to the ordination of women as pastors as simply closed-minded, prejudiced, and divisive. The strategies also include attempts (willful or ignorant) to misinterpret the Bible and revise Adventist history.

In response, in both my *Searching The Scriptures: The Call To Biblical Fidelity* (1995) and *Must We Be Silent: Issues Dividing Our Church* (2001), I have showed some of the misleading ways the pro-ordination arguments are often framed. Let me briefly state what the key issues are and are not, in this matter of women’s ordination:

### Equality of Women and Men

***What the Issue is Not: Equality of Being, Worth, or Status.***

The question of whether or not to ordain women as elders and pastors should not be confused with whether women and men are equal. Equality of being and worth (ontological equality) is a clear Biblical teaching, affirming that all human beings—male and female—have equal standing before God as created beings, as sinners in need of salvation through Christ, and as people called to the same destiny.<sup>47</sup>

Nowhere does the Bible relegate women to second-class status or make men superior and women inferior. To say otherwise is to misrepresent biblical teaching and affront the loving character of the God who created Eve to be Adam's "help meet for him," a partner "fitting" or "suitable" to him. Ellen White was unequivocal: "When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that in all things she should be his equal."<sup>48</sup>

Within this equality, just as gender differences between men and women indicate that they were created to complement one another, so also this complementary nature indicates a *functional* distinction between them. The issue of women's ordination is, therefore, *not* a question of whether women and men are equal. The Bible, re-echoed by the Spirit of Prophecy, has already settled that issue. Women and men are equal; neither is inferior to the other.

***What the Issue Is.*** The real issue in the debate is *whether the equality of male and female does away with functional differences*. While maintaining equality of being, has the Bible assigned a headship/leadership role to the man and a supportive role to the woman? If so, were these complementary roles established before or *after* the fall? Are these roles applicable only to the home, or are they also valid in the church? What Bible principles govern the male-female relationship?

### Women as Elders *but Not* Pastors?

**What the Issue is Not: Difference of Office.** The issue of women's ordination to the gospel ministry should not be confused with whether women may function as ordained elders but not as pastors. It is clear from the Bible that (1) those who are permitted to perform the oversight/leadership functions of the ministerial office are elders or pastors; and that (2) the New Testament makes no essential distinction between the two offices, even though today we divide some of the ministerial responsibilities between *elders* (presbyters) and *pastors* (overseers).<sup>49</sup>

**What the Issue Is.** Since the Bible makes no distinction between the offices of elder and pastor, it is scripturally inconsistent to ordain women as elders but not as pastors. Ordaining women as elders and pastors is either biblical or unbiblical. The key issue, therefore, is *whether the Bible anywhere permits women to exercise the leadership or headship roles of elders and pastors.*

(The implication should not be missed: If women can be ordained as local elders, it is equally valid for them to be ordained as pastors. But by the same token, if the practice of ordaining women as local elders is unbiblical, it is also unbiblical to ordain them as pastors.)

### Women in Ministry or Women's Ordination

It is frequently suggested by our pro-ordination friends that one of the central issues in the women's ordination conflict is whether women can be involved or participate in ministry. The argument runs something like this: "If you don't believe that women should be ordained as elders/pastors and receive a ministerial credential, then you don't believe that women should be involved in ministry."

But this is a fallacious argument, as the Adventist church has never in its history opposed "women in ministry." No matter how much the pro-ordination advocates wish us to think so, the conflict is *not*—and has never been—about whether women can or should be involved in *ministry*. Rather, the issue is about women serving in

the specific role of “elders” and/or “pastors”—and the biblical basis to do so.

Therefore don't be fooled by subtle ploys to equate “women in ministry” with “women's ordination.” The two are not the same, even though some of our friends try to couch their arguments in the garbs of “women in ministry.” Sadly in this era when sound biblical teaching is become a rarity this strategy can be hypnotic in those parts of the world where scarcity of Bible knowledge is now the order of the day.

***What the Issue is Not: God's Call for Women in Ministry.*** The issue of whether or not to ordain women as elders and pastors should not be confused with whether women can be in ministry. The Bible clearly teaches that women have been called to the work of ministry as surely as have men. In the Old Testament, women participated in the study and teaching of the law (Nehemiah 8:2; Proverbs 1:8; Deuteronomy 13:6-11), in offering prayers and vows to God (1 Samuel 1:10; Numbers 30:9; Genesis 25:22; 30:6, 22; 2 Kings 4:9-10, 20-37), in ministering “at the entrance to the tent of meeting” (1 Samuel 2:22), in singing at the worship of the temple service (Ezra 2:65), and in engaging in the prophetic ministry of exhortation and guidance (Exodus 15:20; 2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Chronicles 34:22-28; Judges 4:4-14). Of this latter group, especially prominent are Deborah, “a prophetess ... [who] was judging [NIV “leading”] Israel at that time” (Judges 4:4), and Huldah, the prophetess to whom Josiah the king and Hilki-ah the high priest looked for spiritual guidance (2 Kings 22).<sup>50</sup>

The New Testament portrays women fulfilling vital roles in ministry. Besides Mary and Martha, a number of other women, including Joanna and Susanna, supported Jesus with their own means (Luke 8:2-3). Tabitha ministered to the needy (Acts 9:36). Other women, including Lydia, Phoebe, Lois, and Eunice, distinguished themselves in fulfilling the mission of the church (Acts 16:14-15; 21:8-9; Romans 16:1-4, 12). Of these, many were Paul's co-workers in ministry. Priscilla apparently was well educated and an apt instructor in the new faith (Romans 16:3; Acts 18:26); Paul calls Phoebe “a servant of the church” and a “succourer [helper] of many, and of myself also” (Romans 16:1, 2; see note <sup>51</sup>); Mary, Tryphena,

Tryposa, and Persis all “worked very hard in the Lord” (Romans 16:6, 12); Euodia and Syntyche were women “who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel” (Phil 4:3 RSV); and Junia, who suffered imprisonment with Paul, received commendation as someone “of note among the apostles” (Romans 16:7).<sup>52</sup>

Ellen White strongly encouraged women in ministry. “There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry. In many respects *they would do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God*” (*Evangelism*, p.472). She states:

“The Lord has a work for women as well as for men. ... The Saviour will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of His countenance, and will give them *a power that exceeds that of men*. They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their labor is needed” (*ibid.*, pp. 464-465, emphasis added).

Seventh-day Adventist history and current practice illustrate the biblical truth that indeed women have a role in ministry. The issue of women’s ordination is, therefore, *not* a question of whether women can labor in the ministry. The Bible, emphasized by the Spirit of prophecy, has already settled that issue: women may labor in the gospel ministry.

***What the Issue Is.*** The real issue in the debate is *whether Scripture permits women in ministry to perform the oversight/leadership roles which ordained elders and pastors are called upon to exercise*. Does the Bible teach that women in ministry may be ordained as elders and pastors?

### The Concept of Ordination

Another ill-informed strategy to legitimize women’s ordination is the false claim that ordination is not a biblical concept, but a Catholic notion. This is extremely far from the truth and I refer you to *Searching the Scriptures*, pp. 21-23, and *Must We Be Silent*, pp. 130-133 to study for yourself the biblical case for ordination.

The strategy that is being used is misleading in the sense that it presents the thinking that to reject ordaining women *as elders/pastors* is to imply they cannot be ordained to some other roles. Again, this is not true.

As I have shown in my previous works, ordination or setting one apart by the laying on of hands, is the church's *recognition* and authoritative *commissioning* of individuals to perform certain functions on its behalf. When correctly understood, both men and women may be set apart by the laying on of hands to perform certain functions.

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. *They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands.* In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church" (Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 9, 1895, p. 434).

Though the above statement has often been taken out of context and misused to claim Ellen White's support for ordaining women as elders or pastors of the church,<sup>53</sup> it does illustrate the legitimacy of the church recognizing and commissioning chosen individuals through an act of consecration/dedication ("laying on of hands") to perform designated functions. Within the guidelines of Scripture, the church may do this for both men and women.

Thus, the issue in the debate is not about ordination *per se*. Rather it's about "ordination *to what role*?"

For example, both men and women can be ordained as teachers, doctors, deacons/deaconesses, evangelists, literature evangelists, accountants, etc. But the question remains whether of the many roles to which members can be ordained, can the church legitimately task women or anyone—male or female—to perform functions that are contrary to clear biblical directives?<sup>54</sup>

To restate my earlier point, the issue in the Adventist debate over women's ordination is not about ordination *per se*, but ordination *to what function*. Specifically, can the church commission (ordain) a person (e.g. a woman) to the headship/leadership office of husband or father (in the home) or elder or pastor (in the church)? The issue is not about women in ministry, but rather women in what kind of soul-winning ministry. The issue is not whether women *can perform* the headship responsibilities of husbands or elders/pastors, but rather whether the Bible *permits* them to do so.

### Cultural or Theological Issue?

I have challenged other fallacious notions that often plague the arguments of those pushing women's ordination. Hence, contrary to what we're often made to think,

- The issue of ordaining women as elders/pastors is not a cultural issue to be settled according to a person's prejudice or preference or the sociological structures existing in a particular region of the world;
- It is not an evolutionary issue of increased knowledge and changing norms.
- It's not an equal rights issue to be resolved through such measures as civil laws, lawsuits, or some type of affirmative action to ensure gender parity in the pastoral ministry, or to equalize some supposed power structure.
- The issue is not a financial matter to be dictated by a desire to enjoy United States tax law benefits to ministers or to be decided on the basis of economic might or threat of economic blackmail.
- It is not even a political issue to be settled by petition drives, public opinion polls, referenda, surveys, questionable church policy revisions, unilateral ordinations, or some carefully choreographed campaign-style strategies by some church administrators to legitimize women elders or women pastors in our churches, institutions, and publications.

Rather the issue of women's ordination is *theological*. Our Adventist pioneers and earlier generations of Adventists made that clear in their GC session votes (see chapters 3 and 4). And I have made that case in *Searching the Scriptures* (1995). As a theological issue, it can only be resolved legitimately on the basis of Scripture. Unfortunately, it is on this last point that our pro-ordination friends resort to the notion that “the Bible is neither for nor against” women's ordination.

### Is the Bible Silent—Neither For Nor Against?

But again, this argument is patently false. Let's remember that in establishing any doctrine and practice, we look for at least three things—three important tests to employ for any new light—which is what women's ordination is:

- 1) Are there clear biblical *instructions* to favor the new doctrine or practice we want to institute?
- 2) Are there clear biblical *examples* of the doctrine or practice?
- 3) Are some established biblical *teachings or principles* violated if we adopt the new teaching?

It is on the basis of these three test questions that we have rejected attempts by some Christians to legitimize Sunday as the biblical Sabbath, worshiping of the Virgin Mary, endorsing homosexual practices, believing that dead people immediately go to heaven or hell when they die, or that we can baptize folks by sprinkling, etc. None of these practices or beliefs can be approved because there are no clear biblical *instructions* or *examples* for them, nor can we embrace them because they conflict with other teachings in Scripture.

In much the same way, there is no clear *instruction* for women's ordination in Scripture. And there are no *examples* for the practice in Scriptures. (Contrary to some innovative claims by certain pro-ordination scholars, there were no women priests in the Old Testament, and no women apostles or elders in the New Testament.) Thus, to go ahead with the practice is to conflict with certain clear

biblical instructions in other areas (e.g., the spiritual headship of males in both the home and the church).

The point is, we shall have a hard time making a case for ordaining women as elders/pastors. On the contrary we can easily show from the Scriptures that the Bible is not silent on the issue. As we shall discover in the next chapter, the Bible has spoken clearly on the relation between the roles of men and women in both the home and the church. The question is whether or not we're willing to surrender our egalitarian feminist ideologies for the clear teachings of God's Word.

### Endnotes

- 46 Refer to *Must We Be Silent*, pages 261-266, where I have debunked the false claims by proponents that Mrs. White called for women's ordination and that she herself was ordained. The entire chapter is devoted to other "Misleading and Erroneous Claims Regarding Early Adventist History" (pages 251-270).
- 47 The scriptural evidence for this equality is that (1) both "male and female" were created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6); (2) both have been redeemed by Jesus Christ, so that "in Christ" there is neither "male nor female" (Galatians 3:28); and (3) both are "joint heirs of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7 RSV).
- 48 *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:484
- 49 For it is clear from the Bible that (1) those who are permitted to perform the oversight/leadership functions of the ministerial office are elders or pastors; and that (2) the New Testament makes no essential distinction between the two offices. The Greek terms for elder/presbyter (*presbuteros*) and overseer/bishop (*episkopos*) are used interchangeably in the New Testament (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Peter 5:1-3). The same qualifications are required of both of these offices (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Both perform the same work of shepherding or pastoring (*poimano*) the flock (Acts 20: 17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:12). The New Testament uses the English term "pastor" only once, in Ephesians 4:11. The same Greek word is translated "shepherd" elsewhere in the New Testament. As a shepherd, the pastor has the care and oversight of the flock. For the convenience of using our contemporary terms, in this study we have frequently used "pastor" as a substitute for "bishop" or "overseer." The *elders* are commissioned to stand as *overseers*,

functioning as *pastors/shepherds* to the flock. The book of 1 Peter brings all the terms together: pastor (shepherd), elder (presbyter), and bishop (overseer): “For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd (*poimen*, = pastor) and Bishop (*episkopos*, overseer) of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25). “The elders (*presbuteros*) which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder ... : Feed (*poimano*, to tend as a shepherd) the flock of God, taking the oversight (*episkopeo*) thereof. ... And when the chief Shepherd (*archipoimen*) shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:1-4). Thus we may conclude that since presbyters (elders) and bishops (overseers) are known by the same names, since they are required to possess the same qualifications, and since they do actually discharge the same oversight duties, the two terms refer to the same office of shepherding the flock.

- 50 Under the Old Testament theocracy, Israel was a nation governed by God and His law. In this system, the chosen leaders were prophets, priests, and judges/kings. Unlike the New Testament office of elder/pastor, the Old Testament leadership role of *prophet* (likewise *judge*) was not an elected office. God Himself chose and commissioned prophets (and judges) as His most authoritative mouthpiece; they were not elected by the people. Thus, in the Old Testament, kings (and judges) and priests were all subject to the authority of prophets. The leadership roles of Deborah and Huldah as prophets should not be confused with that of elders or pastors, who occupy the elected leadership office in the church. While prophets in both the Old and New Testaments were chosen and ordained by God Himself, elders and pastors are chosen and ordained by church members within the guidelines set by Scripture and are subject to the leadership authority of God’s chosen prophets.

In Seventh-day Adventist history, the closest parallel to the leadership of Deborah is Ellen G. White. Though she never claimed to be a leader of the church (*Testimonies for the Church*, 8:236-237) and was never ordained by the denomination, she did exercise leadership authority by virtue of her role as a messenger of the Lord. A number of women who worked for the church during the late 1800s and early 1900s were issued ministerial licenses. Ellen White was the only woman to be granted the credentials of an ordained minister (sometimes with the word “ordained” neatly struck out), though she was never ordained and did not perform the functions of an ordained minister. (See William Fagal’s discussion of the question, “Was Ellen White Ordained?” in his “Ellen White and the Role of Women in the Church,” available from the Ellen G. White Estate.)

- 51 Paul commends Phoebe as “our sister, which is a servant [*diakonos*] of the church which is at Cenchrea,” and he urges the church to “assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.” Although the term *diakonos* can refer to the office of a “deacon” (1 Timothy 3:8-13), the description of Phoebe

as a “servant” (KJV) or “deaconess” (RSV) of the church should not be confused with the office of “deacon.” In the New Testament the term diakonos, like the related terms diakonia and *diakoneo*, has both a broad and a narrow meaning. In its broad sense it conveys the idea of “ministry” or “service” carried out on behalf of the church; in this usage, anything a person does to advance the work of the church is a ministry, and the one who labors in this manner is a “minister” or “servant” (*diakonos*) of the Lord (Matthew 20:26; 23:11; Mark 9:35; 10:43; John 12:26; Romans 13:4; 15:8; 1 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 6:4; 11:23; Galatians 2:17; Ephesians 3:7; 6:21; Colossians 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7; 1 Timothy 4:6). In its narrow usage, however, *diakonos* refers to the office of a “deacon,” which among other things can only be occupied by one who is a “husband of one wife” (1 Timothy 3:8-13; Titus 1:5-9). Because Phoebe was a “sister” (Romans 16:1), she could not have served in the male office of a “deacon.” Thus, when Paul described her as “a servant [*diakonos*] of the church,” he was speaking of Phoebe’s valuable ministry to members of the church as well as to himself.

- 52 Paul described Andronicus and Junia as “my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, *who are of note among the apostles*, and who also were in Christ before me” (Romans 16:7). Although there is an ambiguity in the Greek construction “who are of note among the apostles” (KJV), or as the NIV has it, “They are outstanding among the apostles,” no New Testament evidence supports the idea that the woman Junia, mentioned here was an apostle, nor is there any New Testament evidence that the man Andronicus mentioned in the same text was an apostle. The most plausible and biblically consistent understanding is that both Andronicus and Junia were well known and appreciated by the apostles as Christian converts prior to Paul’s own conversion. (See the answer to question #38 in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, “An Overview of Central Concerns: Questions and Answers,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1991], pp. 79-81).
- 53 Evidence that this statement may not be applied to ordination of women as pastors or elders may be found within the passage itself. (1) This is a part-time ministry, not a calling to a lifework. “Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time. . . .” (2) The work is not that of a minister or a church officer. “In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister.” Evidently this work is not that of an elder or minister. (3) It was a ministry different from what we were already doing. The portion quoted here is followed immediately by, “This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor.” (4) It appears in an article entitled, “The Duty of the Minister and the People,” which called upon ministers to allow and encourage the church members to use their talents for the

Lord. The last sentence of the quoted paragraph reflects this thrust: “Place the burdens upon men and women of the church, that they may grow by reason of the exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness.” This is the only statement from Mrs. White addressing the laying on of hands for women. The statement and its context clearly indicate that these women were being dedicated to a specific lay ministry.

- 54 For more, refer to chapter 9 of *Must We Be Silent*, pp. 130-134.

# Chapter 7

## On Solid Ground

*(The Case for Gender-Role Differentiation)*

*“The Scriptures are plain upon the relations and rights of men and women”*

—Ellen G. White (1T 421)

*Alas, we prefer the adornments of pretty white lies to the simplicity of naked truth.”*

—Samuel Koranteng-Pipim

**B**rother Emmanuel, many have uncritically embraced women’s ordination because they have bought into egalitarian feminism’s campaign for “full equality,” by which they mean there should be no role-differences between male and female—whether in the home or in the church.

At the heart of the women’s ordination debate is whether or not Christians should continue to uphold the *Bible’s teaching of headship—a theological concept which means that within the loving relationship of male-female equality and complementarity, God calls upon men to exercise Christ-like leadership in both the home and the church, and that He holds them accountable if they refuse to shoulder those leadership responsibilities.*<sup>55</sup>

Those in favor of ordaining women deny this fundamental biblical teaching. They argue that since men and women are equal, there should be equality in all roles. There should be no gender role-distinctions; hence women can also be ordained to spiritual headship roles in both the home and the church.

Pro-ordination views are based on the widespread ideology called *egalitarianism*, which holds that full equality between men and women can be achieved by eliminating all distinctions among human beings—including role distinctions in the home and in the church.

According to the wording of the motion to be presented to delegates attending the next General Conference (GC) session in San Antonio, Texas, the decision on women's ordination is to be settled on the basis of Scripture (as informed by the Spirit of Prophecy). What then, does, the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy say with respect to gender-role differences between men and women? Before addressing this question, we shall briefly discuss the feminist-egalitarian ideology of gender-role *obliteration*.

### **The Feminist-Egalitarian Ideology: Gender Role-Obliteration**

The feminist movement or the so-called women's lib movement is a crusade for freedom, equality and justice. Although Bible-believing Christians have good reasons to distance themselves from the feminist ideology, they share the legitimate concerns of the movement in standing up against any form of injustice, unfairness, and discrimination.

At the heart of the feminist movement are issues concerning unsatisfied and hurt women. Women have all too often been treated unfairly and as second-class citizens in the world. They have been hurt in the home as well, whenever they have to live with inadequate male leadership. Many are experiencing frustrating marriages as they suffer from abusive, neglectful, and domineering husbands. When they attempt to challenge these injustices, many women feel that society is on the side of the men who have abused them.

These are some of the legitimate issues of women's hurt and unfair treatment that feminism seeks to highlight. But in seeking to address them, feminists resort to solutions that raise more questions for societal balance than it sought to address. Two of the worrisome aspects of the feminist ideology is its insistence on *the obliteration of gender roles* and endorsement of same-sex relationships (homosexuality, lesbianism, same-sex marriage, etc.).

**1. Obliteration of Gender Roles.** Feminists reason that the role differentiation God established at creation to govern the complementary relationship of male and female makes men superior and

women inferior. Believing themselves deprived of their true womanly dignity, some seek self-fulfillment, full equality, and human justice by trying to be like men or by attempting to reject all role distinctions in the home and in the church.

In order to be free from the supposed second-class status resulting from gender role differentiation, some radical feminists have fought against the marriage institution and child-rearing, which they believe confine them to certain roles. Others have taken issue with organized religion, notably Islam and Judeo-Christian religions, whose teachings of male leadership or headship they interpret to mean that women are perceived as slaves to men through submission and obedience.

**2. Lesbianism.** Believing that sexual intercourse with men enables males to exercise power over women, many feminists propose sexual encounters that are entirely independent from men. For some, lesbianism is one way women can be free from patriarchy or male leadership in order to know and experience their true inner self. One prominent feminist declares:

Women's liberation and homosexual liberation are both struggling towards a common goal: a society free from defining and categorizing people by virtue of gender and/or sexual preference. 'Lesbianism' is a label used as a psychic weapon to keep women locked into their male-defined 'feminine role.' The essence of that role is that a woman is defined in terms of her relationship to men.<sup>56</sup>

The feminist ideology is fundamentally opposed to Scripture's teaching on role distinctions between male and female in both the home and the church. This belief in the obliteration of gender roles leads feminists to embrace lesbianism and witchcraft, to redefine and feminize God, to indiscriminately push for gender-inclusive language in Scripture, to question the Bible's inspiration and authority, to adopt higher criticism to reinterpret the Bible, or to transpose women's ministries into feminist ministries.<sup>57</sup>

The above reasons are why feminism has always posed a threat to the Seventh-day Adventist church. Long ago, Ellen White warned

that “those who feel called out to join the movement in favor of woman’s rights and the so-called dress reform might as well sever all connection with the third angel’s message. The spirit which attends the one cannot be in harmony with the other. The Scriptures are plain upon the relations and rights of men and women” (*Testimonies for the Church*, 1:421).

In the above warning, Mrs. White described the women’s rights (the feminist movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) and the third angel’s message as incompatible. The specific reason she gave was that there exist differences on the role relationship between men and women. As has been shown in *Prove All Things*, Sister White also warned against feminism because of its links with spiritualism. This relationship still exists between today’s feminist movement and modern spiritualism.<sup>58</sup>

In spite of its worrisome aspects, the feminist movement continues to exert enormous influence on Christian churches in the campaign for the obliteration of gender role-distinctions. The reason why this push has been quite successful is that feminism grows out of an even widespread ideology called *egalitarianism*.

**3. Egalitarianism.** Radical egalitarianism (or equalitarianism) holds that all human beings are equal, and therefore they ought to be made to be exactly the same in a whole host of spheres.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, God-ordained differences among people must be abolished.

Our contemporary culture has been greatly influenced by the egalitarian thinking that began with the rationalism and egalitarianism that surrounded the French Revolution. Because the French Revolution dethroned the God of the Bible and enthroned Reason as goddess, the differences that God had ordained among people no longer seemed rational to the egalitarian mind.

Egalitarianism rightly protests exploitation resulting from differences among people, such as rich and poor, male and female, black and white, educated and uneducated, etc. But its attempt to rectify the *abuse* of differences goes too far when it proposes to abolish all distinctions and when it suggests that full equality means equality in every sense.

According to radical egalitarianism, it is unfair for anyone to have authority over another, or to have more power, or money, or influence. Taken to its logical conclusion, egalitarianism would argue that those who stand out and excel should somehow be pulled down and made to fit in with the crowd, lest someone else feels inferior.

Thus, communism (or Marxism) embraces this radical ideology when it attempts to make the poor equal to the rich. Feminism also drinks from the egalitarian fountain when it seeks to make women equal to men in every respect. And just as feminists seek full equality by getting rid of *gender* or *sex roles* in marriage and the church, gay theology also seeks to bring about equality between homosexuals and heterosexuals by obliterating *sexual identity*.

This explains why the push for women's ordination—which is based on feminist egalitarianism—almost always leads to the push for homosexuality in the church. For, as explained in the words of the prominent feminist quoted earlier: “Women's liberation and homosexual liberation are both struggling towards a common goal: a society free from defining and categorizing people by virtue of gender and/or sexual preference.”<sup>60</sup>

**Feminist Egalitarianism.** Feminist egalitarianism is seductive because it builds on something close to biblical truth and then proceeds to distort it. Equality of being and worth (ontological equality) is a clear Biblical teaching, affirming that all human beings—male and female—have equal standing before God as created beings, as sinners in need of salvation through Christ, and as people called to the same destiny.<sup>61</sup>

Nowhere does the Bible relegate women to second-class status or make men superior and women inferior. To say otherwise is to misrepresent biblical teaching and affront the loving character of the God who created Eve to be Adam's “help meet for him,” a partner “fitting” or “suitable” to him. Ellen White was unequivocal: “When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that in all things she should be his equal” (*Testimonies for the Church*, 3:484).

In summary, feminist egalitarian ideology reasons that the role differentiation God established at creation to govern the complementary relationship of male and female makes men superior and women inferior. Believing themselves deprived of their true womanly dignity, some seek “self-fulfillment,” “full equality,” “total role-interchangeability,” and “human justice” by trying to be like men or by attempting to reject all role distinctions in the home and in the church.<sup>62</sup>

Many have uncritically embraced women’s ordination because they have bought into egalitarian feminism’s campaign for full equality, without seriously understanding the precise nature of the equality between men and women. Christians who have bought into the feminist egalitarian ideology, reinterpret Paul’s statement that in Christ, “there is neither male nor female” (Galatians 3:28) along egalitarian lines.

When the logic of their argument is taken to its logical conclusion, it would imply that since “there is neither male nor female,” males can marry males, and females are free to marry females. Christian churches can have unisex bathrooms since there is neither male nor female. The ideology of women’s ordination is built on the egalitarian foundation of gender *role-obliteration*, whereas the biblical position against women’s ordination is established on the headship principle, which teaches gender *role-differentiation*.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, the real issue at the heart of the women’s ordination debate is whether the equality of male and female does away with role-differences. While maintaining equality of being, has the Bible assigned a headship/leadership role to the man and a supportive role to the woman?

### **Biblical Teaching: Gender Role-Differentiation**

Whereas women’s ordination is based on feminist egalitarian principles that *deny* role-differentiations between male and female, we can make a compelling biblical case, showing that the headship principle or gender role-differentiation was established by God at creation. It is on the basis of this headship principle that only males

could legitimately serve as priests in the Old Testament and as apostles and elders in the New Testament.

You can find the evidence in several of my works—notably *Searching the Scriptures* (available online) and *Must We Be Silent*. For the sake of simplicity, however, I'll refer you to a very clear presentation of the biblical teaching on headship. In just a few words, the 8-minute video animation (titled “Adventist Women’s Ordination Crisis Overview”) sums up the detailed arguments I have devoted countless pages to articulate.

**Biblical Facts On Headship.** Below are the biblical facts on headship. For appropriate texts and further discussions, refer to my cited works footnoted below:<sup>64</sup>

1. Adam was formed first from the dust of the ground. Genesis clearly shows it was Adam who was called to care for the garden, who identified the animals, and who named his wife.
2. After Adam and Eve sinned, it was Adam who was called to account for the sin, even though it was Eve who sinned first chronologically. This is why Jesus came as the second Adam to win back lost dominion and headship Adam had lost/surrendered through disobedience.
3. Only men are recorded in the Bible as officiating in the offering sacrifices or called to priestly ministry.
4. Founders of the nation of Israel are all men, called Patriarchs.
5. Though the Lord called upon the entire nation of Israel to be a kingdom of priests, only men were appointed to offer the Passover lamb and to later be called to be priests.
6. The 12 rulers appointed by Moses under God’s direction were all men.
7. The 70 elders appointed by Moses were all men.
8. Only men were anointed by God to be kings of Israel and Judah.

9. All patriarchal blessings were passed down from father to son.
10. The Old and New Testaments trace the genealogy of Jesus through the male lineage.
11. There are seven examples of women giving birth in connection with miracles. All the miracle babies who typified Christ were male children.
12. Although Jesus desired women to bear the good news of salvation the gospel, He only called men to serve in the capacity of apostles.
13. Both men and women were baptized, but only by men.
14. The first seven deacons chosen to administrate the early Christian church as deacons were all men.
15. Paul, who said that “in Christ there’s neither male nor female” went from town to town and ordained only men.
16. We must keep in mind that it was Jesus who created Adam and established male headship in a perfect pre-fall world. This reveals the eternal nature of this divine arrangement. Any compromise of the foundation principles found in Genesis paves the way for future compromise on issues like the Sabbath, same-sex marriage, and evolution.
17. The controversy over headship first began in heaven, with Lucifer questioning the divine order in the Godhead. Lucifer resented and eventually rejected the headship of Christ, which thrust the universe into a crisis over this very question.
18. Did Eve have equal headship with Adam at creation? If the answer is No, it should remain so forever. Any attempt to change this order will be similar to Lucifer’s attempt to grasp equal authority with Christ.
19. God set up spiritual headship in Adam. And follows the same creation pattern down through time: Priesthood, kingship, apostleship, and eldership—were all male.

20. Jesus never established a gender-equal (or gender-neutral) priesthood, nor did He establish female apostleship for His new church body.

21. When the sacrificial system was away, and all that pertained to it, Jesus still established male headship to run His church.

22. Had Jesus established women as apostles and leaders of spiritual Israel, no one will be questioning women's ordination today.

23. The apostle Paul said that, "In Christ neither male nor female...". If this means women should be ordained to spiritual headship, it must always have been true, even from creation. But is that what the biblical record shows?

24. The apostle Paul reaffirms this divine plan in 1 Corinthians 11:3: "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God."

25. In the church, ordination to pastoral ministry entitles a person to move into the positions of male spiritual headship. If we ordain women, female headship is likewise instituted. This is something Jesus never gave authority to do.

It makes no sense therefore for the world church to deliberately vote to approve what God has clearly disallowed by His divine right.<sup>65</sup>

**Headship (Role-Differentiation) at Creation.** Forced by the evidence from Scripture, some of our more conservative pro-ordination scholars concede that the Bible teaches headship, but that it originated as a curse *after* the fall. This is why they are pushing for the obliteration of roles—for in their opinion, Christ's death has essentially abolished this curse of sin. This argument has no biblical leg, for the Bible teaches that the headship principle originated at Creation, not the Fall.

In response, let me briefly offer five biblical evidences that establish this headship principle at Creation (See *Searching the Scriptures*, pp. 46-47).

1. God expressed His intended arrangement for the family relationship by creating Adam first, then Eve. (1 Timothy 2:12-13). The divine priority of having Adam “formed first, then Eve” had an important theological significance. The sequence established Adam as the “firstborn” in the human family, a position that gave him the special responsibility of leadership in the family—whether home or church.

2. God gave to Adam the directions for the first pair regarding custody of the garden and the dangers of the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:16-17). This charge to Adam called him to spiritual leadership. When Satan addressed Eve rather than Adam regarding the forbidden tree, the tempter’s object was to undermine the divine arrangement by deceiving Eve into assuming primary headship responsibility (see 1 Timothy 2:14). Had Eve been created first and then Adam, and had she been charged with the responsibility of leadership, Satan might well have attacked the headship principle by approaching Adam.

3. God instructed that in marriage it is the man who must act, leaving dependence on father and mother to be united with his wife (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4, 5), and that in the marriage relationship the woman’s role is to complement the man in his duties (Genesis 2:18, 23-24). In this instruction, God charged the man with the responsibility of lovingly providing for and protecting the woman (cf. Ephesians 5:25, 28-31; 1 Peter 3:7; 1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6).

4. Events after the Fall (but before God pronounced judgment) confirm that Adam’s headship was already in place. Although Eve first disobeyed, it was only after Adam had joined in the rebellion that the eyes of both of them were opened (Genesis 3:4-7). More significantly, after the fall, God first addressed Adam, holding him accountable for eating the forbidden fruit: “Where are you?”...Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?” (Genesis 3:9-12; cf. 3:17: “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you...”)

5. It appears inexplicable for God, who in His omniscience already knew what had happened, to act in this way if Adam had not been given headship in the Eden relationship. Consequently, despite the fact that the woman initiated the rebellion, it is Adam (not Eve, nor even both of them) who is blamed for our fall (Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22), which suggests that as the spiritual head in the partnership of their equal relationship, Adam was the representative of the family.

These facts indicate that even before the Fall, God had established the principle of male headship/leadership. He instituted this principle not as an indication of superiority of Adam over Eve, nor was it for dominance or oppression, but for God-glorifying responsibility.

Thus, when Paul writes that “the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God.” (1 Corinthians 11:3), and that women should not “teach or to have authority over a man,” because “Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Timothy 2:12ff.), he is not concocting an arbitrary “proof text” to justify his alleged concession to Hellenistic or Jewish cultural prejudices against women. As an inspired writer, the apostle Paul fully understood the theological truth of the headship principle as a divine arrangement instituted before the Fall and which remains permanently valid for every Christian.

The pattern of spiritual authority in the home became the model for spiritual authority in the church. This is why, in reference to the qualities of an elder, the apostle Paul wrote:

“A *bishop* [elder/pastor] then must be blameless, *the husband of one wife ... one who rules his own house well*, having *his* children in submission with all reverence (*for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?*)” (1 Timothy 3:2-5).

Observe that spiritual headship in the home is the model for spiritual headship in the church. Just as the man is the spiritual

head of the home, so also is he to be the spiritual head in the church. This fact is again repeated by Paul:

“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and *appoint elders* in every city as I commanded you— if a man is blameless, *the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination*” (Titus 1:5, 6).

### **Testimony from The Spirit of Prophecy: Gender Role-Differentiation**

The writings of Ellen G. White also make it clear that prior to the Fall God had already enjoined different roles for Adam and Eve, each with their “assigned spheres.” Prior to the Fall, Eve’s submission was freely and spontaneously expressed. But after the Fall, the Lord had to make explicit the “law” she had, perhaps, been obeying unconsciously.<sup>66</sup>

“Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband’s side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that *which God had assigned her*. In attempting to rise above *her original position*, she fell far below it. A similar result will be reached by all who are unwilling to take up cheerfully their life duties in accordance with God’s plan. In their efforts to reach positions for which He has not fitted them, many are leaving vacant the place where they might be a blessing. In their desire for a higher sphere, many have sacrificed true womanly dignity and nobility of character, and have left undone the very work that Heaven appointed them” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 59).

A parallel statement of Ellen White brings together role distinctions before the Fall, the subjection of Eve after the Fall. (*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 483-484). Mrs. White taught that male and female were created equal, with neither one superior nor inferior to the other. But because Eve chose to abandon her God-assigned role,

God's curse enjoined her to subject herself to her husband. Referring to Eve before the Fall, Mrs. White in another source wrote:

“She [Eve] was perfectly happy *in her Eden home* by her husband's side; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered that there was a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. But in attempting to climb higher than her original position, she fell far below it. This will most assuredly be the result with the Eves of the present generation if they neglect to cheerfully take up their daily life duties in accordance with God's plan. ... A neglect on the part of woman to follow *God's plan in her creation*, an effort to reach for important positions which He has not qualified her to fill, leaves vacant the position that she could fill to acceptance. In getting out of her sphere, she loses true womanly dignity and nobility. When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that in all things she should be his equal. The holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other; and yet each had an individuality in thinking and acting. But after Eve's sin, as she was first in the transgression, the Lord told her that Adam should rule over her. She was to be in subjection to her husband, and this was a part of the curse.” (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 483-484).

According to E.G. White, despite the abuse of God's creation arrangement for role relations in the home, EGW writes that “*heaven's ideal of this sacred [marriage] relation*” is one in which the man is the head of the home. This kind of relationship is “what God designed it should be” (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 64, 65).

And because “the husband is the head of the family, as Christ is the head of the church,” she writes, “*any course which the wife may pursue to lessen his influence and lead him to come down from that dignified, responsible position is displeasing to God*” (*Testimonies for the Church*, 1:307).

“*In the beginning*, the head of each family was considered ruler and priest of his own household. Afterward, as the race multiplied upon the earth, men of divine appointment

performed this solemn worship of sacrifice for the people.” (*Story of Redemption*, p. 50; emphasis mine).

Notice that “in the beginning” the head of each family was both a “ruler and priest” of his own household. Later, the role of the men in the “home church” was extended to “men [not women] of divine appointment”—the priests.

“God had a church when Adam and Eve and Abel accepted and hailed with joy the good news that Jesus was their Redeemer. These realized as fully then as we realize now the promise of the presence of God in their midst. Whenever Enoch found one or two who were willing to hear the message he had for them, Jesus joined with them in their worship of God. In Enoch’s day there were some among the wicked inhabitants of earth who believed. The Lord never yet has left His faithful few without His presence nor the world without a witness” (Ellen G. White, *The Upward Look*, p. 228).

Ellen White also understood the home as the pattern for the church, with a distinct role assigned to each of the parents.

“Some households have a little church in their home. ... As parents faithfully do their duty in the family, restraining, correcting, advising, counseling, guiding, the father as a priest of the household, the mother as a home missionary, *they are filling the sphere God would have them fill*. By faithfully doing their duty in the home, they are multiplying agencies for doing good outside the home. They are becoming better fitted to labor in the church. By training their little flock discreetly, binding their children to themselves and to God, fathers and mothers become laborers together with God” (Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, p. 253, emphasis added).

The description of the church as “the household of God” (1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:19) and the patterning of church authority after the headship arrangement in the home reveal the high estimation God places on the home family.

“In the home the foundation is laid for the prosperity of the church. The influences that rule in the home life are carried into the church life; therefore, church duties should first begin in the home” (Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, p. 284).

“Every family in the home life should be a church, a beautiful symbol of the church of God in heaven” (*Child Guidance*, p. 480).

Not only is the pattern of authority in the church after that of the home, but the home government is patterned after the church. Ellen G. White wrote,

“The rules and regulations of the home life must be in strict accordance with a “Thus saith the Lord. *The rules God has given for the government of His church are the rules parents are to follow in the church in the home.* It is God’s design that there shall be perfect order in the families on earth, preparatory to their union with the family in heaven. Upon the discipline and training received in the home depends the usefulness of men and women in the church and in the world” (*The Signs of the Times*, Sept. 25, 1901 ).

The home family and the church families reflect the order in heaven. Spiritual headship in the home is related to the spiritual headship in the church. And, according to E.G. White, “it is God’s design that there shall be perfect order in the families on earth, preparatory to their union with the family in heaven.”

Is it possible that those who attempt to drive a wedge between the patterns of authority in the church and in the home are betraying a contempt for or disillusionment with the family institution? Or is it rather a failure to have a biblical understanding of the true nature of male headship and the complementary female supportive role?

At a time of rampant divorces, sometimes because each party seeks to be the “head,” we need to call attention to role-distinctions within the partnership of spiritual equals. And at a time of increasing homosexual demands for marital rights, we need to say unambiguously that men were not created equal with women personally or even physically *as candidates to be spouses of men*, and vice versa.

Failure to do so will open a welcome door for those who seek to nullify the biblical case for divinely-instituted role differences and a monogamous heterosexual relationship.

The evidence from Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy is so overwhelmingly against ordaining women to the headship role of elder or pastor that the only way to say Yes to the pending motion is to adopt some questionable, speculative, and fanciful methods of interpretation—which is what pro-ordination scholars have done, when they claim, for example, that there were “women priests” in the Old Testament and that Eve was a “female priest in Eden,” Junia was a “female apostle,” and Phoebe was a “female minister” and her commendation by Paul means she had a “ministerial credential.”<sup>67</sup>

As I have shown in several earlier works, if the arguments and interpretation of Scripture employed by our leading proponents of women’s ordination are utilized in other areas, they could easily be used to undermine the relevance of many other biblical teachings. Sadly, this is what advocates of women’s ordination have tended to do with Scripture, the Spirit of Prophecy, and even the recorded practice of Adventist history.

### The Example of Our Pioneers

Thus, far, I have shown that unlike the feminist-egalitarian ideology that seeks to *obliterate* gender role-distinctions, biblical teaching and the witness of the Spirit of Prophecy compellingly teach that gender role-*differentiation* is God’s divine arrangement—instituted at Creation to govern the relationship of men and women in the home as well as the church.

Our Adventist pioneers upheld this *theological* understanding. It was on this basis that they rejected women’s ordination at the 1881 GC session. As shown in chapter 3 of this work, they maintained:

1878: “The divine arrangement, even from the beginning, is this, that the man is the head of the woman. Every relation is disregarded or abused in this lawless age”

1878: “A woman may pray, prophesy, exhort, and comfort the church, but *she cannot occupy the position of a pastor or a ruling elder*. This would be looked upon as usurping authority over the man, which is here [1 Tim 2:12] prohibited.”

1895: “The interests of the church and the world generally would be better served if the [gender-role] distinctions given in God’s word were regarded.”

Those are the facts. And yet, there are several instances in which the works of pro-ordination scholars are “factually challenged” when it comes to early Adventist history.

We must remember that church members have always insisted that those who want to push for a Yes vote on women’s ordination should come up with a basis in the Bible or Ellen G. White’s writings on which to support the ordination of women as elders or pastors. There is no such basis in either source; so the evidence gets stretched or is altogether manufactured. This may sound like harsh criticism, but in *Must We Be Silent* I have shown how they do it.

Here are five “facts” that I say the pro-ordination scholars have “manufactured” for the church. I have already set this out earlier in Chapter 3, but there are further insights that make it worthwhile to highlight in this section. They often claim that

- There were women ministers (preferred term “leaders”) in the early Seventh-day Adventist church (at least prior to 1915);
- Our pioneers wrote strongly in support of women ministers;
- The early Seventh-day Adventist church voted at the 1881 General Conference session to ordain women;
- Ellen G. White called for women’s ordination in an 1895 statement;
- Ellen G. White herself was ordained.

### Women As Pastors of the Flock

In *Must We Be Silent* I have addressed the “manufactured” facts bullet-listed above. In addition to these, one passage from E. G. White that has been “rebaptized” and gets thrown around more these days to justify women’s ordination is her statement that women can serve as “**pastors of the flock.**”

“It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God.” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 322.)

Although there is no ambiguity about this statement, the quotation has been exploited to enshroud it in an air of devalued truth that has been downplayed to the demerit of the pro-ordination argument. The ensuing unnecessary misunderstanding is resolved when we read the context and when we find out how E.G. White uses the term “pastor.”

In the first instance, when you read the context of the quote, you’d discover it’s talking about canvassing work (or as she termed it in another place, “The Canvasser a Gospel Worker”). She was not referring to the work of elders or pastors! Here’s the full quote:

All who desire an opportunity for true ministry, and who will give themselves unreservedly to God, will find in *the canvassing work* opportunities to speak upon many things pertaining to the future, immortal life. The experience thus gained will be of the greatest value to those who are fitting themselves for the ministry. It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God. (emphasis mine).

Second, the confusion of the meaning of women serving as “pastors to the flock” is resolved when we recognize that the term “pastor” can be used in two ways: As a reference to a person’s *office* (a minister in charge of a Christian church or congregation) or as to a person’s *function* (doing the work of spiritually ministering to people’s need).

For example, there are many non-denominationally employed laypeople who do not hold the “office” of pastor but are actively engaged in soul-winning activities—by voice or by pen. These can be legitimately referred to as pastor, as is the case in many parts of Africa. This fact is not always appreciated in the Western world where many mistakenly think that only a person ordained to the *office* of “Pastor” can do “pastoral work” or can be referred to as pastor. It is the same mistake they make with reference to E.G. White’s use of the phrase “pastors of the flock.”

Generally speaking, whenever Ellen White wrote about ordained church pastors, she typically referred to them as “*ministers*” rather than “*pastors*.” But in instances in which she used the term “*pastor*” she seems to have done so with a specialized meaning in mind—namely, using the term to refer to a person doing personal labor in the nurture of the flock, rather than a particular church office or position.

For example, in *Gospel Workers*, p. 3, and in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 723, the concept of “*pastor*” is associated with the function of personal work for the flock of God, even when it is done by members of the church other than the minister. *One who visits families, who teaches and prays with them, who shows personal care and interest, is doing pastoral work—serving as “pastor of the flock.”*<sup>68</sup>

Thus understood, canvasser or literature evangelist, church member, student, etc.—anyone, whether male or female—who visits or attends to the spiritual needs of another is functioning as a “pastor of the flock.”

Throughout our history, Seventh-day Adventist women have labored faithfully in the ministry as teachers, preachers, missionaries, Bible workers, etc., and made a vital contribution to the mission of the church, all *without ordination*.

If any woman was so spiritually gifted as to qualify for ordination *as elder or pastor*, it was Ellen White. If any woman was so effective in her ministry as a teacher, preacher, and soul-winner as to qualify for ordination *as elder or pastor*, it was Ellen White. If any Adventist was so justice-inspired, sensitive and caring (and

with demonstrable evidence of other fruit of the Spirit) as to qualify for ordination *as elder or pastor*, it was Ellen White. If any Adventist was so prolific an author and so gifted a leader as to qualify for ordination *as elder or pastor*, it was Ellen White. And if any woman could legitimately claim the title of *Elder or Pastor*, it was Ellen G. White.

But during her later years, Mrs. White was known mostly as “Sister White” and affectionately as “Mother White.” She was never known as “Elder White” or “Pastor Ellen.” Every church member knew that “Elder White” was either her husband, James, or her son, W. C. White.

Far from providing a case for ordination, the women often mentioned by pro-ordination scholars illustrate what women may accomplish without it. And they are not the only ones. Until recently, the Bible workers, as an example, offered valuable service in the ministry; they were an important part of the evangelistic team because they often knew more about the people being baptized and joining the church than the minister did; and the minister welcomed their wisdom and judgment. But none of these women was ever ordained. If these women, who were well versed in Scripture, had been asked if they wanted to be ordained as elders or pastors, most would likely have exclaimed, “Oh, no! It isn’t biblical!” I say this because it continues to be the attitude of thousands of dedicated Adventist women around the world today.

In light of these facts of Adventist history—such as, the fact that Ellen G. White was never ordained, she never called for women to be ordained as elders or pastors, and none of our dedicated Seventh-day Adventist women of the past was ever ordained as elder or pastor<sup>69</sup>—I again ask those who support women’s ordination, just as I would ask those who support the attempted change of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday:

Since the testimonies of Scripture indicate that God the Father *did not* do it; the Old Testament is clear that the patriarchs, prophets and kings *never did* do it; the gospels reveal that Jesus, the Desire of Ages, *would not* do it; the epistles and the acts of the apostles declare that the commissioned

apostles *could not* do it; Ellen White, with a prophetic vision of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, *dared not* do it, should we who live at the turn of another millennium do it?

### Endnotes

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- 55 Is this theological principle culturally conditioned to the days and culture of the Bible writers or is it still valid today? In other words, in the realm of spiritual leadership or headship, God has assigned different roles to men and women. For example, are Paul's counsels on male headship and female submission (Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Corinthians 11:3, 11-12; cf. 1 Peter 3:1-7) to be lightly dismissed as culturally conditioned, so that in our day the man is no longer to be the head of the home? Or that, even if applicable in the home, it cannot be extended to the church?
- 56 The above statement is attributed to prominent feminist Kate Millet, and cited by Mary A. Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel*, 85.
- 57 In *Must We Be Silent*, pp. 139-144, I have explained the following worrisome aspects of feminist ideology: 1. Obliteration of gender roles; 2. Lesbianism; 3. Witchcraft; 4. Redefinition or feminization of God; 5. Indiscriminate push for gender-inclusive language; 6. Questioning of the Bible's inspiration and authority; 7. Reinterpretation of Scripture; 8. Mutation of women's ministries into feminist ministries.
- 58 Laurel Damsteegt, "Spiritualism and Women: Then and Now," in Mercedes H. Dyer, ed., *Prove All Things: A Response to 'Women in Ministry'* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventists Affirm, 2000), 251-271.
- 59 For the thoughts expressed here, I am indebted to the insights of Vern S. Poythress and Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy: Muting the Masculinity of God's Words* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2000), 139-142.
- 60 The above statement is attributed to prominent feminist Kate Millet, and cited by Mary A. Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel*, 85.
- 61 The scriptural evidence for this equality is that (1) both "male and female" were created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6); (2) both have been redeemed by Jesus Christ, so that "in Christ" there is neither "male nor female" (Galatians 3:28); and (3) both are "joint heirs of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7 RSV).
- 62 See *Must We Be Silent?*, pp. 137-148.

- 63 For more on this, and a detailed discussion of Galatians 3:28, see chapter 10 of *Must We Be Silent*, where I discuss “The Feminist Campaign For Equality.”
- 64 The 8-minute video animation is titled “Adventist Women’s Ordination Crisis Overview.” This work produced on April 8, 2015, is one of the best summaries of the issues at stake: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e\\_OytbgfyUY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_OytbgfyUY). For the relevant Bible texts for the following “Some Biblical Facts on Headship,” see *Searching the Scriptures*, chapters 5 and 6 (available online for download: <http://drpipim.org/searching-the-scriptures.pdf>); *Must We Be Silent*, chapters 13 and 14. See also the article, “Leadership in the Church: Are We Honestly Mistaken?” (<http://drpipim.org/leadership-contemporaryissues-97/55-leadership-in-the-church.html>).
- 65 See previous notes, for where you can find the biblical references in my published works. These facts indicate that even before the fall, God had established the principle of male headship/leadership. Thus Paul writes that “the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” (1Corinthians 11:3 RSV), and that women should not “have authority over men” because “Adam was formed first” (1Timothy 2:12ff. RSV). The sequence established Adam as the “firstborn” in the human family, a position that gave him the special responsibility of leadership in the family—whether home or church. Paul fully understood the theological truth of the headship principle as a divine arrangement instituted before the fall and which remains permanently valid for the Christian.
- 66 The perfect harmony that existed in Eden before the fall may perhaps be likened to the harmony in heaven before the fall of Satan, when “So long as all created beings acknowledged the allegiance of love, there was perfect harmony throughout the universe of God. . . . And while love to God was supreme, love for one another was confiding and unselfish. There was no note of discord to mar the celestial harmonies” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 35). Though God’s law governed everyone, “When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of” (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 109). The angels responded freely and spontaneously to God. They seem to have been almost unconscious of a “law” to obey God or to worship Christ. These things were their delight. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 35-37.)
- 67 For a vigorous response to these fanciful speculations, see *Must We Be Silent*, pp. 232-249.
- 68 For example, speaking of ministers who devote excessive time to reading and writing, she said: “The duties of a pastor are often shamelessly neglected because the minister lacks strength to sacrifice his personal

inclinations for seclusion and study. The pastor should visit from house to house among his flock, teaching, conversing, and praying with each family, and looking out for the welfare of their souls.” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 337). She again expressed her concern for personal care for the flock this way: “Responsibilities must be laid upon the members of the church. The missionary spirit should be awakened as never before, and workers should be appointed as needed, who will act as pastors to the flock, putting forth personal effort to bring the church up to that condition where spiritual life and activity will be seen in all her borders” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 723).

69 See the evidence in *Must We Be Silent*, pp. 251-270.



# Chapter 8

## Why Be Concerned?

*(The Tip of An Iceberg)*

*“We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.”*

—Plato

*“To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”*

—Prophet Isaiah

**B**rother Emmanuel, there’s ample evidence from denominations that have ordained women that once we embark on this road, it’s just a matter of time before we shall lose our identity and mission, and this situation will affect us in every imaginable way.

Our Church rightly recognizes that the issue of women’s ordination has to do with the authority of Scripture and hence the very survival of the church. This is why the motion brought before the GC delegates is prefaced by our understanding of Scripture. This fact is clearly evident in the history of other denominations that have embraced the practice.

### **Development in Other Denominations**

Perceptive observers have noted that denominations that ordain women began by undermining the authority of Scripture in certain areas, relegating those parts of Scripture to “the culture of Bible times,” and therefore no longer to be treated as authoritative or universally normative.

Reflecting on denominations that have grappled with the women’s ordination issue in the last two decades, Arnold Cook notes that “in all cases, the eye of the storm is centered on the interpretation of

key [Bible] passages.” He continues by describing the sequence that leads to the erosion of biblical authority:

Recent church history of denominations, with few exceptions, reveals a dangerous sequence of debates. . . . The ordination of women precedes the debate on the ordination of homosexuals. . . . These are very different issues, but what creates the sequence is the common approach to interpreting Scripture: If clear Scriptures prohibit it, focus on the obscure. If that is not possible, then declare the clear passages as culturally time and place specific.<sup>70</sup>

This has been the pattern in liberal or “mainline” Protestant churches of America—and around the world. Generally, this happened first with the biblical teaching of a literal six-day Creation. Generations later the denominations embraced the ordination of women to spiritual headship roles, and before long, the normalization of homosexuality is accepted. As this trend continues, it is followed by a decline in church membership, income, and influence.

In his insightful book *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, one Evangelical scholar, Dr. Wayne Grudem, states it rather bluntly: “Liberal denominations that ordain women pastors have continually declined in membership and income.” He quotes Ruth Tucker, who also adds: “Historians who dig deeper will discover that the mainline churches that were offering women the greatest opportunities [ordination] were simultaneously declining in membership and influence.”<sup>71</sup>

### **Decline in Church Growth**

Reflecting on the Seventh-day Adventist scene, a well-informed lay scholar, David Read, recently noted the above trends in the history of the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA), the United Methodist church, and the Episcopal Church. He wrote:

Denominations that have embraced female headship are coasting toward oblivion. Liberal Presbyterians began ordaining women to the ministry in 1956, and by 2001 there

## Why Be Concerned?

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were almost as many women as men in the PCUSA clergy. But the Presbyterians have witnessed a 40-year decline in membership. In 1968, there were over 4 million members, or almost 2 % of the U.S. Population; today membership hovers around 2 million, or about 0.6 % of the U.S. Population. Their membership was halved and their percentage of the population was reduced by more than two thirds.

The United Methodists also began ordaining women to ministry in 1956, and first ordained a female bishop in 1980. Their U.S. membership has declined every year since 1968, from around 11 million (5% of the population) to 7.8 million (2.5% of the current population).

The Episcopal Church began ordaining female priests in 1974. Their American membership has declined from about 3.2 million to about 1.95 million. *Promoting female headship in the church is not the path to church growth and cultural relevance; it is the path to irrelevance and extinction.*

The liberal churches that have embraced female headship have also embraced (or are in the process of embracing) homosexuality, as witnessed by the confirmation of openly gay Bishop V. Gene Robinson in the Episcopal Church in 2003. Why? Because the culture of post-patriarchy [i.e. a rejection of the biblical teaching of male spiritual headship] is opposed to the entire corpus of biblical directives relating to sex, sexuality, and gender, and once a denomination has placed post-patriarchal culture above Scripture, the biblical rules will all eventually be jettisoned. It is also important to note that no church adopted female headship until after it had made peace with Darwinism and rejected a literal reading of the Genesis narrative.<sup>72</sup>

We must emphasize again: the issue of women's ordination has to do with the authority of Scripture and hence the very survival of the church. To undermine the Bible's authority in any area (e.g., male headship in the home and in the church) will eventually open the door to the rejection of its authority in other areas (e.g., homosexuality and Creation). This trend will ultimately affect the

identity and mission of God's church. This is why we should be concerned about questionable reinterpretations of Scripture to justify women's ordination.

### Recent *Time Magazine* Article

Perhaps I should call attention to an insightful observation in a recent article in *Time Magazine*, January 26, 2015, pp. 47-48. Under the title "A Change of Heart: Inside the Evangelical War Over Gay Marriage," Elizabeth Dias, states very clearly the connection between arguments for homosexuality and women's ordination. She writes:

"For many evangelicals, the marriage debate isn't really about marriage or families or sex—it is about the Bible itself. And that makes many evangelicals all the more uncompromising. The roots of the conflict are deeply theological ...

"And there is another, just as fundamental, obstacle. *So far no Christian tradition has been able to embrace the LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender] community without first changing its views about women. The same reasoning that concludes that homosexuality is sin is also behind the traditional evangelical view that husbands are the spiritual leaders of marriages and men are the leaders in churches. ...*

"It is not an accident that the women's-liberation movement preceded the gay-liberation movement,' [Episcopal Bishop Eugene] Robinson says. 'Discriminatory attitudes and treatment of LGBT people is rooted in patriarchy [a pejorative term for male headship], and in order to embrace and affirm gays, evangelicals will have to address their own patriarchy and sexism, not just their condemnation of LGBT people'" (Elizabeth Dias, "A Change of Heart: Inside the evangelical war over gay marriage" *Time*, Jan. 26, 2015, pp. 47-48.)

Let's not fool ourselves into thinking that ordaining women as elders/pastors will stop there. The arguments and misinterpretation

## Why Be Concerned?

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of Scripture used to justify women's ordination are the same that legitimizes homosexuality. Whether we are aware of it or not, to misinterpret the Bible to obliterate role-differentiation between male and female is to build a theological nest for advocates of homosexual theology to lay and hatch their gay eggs. Once we employ one false method of interpretation, everything will go downhill from there.

### Development In Our Own Church

More than two decades ago, when many in the church were not fully aware of the situation, some of us started sounding the alarm. For example, in my book *Receiving the Word* (1996), I showed (with documented evidence) what was then happening in our church as some of our thought leaders had embraced the spurious method of interpretation called higher-criticism (the so-called historical-critical method).

As these scholars within our ranks began questioning the Bible's full inspiration, trustworthiness, internal consistency, and authority, they also began challenging our long-held beliefs like the Sabbath, Second Coming, Sanctuary, Special Creation, and Spirit of Prophecy. Also our lifestyle practices were slowly questioned, claiming it was now OK to drink alcohol, practice homosexuality and lesbianism, use ornamental jewelry for bodily adornment, embrace new forms of worship, and deny biblical teaching of role distinctions in both the home and the church (which is the real reason behind the push for women's ordination in our Church).

Indeed, over 20 years ago, proponents of gay theology within Adventism made it very clear that the arguments for women's ordination are the same that justifies homosexuality.<sup>73</sup> In fact, one Adventist homosexual, a member of the "Adventist Gay/Lesbian Ministry" at San Francisco Central SDA Church, made an insightful observation regarding the similarities of the pro-gay and pro-women's ordination arguments. He expressed his amusement that

proponents of women's ordination "use a set of arguments to validate women being ordained, almost exactly the same

as us gays used to approve of ‘monogamous gay relationships.’ Junia and Phoebe rank right in there with David and Jonathan, and Ruth and Naomi. In this [Internet Web site] thread, I have even seen the Bible translated by first setting aside references to gender because of some women being just as capable of certain tasks as a man is. Well, let me tell you something honey, except for childbirth I have been just as capable as any woman in all of the tasks normally performed by the woman—so I guess I can also set aside all the biblical statements I don’t like? To my knowledge, ‘Ordination Credentials’ are a man-made set of requirements to fill a biblical role, but they are in no way capable of changing the gender to which the role applies.”<sup>74</sup>

Perhaps I should also add that five years after alerting the Church of the above realities in my book *Receiving the Word*, I felt compelled to publish a new book, *Must We Be Silent* (2001), to focus on some specific issues that were plaguing the Church. I documented how most of the issues dividing our Church were all related to the system of interpretation (hermeneutic) that allows for the ideology of women’s ordination.

This later apologetic work is actually five books rolled into one, tackling some of the hottest potato ideological issues being debated in the church. My argument was that, to embrace these ideological fads would lead to a jettisoning of the full and normative authority of Scripture in matters of doctrine and practice. Here are the five major sections of *Must We Be Silent?*:

- Part 1. Born A Gay and Born Again? (The Ideology of Homosexuality)
- Part 2. A Gender Agenda (The Ideology of Women’s Ordination)
- Part 3. Amazing Grace and Our Mazing Race (The Ideology of Racism)
- Part 4. The Babble Over the Bible (The Ideology of Liberal Higher Criticism)

## Why Be Concerned?

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### Part 5. The Vocal Few and the Local Pew (The Ideology of Congregationalism)

As you'd discover from reading the book or the articles on the website, all the above theological issues are related, in that they raise questions about our view of biblical authority and interpretation.<sup>75</sup>

Brother Emmanuel, my position on these theological issues are well-known and readily available for those who care to know. Some think that by silencing the voice of the messenger they can silence the message. There is just no need for me to repeat these issues again—unless those favoring the practices are able to Biblically refute my position or offer better arguments for theirs. To the best of my knowledge, to date, they have not yet done so. Instead many of the advocates seemed more determined to push their respective agendas, regardless of what the Bible actually has to say.

This desire to legislate ideology, instead of proclaiming sound theology, is best illustrated in the orchestrated strategy adopted by some church leaders and scholars to push women's ordination at all cost.

### Endnotes

- 70 Arnold Cook, *Historical Drift: Must My Church Die? How to Detect, Diagnose and Reverse the Trends* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 2008), pp. 128, 129.
- 71 Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004), p. 477.
- 72 David Read, "Adventist Arab Springs," July 9, 2012; <http://advocate.com/?p=1592>; emphasis mine.
- 73 For example, speaking at the annual meeting of Seventh-day Adventist college and university Bible teachers in San Francisco, California, in 1992, the "liaison" from the pro- homosexual group Kinship, correctly remarked that the push for women's ordination, when successful, will eventually open the door for the church to embrace homosexuality, since both causes are waging a similar battle of "discrimination" and share the same basic approach to biblical interpretation.

- 74 Howard 'duke' Holtz, "Re: Women's Ordination," October 29, 2000. <http://www.sdanet.org/archive/2000/Oct32000/0313.html>. As I have shown in *Must We Be Silent*, pp. 191-249, indeed, the so-called biblical arguments for women's ordination are as flimsy as those being used to support homosexuality.
- 75 For a summary description of each of the above parts, visit: <http://store.eaglesonline.org/index.php/books/must-we-be-silent.html>). Several chapters of the book are also excerpted and made available on my apologetic website [www.drpipim.org](http://www.drpipim.org). They are categorized as "Contemporary Issues" on left panel of the website.

# Chapter 9

## An Orchestrated Strategy

*(How We Got Stuck in This Hole & How To Get Out)*

*“Propaganda does not deceive people; it merely helps them to deceive themselves.”*

—Eric Hoffer

*“In an age of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”*

—George Orwell.

**B**rother Emmanuel, you cannot fully appreciate much of the contemporary crisis over women’s ordination unless you understand the carefully choreographed strategies that have been employed by pro-ordination forces during the past 40 or so years. Permit me to briefly review this history.

But as you read this story, do remember that Church administrators and scholars are human, like the rest of us, and need our fervent prayers. Remember too that what these leaders and scholars attempted to do shortly after the Utrecht GC session (that rejected women’s ordination) was an attempt to do what they sincerely thought would advance the cause of God in North America—and even around the world.

The above caution is my own paraphrase of a similar advice that was first given almost twenty years ago by the late church historian, Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell, when he detailed how the desire of North American church administrators to enjoy United States IRS tax benefits got our church into the theology crisis over women’s ordination.<sup>76</sup>

This chapter will show how pro-ordination leaders embarked upon a well-orchestrated strategy to change the church’s mind on women’s ordination. It is also the disturbing story of how they got

the Andrews University SDA Theological Seminary involved in the campaign to domesticate women's ordination—and in effect prepared the ground for the Seminary into becoming an institution to promote women's ordination ideas around the world—through the pastors it trains and through the Seminary's global influence.

Once again, you can read all about this in *Must We Be Silent*, one of the books some have tried to ban.<sup>77</sup>

### **Ideological Propaganda: The Gender Agenda**

The recent initiatives to ordain women as elders/pastors came from some leaders in the North American Division in response to pressure from a relatively small but influential group which has been pushing for women's ordination during the past thirty or more years.

Initially, advocates convinced *church leaders* at the 1975 Spring Council meeting to approve the biblically-compromising practice of ordaining women as *local elders* in the North American Division if “the greatest discretion and caution” were exercised. Later, they succeeded in persuading *church leaders* at the Fall 1984 Annual Council meeting to reaffirm and expand the 1975 decision, voting to “advise each division that it is free to make provisions as it may deem necessary for the election and ordination of women as local elders.”<sup>78</sup>

Thus, even though the 1975 provision departed from the New Testament model of church leadership which assigns to men, not women, the headship roles of elder or pastor, and even though the world church had not formally approved of the provision at a General Conference session, ordination of women as *elders* was extended from North America to the world field in 1984.

Emboldened by their success in influencing church leaders to allow “women elders,” pro-ordination advocates proceeded then to urge the *world church* in General Conference session to ordain women as *pastors*, at least in divisions favorable to it. However, as we pointed out earlier, at the General Conference sessions both in

1990 (Indianapolis) and 1995 (Utrecht), the representatives of the world church overwhelmingly rejected the pleas to ordain women into the gospel ministry. The votes were 1173 to 377 (in 1990) and 1481 to 673 (in 1995).

In spite of these decisions, proponents of women's ordination determined upon an all-out campaign, including unilateral ordinations in some influential North American churches and institutions. At the same time that these rebellious ordinations were taking place, advocates were also employing a tactic that had served their cause well in the past—namely, working through church leaders to legislate the unbiblical practice.

### **The 12-Point Strategic Plan**

Without doubt, the most subtle, and yet most ambitious, effort by pro-ordinationists to overturn the worldwide decision is the proposal contained in the North American Division's document "President's Commission on Women in Ministry—Report." The document was voted two years after Utrecht, during the October 7-10, 1997 year-end meeting of the North American church leaders.<sup>79</sup> If fully implemented, it will allow women to occupy the highest headship positions of church leadership, including local church pastor, conference president, union president, division president, and even General Conference president. (Already one Conference in the NAD has a woman president).

Significantly, or should we say ironically, this pro-ordination strategic plan was voted in Battle-Creek, Michigan, which is the birth place of the Church and the very place where in 1881 our Adventist pioneers first officially rejected women's ordination.

I summarize below the major strategies which the document outlines, offering possible reasons behind some of its provisions. Readers familiar with what is going on will recognize that advocates were already energetically implementing these strategies in church publications, print and video media, schools, local churches, conferences and unions. Take some time to reflect on each of the strategies, and you may be able to discern that what may be happening

around you today is not accidental or isolated. It is all part of the gender agenda of the women's ordination ideology.

1. To make “women pastors” a common fixture in the church, conferences are encouraged “to hire more women in pastoral positions”; they are also requested “to set realistic goals to increase the number of women in pastoral ministry in their field [*sic*] during the next three years [culminating in the year 2000—the year of the Toronto General Conference session]”;
2. To enlist young people and their parents and teachers in the pro-ordination campaign, Adventist colleges and universities in North America are encouraged “to recruit young women who sense a call to pastoral ministry to pursue ministerial studies”;
3. To get people used to the *concept* of women serving in same roles as men, “the NAD edition of the *Adventist Review* and other general church papers [are to] be asked to publish profiles of women serving in pastoral ministry several times a year”;
4. To ensure that church members become accustomed to *seeing* “women pastors,” the latter must be given “multiple exposures ... in congregations throughout the NAD,” including the “use of print and video media” and “indirect portrayals of women with men in creative approaches to pastoral ministry”;
5. To legislate or make official the ordination of women in the Seventh-day Adventist church without risking another General Conference session defeat, the document encourages the world church “to modify the language” in relevant sections of the current *Church Manual* and North American Division working policy so that wherever the words “ordain” or “ordination” occur they will be replaced by “ordain/commission” or “ordination/commissioning”; this modification makes “commissioning” the functional equivalent of “ordination.”

[NOTE: This is why delegates to GC sessions must be vigilant whenever *Church Manual* revision items are being discussed.]

6. To implement modifications suggested in the *Church Manual* and North American Division Working Policy, unions and local conferences are encouraged “to promptly conduct commissioning services for those women who are eligible”;
7. To skillfully silence opposition to women’s ordination/“commissioning” at both the local and higher levels of the church, “the Ministerial Association and/or any appropriate structure” should appoint “an ‘ombudsman’—a person with insight in the system and denominational policies who can provide feedback and guidance when women in ministry encounter conflict with employing organizations, as well as provide mediation if necessary”;
8. To ensure that pro-ordination views are constantly carried in materials produced by the church, “more of the advocacy for women in ministry [should] be channeled through the Union papers and other media of mass distribution”; “preparation and dissemination of educational materials in multiple media designed to raise awareness about women in pastoral ministry and the role of women in the church” should be carried out;
9. To silence or censor views opposing women’s ordination, “the Church Resources Consortium [should] monitor and audit all NAD-produced and endorsed materials for compliance with a gender-inclusive model for ministry”;
10. To make dissenting church members feel as though *they* are out of harmony with the Bible or the official Seventh-day Adventist position, “the division president [should] issue a clear call to the church for gender-inclusiveness at all levels of the church—boards, committees, pastoral assignments, etc.” [NOTE: It sounds to me like subtle pressure to be mounted at all levels of the church to push women’s ordination. Could this be one of the reasons behind the February 2015 arbitrary, one-sided circulation in all NAD churches of the Division leadership’s pro-ordination document “Answers to Common Questions: Q+A Theology of Ordination”?]

11. To ensure the eventual possibility for all conference, union or division pastors to be guided by a “woman pastor,” the North American Division is urged to “move with a sense of urgency to include a woman with ministerial background as ministerial secretary or an associate ministerial secretary”;

12. To give biblical and historical justification for the women’s ordination agenda, there should be “(i) multiple articles in denominational periodicals” and “(ii) a hermeneutics conference by the NAD and/or the GC” to “clarify” the church’s understanding of biblical interpretation towards the “goals for gender inclusiveness in church organization.”

[NOTE: In case you’ve been wondering why there have been one-sided pro-ordination articles in denominational papers, now you know of the agenda of having “(i) multiple articles in denominational periodicals.” As for “a hermeneutics conference by the NAD and/or the GC,” we shall shortly discuss the circumstances that gave birth to both the Andrews University Seminary “Ad Hoc Committee on Hermeneutics and Ordination” and the GC’s “Theology and Ordination Study Committee” (TOSC)]

Actually, most of these strategies in 1977 had been in operation for many years prior to the voting of the document. Advocates had employed them as they had worked through church leaders in their campaign for ordaining women as *elders* in 1975 and 1984. But now, for the first time, the document puts these strategies clearly into print.

Of the twelve strategies listed above, the last one seems to be the most daunting—namely, “a hermeneutics conference by the NAD and/or the GC” to “clarify” the church’s understanding of biblical interpretation towards the “goals for gender inclusiveness in church organization.” This is because an overwhelming majority of Seventh-day Adventists in North America and other parts of the world are theological conservatives—Bible-believers. As such they will strongly oppose the pro-ordination campaign, unless advocates are able to come up with ways to interpret the Bible (hermeneutics) to justify the ordaining of women as elders or pastors. This is one reason why some North American leaders approached the Seminary, urging it to “do something about Utrecht.”

Observe carefully that the aim of the suggested hermeneutics conference by the NAD and/or the GC supposedly to “clarify” the church’s understanding of the theology and hermeneutics of ordination was for sole purpose of leading the church towards the “goals for gender inclusiveness in church organization.” The stated goal for the Seminary’s “Ad Hoc Committee on Hermeneutics and Ordination” was not a search for truth, but rather to promote women’s ordination. They were looking for a method to justify an ideological agenda. So much for an open-minded, unbiased research work to discover truth!

Besides the Seminary, observe also that, part of the 1997 NAD plan included having the General Conference itself form a study committee to “clarify” the Church’s theology of ordination towards the same “goals for gender inclusiveness in church organization.” It should not come as a surprise that at the 2010 GC session Atlanta, Georgia, a request was made for an official church study of ordination.

### **GC Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC)**

In response to the request at the 2010 Atlanta GC session for a study committee on ordination, on September 18, 2012, General Conference leaders voted to establish the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC). TOSC was composed of 106 Adventist men and women of diverse ages, ethnicities, and professions, tasked with answering two primary questions which it was to report on at the 2014 Annual Council:

- 1) What is the theology of ordination from a Biblical perspective?
- 2) What should the implications of this theology be for Seventh-day Adventist practices, including the question of women’s ordination?<sup>80</sup>

Does this mean that for the more than 150 years that the Adventist Church had been ordaining elders and pastors, it had no theology to base it on? Of course not! The Church had a theology. And it was that theology that formed the basis of the decision at the

1881 GC session in Battle Creek and reaffirmed twice—in 1990 and 1995. As I see it, the call for a biblical “clarification” was intended to come up with a justification to ordain women—a justification that advocates couldn’t provide at the 1995 Utrecht GC session where the NAD’s request was voted down.

Perceptive observers may justifiably conclude that had the pro-ordination advocates had their way, the GC’s “Theology of Ordination Study Committee” which [was moved at the 2010 GC session floor and which committee was later formed at the GC level], would have been the cover to justify women’s ordination worldwide—even as the pro-ordination Seminary committee’s work became the hermeneutical engine that drove the NAD’s ordination train. We can be thankful to the Lord that He raised up scholarly voices to challenge the hermeneutics and theology of the pro-ordination advocates.<sup>81</sup>

As far as I can tell, none of the pro-ordination presentations at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee was substantially superior to what had earlier been articulated in *Women In Ministry*, the book produced by the pro-ordination scholars at the Seminary at the request of NAD church leadership.<sup>82</sup>

Despite this fact, the Seminary continues to push the NAD’s gender agenda. In fact, just as I was about to send the manuscript of the present book to the printers, my attention was called to a news item on a liberal Adventist website captioned: “Pacific Press Publishes New Collection of Essays on Ordination.” The article interviews the editor of the Seminary’s new book *Women and Ordination: Biblical and Historical Studies* (2015).<sup>83</sup>

This new work contains some of the pro-ordination papers presented at the Theology of Ordination Commission (TOSC). (According to the editor of the new book, eleven (11) of the nineteen (19) chapters are adaptations of TOSC papers.) But unlike its ideological mother, *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (1998), which was published by Andrews University Press, this new work (*Women and Ordination: Biblical and Historical Studies*) was published by Pacific Press.

Observe that with the tragic collapse of the Church's historic Review and Herald publishing house, Pacific Press is now the only remaining denomination-owned publishing house in North America. Could the announcement of the pro-ordination book's release on the liberal website under the caption "Pacific Press Publishes New Collection of Essays on Ordination" be a subtle suggestion that the views contained in *Women and Ordination* is the "official" position of the NAD—which owns the Pacific Press?

In his interview on the liberal website, the editor *Women and Ordination* has articulated his estimation of the book, and what it is intended to accomplish. Here are some excerpts in that interview:

[*Women and Ordination* contains] "some of the best studies that have shaped the ongoing conversation. . . . This is a pro-women's ordination book. The authors of this book are in favor of allowing women to be ordained in the Seventh-day Adventist Church wherever doing so would enhance the mission of the church. . . . It may influence the delegates [at the 2015 GC session] to know that the faculty at the SDA Theological Seminary are overwhelmingly in favor of allowing the ordination of women. . . . I am sending copies to every Adventist college and university library so that they will be available to students and faculty around the world as a starting point for the next conversation that will inevitably take place."<sup>84</sup>

As I see it, to the extent that the "biblical and historical" views expressed in *Women and Ordination* are not substantially different from the "biblical and historical" content of the earlier pro-ordination Seminary's book *Women in Ministry*, we can say that *Women and Ordination* is an upgrade of *Women in Ministry*. Upgraded in two ways. First, by the entity that published the book (Pacific Press—instead of Andrews University Press). Second, by where most of the content was presented—namely, at the GC's Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC).

In short, the new pro-ordination book *Women and Ordination* (2015) is version 2.0 of the earlier *Women in Ministry* (1998). Buyers of the ideas contained in this new pro-ordination book must be aware that, despite its improved and upgraded packaging,

the egalitarian-feminist contents it presents have been soundly challenged by TOSC scholars who uphold the longstanding Adventist view.<sup>85</sup>

It is therefore preposterous for the editor of this new work (*Women and Ordination*) to even suggest that “whatever happens at the General Conference session this summer, a new conversation will begin. This book is poised to be the starting point of that conversation.” Is this an indication that the pro-ordination forces will still be pushing their agenda, even if the GC session rejects it? Can error magically become truth? My mother used to say, “Dressing up an old pig will never transform it into a young lady.”

### **The Seminary Book: *Women In Ministry***

Getting back to the NAD’s well-orchestrated plan to legitimize women’s ordination, we mentioned that North American leaders approached the Seminary, urging it to “do something about Utrecht.” The rest is now history. As requested, the Seminary’s “Ad Hoc Committee on Hermeneutics and Ordination” carried out its assignment, producing the book *Women in Ministry*.

And consistent with the strategies already outlined in the North American Division’s “President’s Commission on Women in Ministry—Report,” the book has been one-sidedly promoted in church publications and widely distributed around the world. Its producers and promoters believe that they have offered the long awaited reasons for the new light urging women’s ordination.

As we noted in chapter 5, the publication of *Women in Ministry* is not the first time that a group of church scholars collaborated to produce a pro-ordination volume. In 1995, fourteen (14) pro-ordination thought leaders produced the 408-page book, *The Welcome Table: Setting a Table for Ordained Women*. This earlier work did not gain much credibility among thoughtful Adventists because its conclusions were based on the historical critical method and revisionist interpretation of the Bible and Adventist history.

But, it's worth emphasizing again that, unlike the authors of *The Welcome Table*, many of whom seem to put their liberal and feminist commitments above Scripture, the authors of *Women in Ministry* consciously underscore the claim that their approach to the Bible is different. They disavow the feminist and higher critical method of their ideological cousins. Whether the actual practice in the *Women in Ministry* book is consistent with the claim remains to be seen. Still, insofar as the authors claim to uphold the church's generally accepted approach to Scripture on this particular issue, I personally sense a far closer affinity with the authors of the Seminary book than with those of *The Welcome Table*.

The Seminary volume *Women in Ministry* (and its re-incarnated version *Women and Ordination*) can be viewed as new only in the sense that, for the first time, a group of church scholars attempted to present *conservative* arguments to justify women's ordination. In other words, although *Women in Ministry* concludes with *The Welcome Table* that there is support in the Bible and the writings of Ellen White to ordain women as elders or pastors. However, the Seminary book presents new arguments and, in some instances articulates more carefully old arguments, to justify women's ordination.

Indeed, much of the arguments being put forth today—including the pro-ordination papers presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee—are not substantially different from or superior to what is contained in *Women In Ministry*, the mother of all the recent pro-ordination arguments favoring women's ordination.

Now that we know how the 12-point strategy resulted in *Women in Ministry* book—a book which provides fodder for much of the pro-ordination papers of the “Theology of Ordination Study Committee,” it behooves us to assess it. How do we assess the biblical and historical research provided by our pro-ordination authors? Do the works offer a sound theological basis to depart from nearly 150 years of Seventh-day Adventist belief and practice? Is this work credible enough to be used legitimately to overturn the General Conference session decisions at Indianapolis (1990) and Utrecht (1995)?

Apparently some think so. They believe “It’s Time”—adopting the title of a recent declaration by some influential “Adventist Elder Statesmen: Retired Adventist leaders whose ministries have been on a global scale, with impact on the church throughout the world.”<sup>86</sup>

It is this Statement you read, Brother Emmanuel, that occasioned you to ask: “*Where are our African leaders. . .*” Since you ask me what I think? I can only refer you again to *Must We Be Silent* (chapter 16), where I summarize my analysis and evaluation of the *Women in Ministry* book—the darling work produced by some of the most respectable scholars at Andrews University.

### **Our Assessment of Women in Ministry**

As I stated earlier, *Women in Ministry* offers the best arguments that Adventist proponents of women’s ordination can find to present to a Bible-believing conservative Seventh-day Adventist church. How do we assess the biblical and historical research provided by our pro-ordination authors?

We ask again: Does the book’s new light offer a sound theological basis to depart from nearly 150 years of Seventh-day Adventist belief and practice? Can ideas in this work be used legitimately to overturn the General Conference session decisions at Indianapolis (1990) and Utrecht (1995)?

In the Andrews University Alumni magazine, *Focus*, an admiring reviewer of the book adds, “The ultimate purpose of *Women in Ministry* is to provide information for informed decision making, a clear indication that there is a decision to be made. In so doing, the book calls the church to do some serious Bible study. If the basis of our decision is going to be in our interpretation of Scripture, we must do it well.”<sup>87</sup>

The simple question we must ask, therefore, is: Did the twenty authors of *Women in Ministry* do their job well?

The editor of the book believes they did—and states it in the Prologue and Epilogue of the book. In the prologue of the

volume, she speaks on behalf of the authors of the pro-ordination volume when she said they had submitted their work to the church “as a resource tool for decision making,” a euphemistic expression for the overturning of the previous General Conference session decisions.<sup>88</sup>

In a letter accompanying *Women in Ministry*'s wide distribution to church leaders around the world, the authors express the belief that they have provided the church with “carefully researched information” that will “foster dialogue.” (“Fostering dialogue” among church leaders *around the world*, and yet unwilling to foster dialogue at the Seminary by inviting scholars opposed to women's ordination?)

An author of one of the chapters (a member of the Ad Hoc Committee who seeks to make *Women in Ministry* “the official view of the Seminary and the position of virtually all of its faculty”) thinks that this work will “demonstrate that the Seminary faculty stands for sound Biblical and historical scholarship on this contemporary and controversial issue.”<sup>89</sup>

Similarly a former Vice-President of the General Conference (and one of the Elder Statesmen who recently issued their “It Is Time” video and website for a “Yes” vote) gave the book a glowing review in the *Adventist Review* (the worldwide Church's official magazine).

He offers “special kudos” to the Seminary Ad Hoc Committee for “providing a deeply spiritual, highly reasoned, consistently logical approach to the issue of women's ordination.” In his opinion the book provides “incisive arguments” for those who believe in women's ordination, and “a thoughtful, thorough treatment” of the major aspects of the women's ordination question. He applauds it as the product of “skillful exegesis of Scripture and careful examination of relevant E. G. White materials,”<sup>90</sup>

What a hype!

And coming from an African American scholar who was previously the President of Oakwood University, his recommendation might have been intended to carry weight among African

Americans in North America—an ethnic group that tends to be biblically conservative.

But there's one more review of *Women in Ministry*—this time from another scholar who had previously contributed to the liberal-feminist ordination book *The Welcome Table*. He wrote his review in *Ministry* magazine, the publication for our ministers. He recommends the Seminary book, claiming the volume “brings together a wealth of material and deserves to be taken seriously.”<sup>91</sup>

With all due respect, this African student from a Ghanaian village disagrees with these “opinions of learned men” (*The Great Controversy*, 595). And I am not alone in my assessment. Heeding the Bible's command to “prove all things; [and] hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21), and accepting the invitation from the book's editor for responses by those who may disagree with their findings, some fifteen Bible students examined the above claims. Our analysis and evaluation in *Prove All Things* call into serious question what the authors and promoters are saying.<sup>92</sup>

Contrary to their claims, *Women in Ministry*, like its forerunner, *The Welcome Table*, does not present a cogent and defensible way to neutralize the witness of the Bible and the historical precedent of early Seventh-day Adventism.

Indeed, as I tried to show in various chapters of *Must We Be Silent*,

the pro-ordination darling book *Women in Ministry* is built largely on: (1) ambiguity and vagueness, (2) straw-man arguments, (3) substantial leaps of logic, (4) arguments from silence, (5) speculative interpretations, (6) questionable re-interpretations of the Bible, (7) distorted biblical reasoning, (8) misleading and erroneous claims regarding Adventist history, (9) a seriously flawed concept of “moral imperative,” and (10) a fanciful view of the “Holy Spirit's leading.”<sup>93</sup>

Therefore, Seventh-day Adventists who wish to believe in women's ordination should do so on the basis of better evidence and methods superior to those found in *Women in Ministry*. And the attempt to put the Seminary's imprimatur on a work that is patently

biased and arguably defective in biblical and historical scholarship holds the potential of damaging the credibility of the Seminary as a place of sound teaching.

The editor of *Women in Ministry* may have had these shortcomings in mind when she admitted in her prologue that “at times clear evidence may be lacking, thus making necessary the use of sanctified judgment and imagination to resolve questions and issues” associated with women’s ordination as elders and pastors.<sup>94</sup>

Given the fact that there is no clear evidence in Scripture for ordaining women, we can now understand why the authors of *Women in Ministry* often resorted to “sanctified judgment and imagination,” and why the committee needed two long years of “animated” discussions, writing, rewriting, editing, and cross-referencing to produce their 438-page volume. Ellen G. White’s observation is pertinent:

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

Despite the good intentions and best efforts of the authors of *Women in Ministry*, their book falls short of its goal. It does not provide a sound biblical and historical basis for resolving “this contemporary and controversial issue.” Perhaps a future work by some other proponents may be able to make a more judicious use of biblical and historical data to provide the much-desired justification for women’s ordination. But I doubt it, because the basis for women’s ordination as elders or pastors simply doesn’t exist, either in the Bible or in the writings of Mrs. White.

(By the way the same verdict can be passed on the arguments of the pro-ordination scholars at the recent GC-sponsored “Theology of Ordination Study Committee.” Trying to cough up biblical and Spirit of Prophecy justification is as easy as a bull giving birth.)

Perhaps here is where the Seminary Ad Hoc Committee has provided its greatest service. After two years of hard work and prayer, they have produced a 438-page book that reveals, when carefully examined and tested, that there is no support in either the Bible or Mrs. White's writings for ordaining women as elders and pastors. Those of us who have for a long time cautioned against this practice gratefully respond, "Thank you, Ad Hoc Committee."

The same "Thank You" goes to the pro-ordination scholars at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee. After their two years of research work, their failure to come up with the elusive basis for ordaining women as elders/pastors has confirmed that the position of our Adventist pioneers and that of the world wide Church (through its official actions at GC sessions) are on solid ground. In the course of examining their research, the truth we have always believed has shone even brighter. Writes E. G. White:

"Opposition and resistance only serve to bring out truth in new, distinct lines. The more truth is spoken against, the brighter it will shine. Thus the precious ore is polished. Every word of slander spoken against it, every misrepresentation of its value, awakens attention and is the means of leading to closer investigation as to what is saving truth. The truth becomes more highly estimated. New beauty and greater value are revealed from every point of view"

—Ellen G. White (*Evangelism*, p. 305)

The NAD leadership's carefully-choreographed agenda to domesticate women's ordination, though wrong-headed, has resulted in the Church studying the subject more deeply. Now that we know the arguments for women's ordination are still Biblically non-existent, the world Church has a stronger reason to resoundingly vote against motion for women's ordination when it comes up at the 2015 San Antonio GC session, and *in addition* vote "No more" to further attempts to force the Church to adopt or permit a post-modern revision of the Bible.

Brother Emmanuel, I hope you now understand why, contrary to the call by the “Elder Statesmen,” we must NOT vote “Yes” for women’s ordination.

### Why We Must NOT Vote “Yes”

In order for the 2015 GC session motion for ordaining women to be approved, delegates must be convinced that the new arguments being offered today for it are biblically-valid and superior to the arguments that were defeated in 1995 at Utrecht. The truth is, there is no biblical or Spirit of Prophecy leg for women’s ordination to stand on.

Thus to vote Yes for women’s ordination is tantamount to legislating error and encourage disobedience to God’s Word.

To the extent that my conclusions about the Seminary book and the pro-ordination arguments at Theology of Ordination Study Committee are valid, I would mention the following as some of the consequences that will result if we vote Yes to women’s ordination. Another way of saying it is that, we must vote No because of the following reasons:

**1. A “Yes” vote for women’s ordination will lead to more disobedience.** Acting upon any advice that is contrary to Scripture ultimately leads to disobedience of God’s Word in general.

“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*, 289, 290).

“True faith consists in doing just what God has enjoined, not manufacturing things He has not enjoined” (*That I May Know Him*, 226).

**2. A “Yes” vote for women’s ordination will lead to destructive consequences.** No one can disobey God’s Word without experiencing destructive consequences. Because our Lord is merciful and

patient, not willing that any should perish, the consequences of our disobedience are often slow in coming. But consequences always follow. Thus, the legislation of any secular ideology instead of the proclamation of sound theology will surely have consequences.

Already the worldwide church is harvesting some of the baneful results of the push to ordain women as elders and pastors. For example,

- there are tensions and divisions in churches where the ideology of women's ordination is being forced upon loyal members;
- there are strained relationships and broken homes where the erroneous doctrine of "total egalitarianism" or "total role interchangeableness" has been accepted;
- there is mistrust in and loss of credibility by church scholars and leaders who are perceived as pushing upon the church an alien agenda;
- there is disillusionment among dedicated women in ministry, who are made to believe that the church is quenching their desire to be part of the soul-winning work or is discriminating against them;
- there is vilification of scholars and leaders who have courageously stood up against women's ordination;
- there is erosion of confidence in the Bible and the writings of Mrs. White as dependable sources of answers to today's perplexing questions; and
- there's an unwitting laying of a theological foundation for pro-homosexual theology, when we reject God's creation order of gender or sex roles in marriage and in the church.

**3. A "Yes" vote for women's ordination will eventually lead to doubts of the Bible.** These consequences will continue as long as we do not renounce our errors and embrace God's truth: "The teachings and restrictions of God's Word are not welcome to the

proud, sin-loving heart, and those who are unwilling to obey its requirements are ready to doubt its authority” (*Steps to Christ*, 111).

Instead of being faithful to the inspired writings by Moses, David, Isaiah, Matthew, Peter or Paul, those set on their own ways would rather cling to the opinions of their self-appointed experts—be they pastors, professors, parents, or personal acquaintances. In so doing they forget the warning by Ellen G. White:

“Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will” (*The Great Controversy*, 595)<sup>95</sup>.

### **Biblical Faithfulness: The Steps to Obedience**

We can avert these destructive consequences by turning away from our errors. In view of the biblical teaching that only qualified men may legitimately serve in the headship role of elders or pastors, we can take the following specific steps:

(1) *Delegates to the General Conference Session* should soundly defeat the motion to ordain women in different Divisions. The wording of the motion makes it clear that the decision should be based on the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy—not culture or opinions of some learned men, or Elder Statesmen. A “No” vote is the logical—and right—thing to do, since there is no ground for women’s ordination. Hence voting for regional ordinations will be equivalent to voting for the teaching and practice of error.

I agree with the group of “Theology of Ordination Study Committee” scholars who were opposed to women’s ordination, when they argue that:

“Allowing regionally-established beliefs or qualifications for ordination would fracture the church, create confusion and disunity, and set a dangerous precedent. It would remove an

important protection from non-biblical cultural influences (see AA [*Acts of the Apostles*] 95-96) and move the church toward becoming an association of national churches instead of a united world church.”<sup>96</sup>

(2) **Only faithful and courageous leaders** should be elected to office—i.e., only those who will uphold our sound biblical teachings and practices should be entrusted with the stewardship of leadership. Those already holding positions must be charged to faithfulness or be encouraged to step down. (It makes no sense for a company to keep one who is hired to promote a product, when that individual is promoting a rival product).

(3) **Church Leaders** should call for an immediate moratorium on ordaining women *as elders* and also initiate proceedings to rescind the biblically-compromising 1975 Spring Council and 1984 Annual Council actions that permitted women to be ordained as *elders*, actions that have brought the church to the straits we are in now;

(4) **Church scholars and editors** should renounce ideological proclivities, temptations, or pressures to justify or promote the divisive and unbiblical practice of ordaining women;

(5) **Women ordained as elders** should willingly and courageously give up that office, bringing their practice into line with the Bible (Acts 17:30-31);

(6) **Women laboring in the ministry** should serve in accordance with God’s biblically-prescribed will, resisting ideological attempts to transform “women’s ministry” into “feminist’s ministry”;

(7) **Church members** should respectfully, but courageously, demand a plain “thus says the Lord” whenever and wherever vocal groups, scholars, leaders, pastors, or even committees urge them to ordain or accept women as elders or as pastors; insisting upon a prayerful, unbiased, and biblically-sound investigation of the issue as both a right and a duty of every church member.

Retracing our erroneous steps, as evidence of genuine repentance, may be uncomfortable, humiliating, even costly. But what is

more costly than what it cost Jesus to save us? Loyalty to Christ may cost us our pride, but it will surely give us a free conscience.

“God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view. Would that all who have not chosen Christ might realize that he has something vastly better to offer them than they are seeking for themselves. Man is doing the greatest injury and injustice to his own soul when he thinks and acts contrary to the will of God. No real joy can be found in the path forbidden by Him who knows what is best, and who plans for the good of His creatures. The path of transgression is the path of misery and destruction” (*Steps to Christ*, 46).

**Light or Darkness?** Ellen White warned about the danger of holding on to error, after knowing the truth:

If rational beings really desire the truth, God will give them sufficient light to enable them to decide what is truth. If they have a heart to obey, they will see sufficient evidence to walk in the light. But if they in heart desire to evade the truth, he will not work a miracle to gratify their unbelief. He will never remove every chance or occasion to doubt. If they honestly, sincerely grasp the light, and walk in it, that light will increase until lingering doubts will be dispelled. But if they choose darkness, their questioning and caviling over the truth will increase, their unbelief will be strengthened, and the light which they would not accept will become to them darkness, and how great will be that darkness! It will be as much greater than before the light came, as the light which was rejected was clearer and more abundant than the light which first shone upon them. Thus it was with the Jewish nation; thus it will be with the Christian world in every generation. The rejectors of light treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath. There are those who walk amid perpetual doubts. They feed on doubts, enjoy doubts, talk doubts, and question everything that it is for their interest to believe. To those who thus trifle

with the plain testimonies of God's word, and who refuse to believe because it is inconvenient and unpopular to do so, the light will finally become darkness; truth will appear to the darkened understanding as error, and error will be accepted as truth. When thus shrouded in error, they will find it perfectly natural and convenient to believe what is false, and will become strong in their faith (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 5, 1886).

My way of paraphrasing E.G. White's statement above is this: "When truth is presented to an honestly mistaken person, they either cease to be mistaken (if they embrace the truth) or cease to be honest (if they reject the truth).

**The Choice We Face.** In presenting their book to the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist church, the twenty scholars of *Women in Ministry* stated: "We hope and pray that this volume may assist individuals, leaders, and the community of faith at large in deciding how to deal with the issue of ordination and, more specifically, the relationship of ordination to women."<sup>97</sup>

If the "biblical, theological, and historical perspectives" elaborated in *Women in Ministry* are all that these professors can present to the church, then the decision on "how to deal with the issue" of women's ordination *as elders or pastors* is not a difficult one to make. Their well-publicized and widely distributed volume offers compelling evidence against the practice. It is one more proof that the campaign waged during the past two or three decades by a few influential scholars and leaders to impose women's ordination on the church is a tragic mistake.

In light of this fact, we must ask: What should be our individual and collective responses to the teaching of Scripture regarding the ordination of women to the headship office of elder or pastor? Should we go beyond the legitimate role of women in ministry by ordaining them as elders or pastors?

Should we risk the displeasure of God by doing what seems right in our own eyes? Or should we seek a scriptural basis for empowering women for ministry and bring an end to the present

“divisiveness and disunity,” “embarrassment,” and “dishonor upon this church that we love”?<sup>98</sup>

Brother Emmanuel, what I have set forth thus far has been what I have articulated more fully in several of my works. These works are available for all who love the truth. So, No, unlike some others, I have not been silent.

### Endnotes

- 76 C. Mervyn Maxwell, “A Very Surprising (and Interesting) History,” *Adventists Affirm* 12/3 (Fall 1998): 18-23, appearing on pp. 225-230 of *Prove All Things*; cf. *Receiving the Word*, pp. 125-126; 140, notes 43 and 44.
- 77 This section is a slight adaption from chapters 11 and 16 of the book.
- 78 Refer to the minutes of the General Conference Spring Meeting (April 1975) and the General Conference Annual Council (October 1984).
- 79 The entire document, with helpful commentary, is reproduced as Appendix D in *Prove All Things*, 391-404.
- 80 For information about the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC)—guidelines/terms of reference, composition, etc., see <https://www.adventistarchives.org/about-tosc>.
- 81 For a list of some of the significant TOSC works that uphold the longstanding position of the Church, see Appendix of this book, under “C. More Scholarly Articles from the “Theology of Ordination Study Committee” (TOSC).”
- 82 Three positions eventually emerged at the TOSC: Position Summary #1—the “No” position finds no evidence in Bible and Ellen G. White’s writings to support the ordination of women to the gospel ministry. (<https://www.adventistarchives.org/position-summary-1.pdf>); Position Summary #2—the “Yes” position argues that “there is nothing spiritually, ethically, or morally wrong with ordaining women to the gospel ministry” (<https://www.adventistarchives.org/position-summary-2.pdf>); Position Summary #3—the “No” & “Yes” position is more of a compromising position (contrary to their claims) that attempts to blend Positions 1 and 2 (<https://www.adventistarchives.org/position-summary-3.pdf>).
- 83 *Women and Ordination: Biblical and Historical Studies* (Pacific Press, 2015) is edited by John W. Reeve—an assistant professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. He is also editor of *Andrews University Seminary Studies*; his wife is associate professor of New Testament as well as associate dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.

The book's release was announced on the *Spectrum* magazine website, under the caption "Pacific Press Publishes New Collection of Essays on Ordination." See, <http://spectrummagazine.org/article/2015/05/16/pacific-press-publishes-new-collection-essays-ordination>.

- 84 Pacific Press Publishes New Collection of Essays on Ordination." See, <http://spectrummagazine.org/article/2015/05/16/pacific-press-publishes-new-collection-essays-ordination>.
- 85 See, "Evaluation of Egalitarian Papers"—by Gerhard Pfandl with Daniel Bediako, Steven Bohr, Laurel and Gerard Damsteegt, Jerry Moon, Paul Ratsara, Ed Reynolds, Ingo Sorke, and Clinton Wahlen, available at: <https://www.adventistarchives.org/evaluation-of-egalitarian-papers.pdf>.
- 86 The following are the "Adventist Elder Statesmen" who issued their "Yes" statement: Jan Paulsen (former GC President, 1999-2010), Charles Bradford (Former NAD President, 1979-1990), Alejandro Bullón (Pastor/Evangelist, South America and throughout the world, 1969 to present), Calvin B. Rock (former General Conference Vice-President, 1985-2002), William G. Johnsson (former editor of *Adventist Review*, 1982-2007), and Angel Rodriguez (former Director of the GC's Biblical Research Institute, 1987-2011).
- 87 See Beverly Beem, "What If ... Women in Ministry?" *Focus*, Winter 1999, 31.
- 88 Vyhmeister, "Prologue," *Women in Ministry*, 5; idem, "Epilogue," *Women in Ministry*, 436.
- 89 Roger L. Dudley, "[Letter to the Editor Regarding] *Women in Ministry*," *Adventist Today*, January-February 1999, 6.
- 90 Calvin Rock, "Review of *Women in Ministry*," *Adventist Review*, April 15, 1999, 29.
- 91 Fritz Guy, "Review of *Women in Ministry*," *Ministry*, January 1999, 29.
- 92 Mercedes H. Dyer, *Prove All Things: A Response to 'Women in Ministry'* (2000).
- 93 Similarly, the attempt to legislate women's ordination as a "moral imperative" could lead to and institutionalize intolerance and persecution of those who uphold the biblical teaching of role relationships in the church. In my opinion, it is a tragic mistake for the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary to have financed the publication of this book, when the same work could have been published independently by the pro-ordination scholars. In this respect, the Seminary has set an unfortunate precedent by opening its door to those who may be seeking ways to commandeer the name and resources of our church's leading theological institution for their own ideological agendas.

- 94 Vyhmeister, "Prologue," *Women in Ministry*, p. 5.
- 95 I simply refuse to comment on the way church publications and other organs of the church in North America (and some parts of the industrialized world) have been hijacked to promote in a one-sided manner the agenda of women's ordination.
- 96 <https://www.adventistarchives.org/way-forward-statement-1.pdf>.
- 97 Vhymeister, "Prologue," *Women In Ministry*, p. 5.
- 98 Alfred C. McClure, "NAD President Speaks on Women's Ordination," *Adventist Review*, February 1995, 14, 15.



# Chapter 10

## Restless Eves or Reckless Adams

*(A False Dilemma)*

*“When truth is presented to an honestly mistaken person, they either cease to be mistaken or cease to be honest.”*

—Samuel Koranteng-Pipim

*“I would exchange a thousand errors for one truth.”*

—J.N. Andrews

A false dilemma is a logical fallacy which involves presenting two opposing views, options, or outcomes in such a way that they seem to be the only possibilities. It describes a situation when only two choices are presented yet more exist, or a spectrum of possible choices exists between two extremes.

This is the manner in which proponents of women’s ordination often frame the argument. Either you’re for women’s ordination or you’re not in favor of women in ministry. Or that, you have to be in favor of “full equality” (defined as the obliteration of gender role-differences) or you believe in male superiority. These are all false dilemmas. And they can be toxic in our relationship with one another.

One of the major concerns raised by the push for women’s ordination is the attitude that it is breeding. I refer to it as the spirit of “restless Eves” and “reckless Adams.” Some would call it female- and male-chauvinism. Both of these attitudes permeate much of contemporary society, and both tend to muffle Scripture’s testimony of the complementary relationship between women and men.

How has the spirit of “restless modern Eves” influenced attitudes toward Scripture? To what extent is this restlessness a response to reckless modern *Adams*? In this setting, how has “culture” set up

barriers to prevent women from giving full expression to their ministry? How can we recapture the “true womanly dignity and nobility of character” that has been sacrificed as restless Eves have “left undone the very work that Heaven appointed them” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 59)?

### The Spirit of Restless Eves

Ellen White was well aware of the feminist movement of her day when she wrote concerning the attempt to ignore or even reverse God’s divine arrangement on headship:

Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband’s side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 59).

Restless modern Eves reason that the role differentiation God established to govern the complementary relationship of male and female equality makes men superior and women inferior. Believing themselves deprived of their true womanly dignity, some modern Eves seek “self-fulfillment,” “equality,” and “human justice” by trying to be like men or by aspiring for roles that are assigned to men. Regrettably, these worrisome aspects of feminism are slowly migrating into Christianity.

Feminists within Christianity who may not go this far in their war against marriage and organized religion still do make the effort to re-define God along gender-neutral lines. They want to get rid of the alleged offensive (i.e., “sexist,” “male-oriented” or “patriarchal”) language in the Bible and replace it with a gender-inclusive terms which blur the male-female distinction. Accordingly, “Son of God” becomes “Child of God;” “Son of Man” becomes “Human One;” “heavenly Father” becomes “heavenly Parent;” and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is transformed into a goddess named Sophia.<sup>99</sup>

To declare gender distinctions as obsolete, restless Eves adopt an attitude which denies the full inspiration of the Bible and which utilizes higher critical methods of its interpretation.<sup>100</sup>

To them, the Bible is the product of a patriarchal, male-dominated (androcentric) culture. Maintaining that some parts of the inspired Scriptures are prejudiced against women's rights and aspirations, they hold that Paul's prohibition of a woman "to have authority over a man" (1 Timothy 2:12; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:3, 8, 11; 14:34) and his statement that an overseer/elder be "husband [*aner*] of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6) are "culturally-conditioned."

By pitting Paul's "neither male nor female" principle (Galatians 3:28) against his headship principle, they seem to suggest that there are degrees of inspiration in the Bible—the less inspired parts being tainted with human errors and contradictions. Thus they consider any passage of Scripture that does not uphold the principle of "equality"—redefined to mean the absence of role differentiation within the complementary partnership of male and female relationship—as sexist and biased, and therefore not inspired.

Ellen White warned against this spirit:

There are some that may think they are fully capable with their finite judgment to take the Word of God, and to state what are the words of inspiration, and what are not the words of inspiration. I want to warn you off that ground, my brethren in the ministry. 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' There is no finite man that lives, I care not who he is or whatever is his position, that God has authorized to pick and choose in His Word. . . . I would have both my arms taken off at my shoulders before I would ever make the statement or set my judgment upon the Word of God as to what is inspired and what is not inspired."<sup>101</sup>

Regrettably, in their effort to "de-culturize" the Bible, Christians influenced by the "restless modern" spirit approach the Bible with suspicion and skepticism rather than with an attitude of trust and submission to Scripture's claims. To such,

“The Bible is as a lamp without oil, because they have turned their minds into channels of speculative belief that bring misunderstanding and confusion. The work of higher criticism, in dissecting, conjecturing, reconstructing, is destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation. It is robbing God’s Word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 474).

Recognizing the dangers involved, Ellen White urged believers, “Brethren, cling to your Bible, as it reads, and stop your criticisms in regard to its validity, and obey the Word, and not one of you will be lost.”<sup>102</sup>

Since the Bible in its entirety is the inspired Word of God, we cannot pick and choose—cafeteria style—from Scripture the teachings we find palatable to our tastes.

“Do not let any living man come to you and begin to dissect God’s Word, telling what is revelation, what is inspiration and what is not, without a rebuke. ... We call on you to take your Bible, but do not put a sacrilegious hand upon it, and say, ‘That is not inspired,’ simply because somebody else has said so. Not a jot or tittle is ever to be taken from that Word. Hands off, brethren! Do not touch the ark. ... When men begin to meddle with God’s Word, I want to tell them to take their hands off, for they do not know what they are doing.”<sup>103</sup>

God speaks to all students of the Bible when He says: “This is the one I esteem: *he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word*” (Isa 66:2 NIV).

As we approach Scripture, we must not come with the spirit that possesses restless Eves, that is, the attitude that seeks to correct the alleged mistakes or biases of the Bible writers. Rather, we must be willing to learn from the Spirit of Christ, the One who inspired the Scriptures:

“In the presence of such a Teacher [Jesus], of such opportunity for divine education, what worse than folly is it to seek an education apart from Him—to seek to be wise apart

from Wisdom; to be true while rejecting Truth; to seek illumination apart from the Light, and existence without the Life; to turn from the Fountain of living waters, and hew out broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (*Education*, p. 83).

### The Attitude of Reckless Adams

To a large extent the restlessness of modern Eves results from modern Adams’s *recklessness*—a term denoting one who is careless, heedless, irresponsible, rash, foolhardy, imprudent, thoughtless. We cannot therefore discuss how women have aspired to roles for which they have not been fitted without calling attention to how men have been reluctant, if not renegade, in the judicious exercise of their true headship roles.

### Abuse of Headship

Reckless Adams have misunderstood the true biblical concept of headship, which is leadership in self-giving service (Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:24-27; John 13:13-16), misinterpreting it as dominance or control of women. What God originally instituted to be a blessing to humanity has sometimes been transformed into an oppressive structure of abuse and exploitation of women.

Ellen G. White spoke out strongly against such abuse.

The Lord Jesus has not been correctly represented in His relation to the church by many husbands in their relation to their wives, for they do not keep the way of the Lord. They declare that their wives must be subject to them in everything. But it was not the design of God that the husband should have control, as head of the house, when he himself does not submit to Christ. He must be under the rule of Christ that he may represent the relation of Christ to the church. If he is a coarse, rough, boisterous, egotistical, harsh, and overbearing man, let him never utter the word that the husband is the head of the wife, and that she must

submit to him in everything; for he is not the Lord, he is not the husband in the true significance of the term.<sup>104</sup>

She prescribed the cure for the attitude of reckless Adams. “Husbands should study the pattern and seek to know what is meant by the symbol presented in Ephesians, the relation Christ sustains to the church. The husband is to be as a Saviour in his family. Will he stand in his noble, God-given manhood, ever seeking to uplift his wife and children? Will he breathe about him a pure, sweet atmosphere?”<sup>105</sup>

Unfortunately, history documents how women have often been treated as second-class citizens in a male-dominated world. The Christian church rarely did better in its negative view of women. Some misinterpreted Paul’s prohibition of a woman “to have authority over a man ... For ... Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner” (1 Timothy 2:12, 14 NIV) as an indication that women are temptresses and seductresses of incautious men. Thus, they have argued, women should be veiled and silenced, performing their God-given roles only in the home.

This distorted view of woman’s “place” in society fails to recognize that, outside the ordained roles of priest, apostle, elder and minister, women have always had a legitimate place in society and ministry.<sup>106</sup>

### Failure to Measure Up

In addition to the abuse of the headship principle, the restlessness of modern Eves may, in some cases, also be traced to the incompetent and mediocre ministries of some who have exercised authority as elders and pastors. How well do reckless modern Adams measure up to their calling?

Bible-believing Christians who rightly insist that an elder or pastor should be the “husband [*aner*] of one wife” must also take seriously the other qualifications:

Here is a trustworthy saying: If any one sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap (1 Tim 3:1-7, NIV; cf. Titus 1:5-9).

Measured by these standards, can it be denied that too often modern Adams have been reckless?

- Is the restlessness of modern Eves an echo to some degree of a crisis of male leadership? A protest, perhaps, against the abuse and distortion of the headship principle?
- Is it a commentary on the ineptitude, incompetence, arrogance, laziness, greed, and mediocrity that has plagued the ministry of some males in spiritual leadership?
- Or might it be an indictment of the poor preaching and teaching of elders and pastors, and perhaps their lack of courage, dedication and spirituality?
- If so, is there any better time than now to repent, confess, and remedy the abuses, inequities, and failures of men that have given credibility and power to the call for women's ordination?

### **Injustice**

Much of the agitation for women's ordination will be quieted if the men who have been called to leadership roles make a genuine effort to rectify the years of denial of fair wages and other financial

security to women who have labored faithfully in ministry. If “the elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching,” and if “the worker deserves his wages” (1 Timothy 5:17, 18 NIV; cf. 1 Corinthians 9:7-12), what about the faithful women laboring in ministry?

Ellen White used several strong terms to describe the denial of just wages for the labor of women in ministry. She called this “making a difference” (discrimination), “selfishly withholding ... their due,” “exaction,” “partiality,” “selfishness,” and “injustice.” She said, “the tithe should go to those who labor in word and doctrine, be they men or women.”<sup>107</sup>

Fairness and equity should not depend on ordination. Ellen White protested the injustice of denying women workers their full due.

Some matters have been presented to me. ... If the Lord gives the wife [of the minister], as well as the husband, the burden of labor, and if she devotes her time and her strength to visiting from family to family, opening the Scriptures to them, *although the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her*, she is accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry. Should her labors be counted as nought, and her husband’s salary be no more than that of the servant of God whose wife does not give herself to the work, but remains at home to care for her family? ... As the devoted minister and his wife engage in the work, they should be paid wages proportionate to the wages of two distinct workers, that they may have means to use as they shall see fit in the cause of God. The Lord has put His spirit upon them both.<sup>108</sup>

Discrimination against women has much the same effect as racism, a sinful practice that has “created in its victims a sense of inferiority, defeatism, resentment, and a determination to get even. It has despised, beaten, wounded, robbed, bruised and left unconscious people of other races, while those who are in a position to show compassion and bind up the wounds of the victims of racism, like the priest and Levite in Christ’s parable of the Good Samaritan,

have passed by on the other side. Worse still, racism has murdered many innocent people just because of the shape of their noses, the color of their skins or some other physical features.”<sup>109</sup>

Practicing oppression based on gender is no less offensive to God than doing so based on skin color or nationality. Taking moral responsibility for the restlessness of some modern Eves means that we—reckless modern Adams—have to repent and correct the wrong practices that have led to this.

A call to biblical fidelity summons us not only to reject the unbiblical practice of ordaining women as elders or pastors, but also to reaffirm women’s legitimate role in ministry within the framework of biblical guidelines. We still have work to do to remove any obstacle that is “liable to discourage our sisters from qualifying themselves for the work they should engage in.” Their ministry is important. Writes E. G. White:

“In many respects a woman can impart knowledge to her sisters that a man cannot. The cause would suffer great loss without this kind of labor by women. Again and again the Lord has shown me that women teachers are just as greatly needed to do the work to which He has appointed them as are men.”<sup>110</sup>

### **“Cultural” Barriers to Women’s Ministry**

In addition to the abuse of headship and the failure of men to live up to the demands of their calling, certain cultures have also contributed to the restlessness of modern Eves. In speaking of “culture” in this context, I do not have in mind a sociological definition, such as a group’s identification with certain political structures, be they “patriarchal,” “democratic,” or “non-democratic” systems.

Instead, I am referring to culture in the *theological* sense—understood as a community’s fidelity to the truths revealed in Scripture. Thus defined, it is not altogether difficult to explain why some cultures relate to the women’s ordination issue in particular ways.<sup>111</sup>

There are “cultures” (churches, conferences, unions, divisions) in which the biblical meaning of “ministry” as any service rendered

by a person to advance the work of God<sup>112</sup> is restricted largely to the *pastoral* ministry. Where such a view of ministry prevails it is not uncommon to find another deviation from the biblical understanding of ministry: rather than perceiving ministry as a servant-leadership role that empowers and nurtures church members (1 Corinthians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:7), these cultures will tend to view ministry in terms of power, status and privileges to be enjoyed (1 Peter 5:1-3).

Accordingly, church members are led to believe that the only way a person can do the work of ministry is to be an elder or pastor. Besides, any biblical restriction regarding who can fulfill these roles (e.g., the headship principle) is interpreted to mean a limitation or control of a person's desire to work in the ministry, if not a denial of the person's "rights" "privileges" or "status" as a Christian.

Therefore, in the "cultures" (churches, conferences, unions, divisions) where "ministry" carries the narrow meaning of "*pastoral* ministry," those who seek "empowerment for ministry" believe it can only be found when one is ordained as an elder or pastor. As a consequence, there is confusion about what "lay ministry" and "women ministry" are all about—a fact that may account for both a diminishing participation of lay persons in the work of ministry and a restlessness of modern Eves in those cultures.

By contrast, in areas where the true meaning of ministry (i.e., any service that is carried out by any church member in a God-glorifying manner) is upheld, the ordained elder/pastor is not viewed as the only "minister" with the gift of preaching, evangelizing, counseling or administration, etc. (Romans 12:4ff.; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:7-13). Though he serves as leader of the church, he understands his place as the first among spiritual equals; he is one "minister" who has been called upon by the church, through the act of ordination, to provide a servant-leadership of protecting the church and empowering all of its members for their respective work of "ministry."<sup>113</sup>

Wherever this true meaning of "ministry" is captured, the tendency for the elder/pastor to think of himself as the "senior" pastor, or even to talk about "my church" or "my pulpit," is greatly minimized.

When the ordained elder or pastor does his work well—not as a reckless modern Adam—no restriction, other than that found in Scripture itself (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6), is placed on what women can do in ministry. This might explain why, in these “cultures,” there is explosion in church membership as well as a decrease in the spirit of restless Eves.

The above analysis suggests that overcoming the “cultural barriers” to women’s role in ministry must begin with a recovery of the true meaning of ministry. The emphasis on *pastoral* ministry (not lay ministry) as the essence of ministry will have to be corrected.

First, those holding headship positions as elders/pastors need to be reminded of the biblical doctrine of the “priesthood of all believers.” This doctrine recognizes that since the church is a worshiping community (a priestly people called to offer “spiritual sacrifices” of praise and prayer) and also a witnessing community (a missionary people called to declare the “praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light”), every church member—whether man or woman—has been called to a ministry that is of no less importance than the pastoral ministry (1 Peter 2:5, 9-10 NIV; cf. Revelation 1:6).

Second, while there exist “varieties of service [*diakonia* = ministry]” in the church, so that every believer has a “ministry,” church members (i.e., those who are not part of the pastoral ministry) must also be reminded that elders and pastors have been given a special oversight responsibility in the church (Hebrew 13:7, 17, 24; Acts 20:28-35; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). They “rule well” (1 Timothy 5:17; 3:5) if, in their capacity as “pastor-teachers,” they are able to channel all the gifts of the church members toward the work of ministry.<sup>110</sup>

The “priesthood of all believers” is not, therefore, a justification to diminish the importance of the pastoral ministry; nor is it a reason to show contempt or disrespect to the pastoral ministry. To do so is to display the spirit of Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Numbers 16; 26:9-11).<sup>115</sup>

As Ellen White explains, the pastoral ministry is “a sacred and exalted office,” “the highest of all work.” Those “who belittle the ministry are belittling Christ.”<sup>116</sup>

Once these “cultural barriers” to ministry are removed by recapturing the biblical understanding of ministry, it will be clear that the restriction of the headship role of elder or pastor is not a limitation upon women’s role in ministry.

On the contrary, converted women—whether married or single—will come to realize that there are *unlimited ministries* in which they can be involved in advancing the cause of Christ:

Wonderful is the mission of the wives and mothers and the younger women workers. If they will, they can exert an influence for good to all around them. By modesty in dress and circumspect deportment, they may bear witness to the truth in its simplicity. They may let their light so shine before all, that others will see their good works and glorify their Father which is in heaven. A truly converted woman will exert a powerful transforming influence for good. Connected with her husband, she may aid him in his work, and become the means of encouragement and blessing to him. When the will and way are brought into subjection to the Spirit of God, *there is no limit to the good that can be accomplished* (*Evangelism*, pp. 467-468, emphasis added).<sup>117</sup>

Capturing this broad meaning of the gospel ministry, Ellen White wrote, “There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry. In many respects they would do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God” (*Evangelism*, p. 472).

The Lord has a work for women as well as for men. . . . The Saviour will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of His countenance, and *will give them a power that exceeds that of men*. They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their labor is needed (*ibid.*, pp. 464-465, emphasis added).

Where such ministry develops into regular, full-time labor, these women will be greatly encouraged if adequate financial provision is made for them (ibid., pp. 491-493).

The question is, within the complementarity of the gifts within the church, are women willing to perform their unlimited ministries under the appropriate headship of men? Will reckless Adams repent of their recklessness so that they may encourage restless Eves to perform their ministries in the true spirit of “mothers in Israel”?

### The Ministry of True “Mothers in Israel”

As we have seen, the real issue in the debate over women’s ordination is not whether women can be in ministry, preaching, teaching, counseling, nurturing, helping, or exercising their gifts of administration (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:4-8; Ephesians 4:7-13). The crucial issue is whether, within the partnership of an equal relationship between male and female, women are willing to exercise their gifts in a manner consistent with the teaching of Scripture.

Will they labor in ministry without aspiring for the headship role of ordained elders or pastors? Will the women who are seeking to labor in ministry follow the example of the godly women recorded in the Bible (a challenge for which men find a parallel in the lives of godly men recorded in Scripture)?

### True Women in Ministry

These women of old were not actuated by the principle of self-advocacy that is prevalent in the spirit of our restless modern Eves. Instead, they exhibited a spirit of self-denial in utilizing their God-given gifts within the framework of biblical guidelines.

- Some of *these women* braved the hazards of missionary outreach work by accompanying Jesus and the apostles as they taught in various places (Luke 8:1-3, 1 Corinthians 9:5).

- *Mary, Joanna, Susanna* and *others* “ministered” (*diakoneo*) by contributing from their own means to support the work (Luke 8:3),
- *Peter’s mother-in-law* and *Martha* “ministered” by preparing meals (Luke 4:39; John 12:2).
- Others like *Jochebed* and *Hannah* labored quietly in their homes, believing that rearing a future Moses or Samuel was as much ministry as the work of evangelists, preachers, and church administrators.

### Temporary Leadership

In the Bible record, when the men defaulted in their headship responsibilities, some women also ministered by exercising *temporary* leadership in a way that was consistent with the biblical guidelines.

- Over against the foolhardiness of Nabal (1 Samuel 25), *Abigail* “lost no time” in averting a crisis (1 Samuel 25:18ff. NIV);
- Against Barak’s vacillation and spineless leadership, *Deborah* the prophet emerged as a “mother in Israel” (Judges 5:7) who not only performed the function of judge but accompanied Barak to battle (Judges 4);<sup>118</sup>
- Against the prejudice of the disciples, *the Samaritan woman* was raised to preach the gospel to an entire village, preparing the ground for a bountiful harvest of souls (John 4);
- Against the greed of Judas who betrayed his Master for thirty pieces of silver, *Mary* expended her savings of a typical year’s worth of income on a perfume to anoint her Lord for His burial (John 12:1-8);
- Against the cowardice of the disciples locked behind doors for “fear of the Jews,” Jesus commissioned *Mary* with the good news of His resurrection (John 20; cf. Luke 24:9, 10, 22);

- Against Demas' worldliness and betrayal of Paul (2 Timothy 4:10), **Junia** chose imprisonment with the apostle (Romans 16:7; cf. Acts 8:3);<sup>119</sup> and
- Against the behavior of some elders greedy for money, not eager to serve and lording it over the church members (1 Pet 5:1-4), **Phoebe** served admirably as “a servant of the church ... [and] a great help to many people, including me [Paul]” (Romans 16:1, 2 NIV).<sup>120</sup>

These godly women exercised their leadership within the framework of biblical guidelines. Consequently, they did not aspire to ordination as priests, apostles or elders, even though the recklessness of the Adams of their day could have been cited as justification for them to display the restless spirit of modern Eves.

History will indicate that the faith and prayers of women have helped to make Pentecost happen in every generation (Acts 1:14). In our own Seventh-day Adventist church, Ellen White is another example of a woman who was not actuated by the self-advocacy spirit of modern Eves.

“No one has ever heard me claim the position of leader of the denomination. I have a work of great responsibility to do—to impart by pen and voice the instruction given me, not alone to Seventh-day Adventists, but to the world. I have published many books, large and small, and some of these have been translated into several languages. This is my work—to open the Scriptures to others as God has opened them to me. ... I thank the Lord that He gave us the privilege of acting a part in the work from the beginning. But neither then nor since the work has grown to large proportions, during which time responsibilities have been widely distributed, has anyone heard me claiming the leadership of this people” (*Testimonies for the Church*, 8:236, 237).<sup>121</sup>

These noble examples of unique leadership by women are warnings to reckless modern Adams that if they are reluctant or renegade in exercising their God-assigned roles as leaders in their

homes and churches, God can raise some temporary Deborahs to do the work.

Similarly, the beautiful examples of these godly women speak to restless modern Eves the truth that even in this sinful world, Christ's transforming power is able to help women fulfill their Heaven-appointed roles "in accordance with God's plan." Because these women in Bible times did not succumb to the flattery "of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned," they did not sacrifice their "true womanly dignity and nobility of character."<sup>122</sup>

Are we reckless Adams and restless Eves ready to respond to the heart-searching questions posed by God?

### **"Where Are You," Adam? "What Is This You Have Done," Eve?**

When Satan tempted our first parents, he wanted to lead them into thinking that they could be "like God" (Genesis 3:5). To do so, he suggested to Eve that she could attain a higher role than that which God had assigned her at creation.

Thus, Eve took the first step in her quest to be like God when she usurped the man's headship role. By directing his temptation to Eve instead of Adam, who had been given the leadership responsibility concerning the dangers of the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:16-17), Satan struck at the headship principle governing the relationships between men and women, and he succeeded in disrupting the harmony our first parents enjoyed under God's arrangement.

Both of our parents were responsible for the fall—Adam by failing to exercise his responsibility to protect his wife and guide her to obey God, and Eve by usurping Adam's headship. Adam was reckless, and Eve was restless.

Since that time men who are expected to exercise the headship function in both the home and the church have been reckless. In place of providing caring, sacrificial male leadership, many men attempt either to dominate women or to escape responsibility. Also, instead of women assisting or supporting the men, modern Eves

have been restless. In place of a loving submission or a noble cooperation, they have sought to usurp men's leadership or they adopt a servile submission.

The result is that today, gender roles have become a cage from which both men and women want freedom. Some men believe that they need to be nurtured and consoled, while some women want to be tough and "strong." Men are piercing their ears and dressing in more feminine ways. Some are even claiming to be women and attempting to marry their fellow men. Not wanting to be outdone, women are now dressing like men, aspiring to roles reserved for men and even seeking "marriages" with other women.<sup>123</sup>

Could it be that at the root of the ongoing push for women's ordination in various Christian churches lies the forbidden issue of the recklessness of modern Adams and the restlessness of modern Eves? If so, we may find a solution in responding to the heart-searching questions God posed after the fall of Adam and Eve. To Adam, God said, "Where are you?" and to Eve, He said, "What is this you have done?" (Genesis 3:9, 13). In these two questions God calls to reckless Adams and restless Eves.

The attitude of modern reckless Adams does not help women in ministry. Its failure to live up to the demands of Christlike leadership has distorted, if not abused, the biblical headship principle—resulting in some instances in discouraging women from laboring in ministry, a mission that Christ Himself has extended to both men and women (Matthew 28:18-20).

Therefore when the Lord calls out, "Adam, where are you?," He is calling upon men to give account of their stewardship as leaders in both the home and the church. They have been mesmerized by the spirit of restless Eves that permeates much of society, so that they have reneged on their responsibility as spiritual leaders and have failed to uphold biblical fidelity.

In the same way, the spirit of restless modern Eves will not empower women in ministry. Its self-advocating stance is contrary to Scripture's emphasis on self-denial. Its war against role distinctions in marriage as well as in the church does not accord with God's

plan. Its recipe of picking and choosing from the Bible, rejecting “unpalatable” portions of Scripture, undermines the foundation of the Christian’s faith.

Therefore, when the Lord also calls out, “Eve, what is this you have done?”; He is calling Eves to consider seriously what they are doing to homes and churches by their restless spirit. They have allowed the recklessness of modern Adams to lead them into disobeying God’s arrangement so that they aspire to roles that God has not assigned to them.

Ultimately, God’s two questions—”Where are you,” Adam? and “What is this you have done” Eve?—probe whether we are willing to do God’s will. Are we willing to answer these heart-searching questions? Specifically, in the light of *searching the Scriptures*, is the church going to address the issue of women’s ordination in a manner

### Endnotes

- 99 See Elizabeth Achtemeier, “Why God Is Not Mother: A Response to Feminist God-talk in the Church,” *Christianity Today* (August 16, 1993):16-23. For a shocking account of how this feminist “re-imagining” of God is being actively promoted in Christian churches, see James R. Edwards, “Earthquake in the Mainline,” *Christianity Today* (November 14, 1994): 38-43.
- 100 While C. Raymond Holmes has provided a useful analysis and critique of feminist ideology (see *The Tip of an Iceberg*, pp. 87-132), it is of no less importance that the method feminist interpreters bring to Scripture, like that of other liberation theologians, is an aspect of the historical-critical method (*ibid.*, pp. 31-48).
- 101 Ellen G. White comments, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:919.
- 102 *Selected Messages* , 1:18.
- 103 Ellen G. White comments, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:919-920.
- 104 *The Adventist Home*, p. 117.
- 105 *ibid.*

- 106 One of the best summaries of the role of women in biblical history is provided by Dwight Pratt. Contrary to modern revisionist interpretations which claim that women in Bible times were reduced to little more than goods and chattel, he shows that the position of women among God's people in both the Old and New Testaments contrasted markedly with their status in the surrounding heathen nations. Whatever distorted view currently exists regarding women's place in society and ministry is a departure from the religion of the Bible. See Dwight M. Pratt, "Woman," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, ed. James Orr, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, reprint 1986) 4:3100-3104.
- 107 *Evangelism*, pp. 491-493.
- 108 Ms. 43a, 1893, published as Manuscript Release #330 in *Manuscript Releases* 5:323,324, emphasis added.
- 109 Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, "Saved by Grace and Living by Race: The Religion Called Racism," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 5/2 (1994):64. For a detailed discussion of the subject of racism, see, *Must We Be Silent*, p. 299-441.
- 110 *Evangelism*, 492, 493.
- 111 It can hardly be disputed that there are some "cultures" where the churches, conferences, unions, and divisions are "not ready" to go ahead with the ordination of women to the gospel ministry. The question is not whether culture plays a part in the discussion of women's ordination, but rather how "culture" is to be defined in the context of "ministry." Should Christians adopt a sociological definition (e.g., "patriarchal," "democratic/non-democratic") or should it be defined theologically in terms of one's attitude to Scripture (view of inspiration, method of interpretation)? While some may adopt the former, Bible-believing Christians will prefer the latter approach. Thus, in the context of our discussion of women's ordination, these Christians may point to "cultural" attitudes that are formed when one has a particular view of "minister." One theological culture will develop if the word is taken simply as a noun—a station of life for a few people, namely, the ordained clergy; another will develop if "minister" is seen as a verb, an activity to be carried out by all members of the church—elders and pastors as well as church members.
- 112 Thus, services like preparation of a meal (Luke 10:40), serving a meal (Luke 22:27), taking care of the needy (Acts 6:1-4), the employment of any of the spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:5; 1 Peter 4:10), and any other thing done to advance the course of the gospel (Luke 8:1-3) are termed ministry (*diakonia*). See also our discussion of the term *diakonos*, in *Searching the Scriptures*, chapter 3, note 2.
- 113 Luke 9:1; 1 Corinthians 4:19-21; 2 Corinthians 10:8; 13:10; Philemon 8-10.

- 114 The relationship between the pastoral ministry and all other ministries is set forth in Ephesians 4:11-12: “And these were his gifts: some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, *to equip God’s people for work in his service* [ministry], to the building up of the body of Christ” (NEB). Paul refers to the pastoral ministry to which elders or pastors are called as the office of “pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11). In the Greek, the structure of the phrase “pastors and teachers” suggests that this is one office with two essential functions— (1) pastoring or shepherding (cf. John 21:16; Acts 20:28, 29; 1 Peter 5:2, 3) and (2) teaching (cf. 1 Timothy 3:2; Romans 12:7, Titus 1:9). In other words, those in the pastoral ministry are “teaching-shepherds” (or “pastor-teachers”) and in this role they are to equip “God’s people” for ministry (Ephesians 4:12).
- 115 See S. Lawrence Maxwell’s article, “One Chilling Word,” in the Spring 1995 *Adventists Affirm*.
- 116 *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:615; 6:411.
- 117 With women comprising a large percentage of the church membership, with a sizable group of the world’s population unreached by the traditional evangelistic methods, and with the needs in our world ever growing due to the problem of sin, why should we think that the single biblical restriction of the headship role of elder/pastor to men places a limitation on what women can do in ministry? When ministry is understood not just as *pastoral* ministry, it would be impossible to list all the ministries women can engage in. Of these we can point to personal ministries, such as the ministries of prayer, letter writing, counseling, helping, giving Bible studies, teaching cooking and literacy, not to mention ministries to the sick, children, needy, etc. *Public* ministries may include teaching Sabbath school, preaching, singing, missionary work, social ministries, health evangelism, chaplaincy work, prison ministry, etc. The designation our church recently developed, “associates in pastoral care,” was intended, I believe, to express and encompass especially these public ministries along with such personal ministries as counseling and giving Bible studies.
- 118 For a discussion of the leadership of Deborah the prophet in comparison to the leadership of elders/pastors, see chapter 3, endnote 1 above. The unique leadership of Deborah as prophet and judge in Israel is probably the best model of how women can exercise their leadership gifts in the absence of capable men (Judges 4:4ff.). However, whereas other judges led Israel into victory in battles, God told Deborah that Barak was to do this (vv. 6-7). Apparently she was the only judge in the book of Judges who had no military function. Also, Deborah did not assert leadership for herself, but she gave priority to a man—even though the man was reluctant to go to battle without her (v. 8). Deborah rebuked Barak’s failure to exercise his God-appointed leadership; he is told that the glory that

day would go to a woman—not Deborah, but Jael (vv. 9, 17-25.). Thomas R. Schreiner therefore concludes that Deborah’s “attitude and demeanor were such that she was not asserting her leadership. Instead, she handed over the leadership, contrary to the pattern of all the judges, to a man” (see Schreiner, “The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership: A Survey of Old and New Testament Examples and Teaching,” in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, p. 216).

- 119 Regarding the claim that Junia was a “female apostle,” see *Must We Be Silent*, pp. 237-238; cf. *Searching the Scriptures*, note 3 in chapter 3.
- 120 For a discussion of the claim that the description of Phoebe as “a servant [*diakonos*] of the church,” means she was a “female minister,” see *Must We Be Silent*, pp. 238-244; cf. *Searching the Scriptures*, chapter 3, note 2.
- 121 Wherever this spirit of Ellen White is cherished, the ministry of women has had powerful impact. Thus in early Seventh-day Adventist history women played major roles in the publishing and editorial work, home missionary work, the work of Sabbath schools, church finances and administration, frontier missions and evangelism, and medical and educational work. None of these roles, however, led women to aspire to ordination as elders or pastors (see William Fagal, “Ellen White and the Role of Women in the Church,” available from the Ellen G. White Estate). The spirit of Ellen White is also reflected in the ministries of women in Africa and many other parts of the world. See J. J. Nortey, “The Bible, Our Surest Guide,” in the Spring 1995 issue of *Adventists Affirm*.
- 122 *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 59.
- 123 Samuele Bacchiocchi, “Recovering Harmonious Gender Distinctions,” in the Spring 1995 issue of *Adventists Affirm*.



# Chapter 11

## Standing at a Crossroads

*(What It Boils Down To)*

*“True faith consists in doing just what God has enjoined, not manufacturing things He has not enjoined”*

—Ellen G. White

*“Truth enlightens those who are willing to receive it and brings out the true nature of those opposed to it”*

—Samuel Koranteng-Pipim

**T**hough a defining issue, the question of women’s ordination is one of the theological issues that many Christians would rather not discuss. It is so explosive that anyone on either side who dares to raise the subject is likely to be misunderstood. Several reasons for this are evident.

First, church members, pastors, leaders, theologians, authors, and editors have adopted postures which might be termed arrogant, saying in effect, “No turning back on my position”—either for or against—even if Scripture teaches contrary. This unyielding attitude has contributed to the lack of free and open discussion of the subject.

It sometimes appears that there is an unspoken moratorium on a biblical investigation of the issue. In the few instances that the subject has been raised, it is not uncommon to discover that only one view is presented. This observation has led some to question whose interest is being served by the apparent muffling of opposing views. Is not the church better served when believers search the Scriptures “with all readiness of mind” to discover truth (Acts 17:11; John 8:32; Philippians 4:8)?

Without any justification, some have closed discussion on the subject, claiming the issue is “cultural,” not theological; some even suggest that the issue is not theological, but “ecclesiological,” as if

ecclesiological issues are not theological. This implies that anyone holding a contrary view on the subject is merely echoing his or her individual, cultural, or ideological biases and self-interests.

Also, because the issue of women's ordination has become so political, Christians have labeled one another unfairly, contributing to a very superficial discussion of the subject.

For example, because this cause is chiefly championed by advocates of feminist, liberation and liberal theologies (groups which generally question the full inspiration and trustworthiness of Scripture), many have wrongly assumed that any one in favor of women's ordination is a feminist, a liberal or a liberation theologian. In the same way, because those who oppose women's ordination tend to be "traditionalist" and theologically conservative, some have claimed that those who reject women's ordination are "power-hungry," "anti-women" or ethically "insensitive" to the concerns of women and minorities.

Furthermore, in subtle ways, it has also been wrongly suggested that those outside "democratic" cultures are "not ready" to go along with women's ordination either because their "cultures" do not have a high view of women, or because their cultures make it difficult for them to understand the Bible correctly or even to discern the Holy Spirit's leading of women who are aspiring to the roles of elder or pastor. The unfortunate cumulative implication of all these is that theological knowledge and spiritual insight belong only to some cultures; and unless one belongs to those cultures, one cannot legitimately address the issue.

Moreover, emotions are very much involved. We all have close friends, relatives, or other persons who influence our lives and who relate to the issue in a certain way. We do not want to hurt them by taking an opposing view. Besides, many God-fearing and capable women are serving admirably as elders. Hence, questioning whether the ordination of women as elders is biblically proper is misconstrued as an affront to their effectiveness or character.

Finally, in our pluralistic world—a world that prizes theological uncertainty, ambiguity and vagueness as marks of spiritual maturity

and scholarly enlightenment—anyone who attempts to speak forthrightly is perceived as dogmatic or intolerant.

Brother Emmanuel, against this hostile background I reluctantly undertook this assignment of presenting to you what I have clearly and more fully articulated in earlier works. We embarked upon this investigation believing that it is better to discuss an issue without settling it than to settle an issue without discussing it, and believing also that to disagree with friends is not to dishonor them. This is an honest effort to address a forbidden issue.

I have also undertaken this study with you because there are times when silence is a betrayal of Christ and His cause. You may not know how much I struggled with whether or not to respond to you, since just a short while before your phone call, I had made it clear to others that I would not say any more on the issue.

The apostle Peter wrote, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience” (1 Peter 3:15-16 NIV). I have given you my answer to your question, and the reasons on which it is based. This will be my standard response to others who might request the same of me.

In this *COURAGE* book, I have presented our understanding of Scripture (and the Spirit of Prophecy) on the subject, hoping that it will clarify some of the theological questions involved in the ongoing debate over women’s ordination. Readers should evaluate this work and others on the same issue solely on the basis of the Scriptural data. In this way we shall avoid the perennial temptation to subordinate the Bible to our individual, cultural, or ideological, prejudices and self-interests.

In this penultimate chapter, I will briefly summarize the results of our investigation and suggest some implications they may have for the Seventh-day Adventist church, which currently stands at a crossroads on the issue.

### Moment to Decide

Our study has shown that the question is not whether the church may consecrate women to a specific work by prayer and laying on of hands. Women as well as men may commit their talents fully to the Lord and His service, and the church may recognize and honor that commitment through such a special dedication service. The real question is whether, in light of the Bible's instructions, women may serve in the headship role of the elder or pastor.

My position remains that the Bible portrays women in a wide variety of significant ministries, commending many of these women for their faithful service. But on theological grounds that reach back to the order established in the Garden of Eden, it does not allow for women to serve in the headship role of the elder or pastor in the church.

Once we see what the Bible teaches, can we lightly set it aside? Though most Christian groups acknowledge that God instituted the Sabbath as the seventh day, they do not keep it holy. They have found what they consider good reasons to keep the first day. But Seventh-day Adventists keep the Sabbath, not because Sunday is inferior, but solely because God said to “remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

The principle applies to more than the Ten Commandments: we wash feet because Jesus said we should; we abstain from unclean foods because the Bible says not to eat them; we tithe as well as give offerings because the Bible tells us that *all* we have belongs to God, not to us. In these and other issues we are different from many other Christians, not in order to be *different*, but in order to be *faithful* and *obedient*.

Faithfulness to Scripture has been our strength. It has given power to our preaching and weight to our witness. On this matter of ordaining women to the headship roles of elder and pastor, can we demonstrate that we are faithful to all of what Scripture says on the subject (not just to some of the passages or to the “general principles” of Scripture)? If not, what shall we say to those we are trying to win when they challenge us on how well we follow the Bible?

Can we give a clear, “Thus saith the Lord”? Will our reasons for setting aside the Bible’s instruction on this matter sound convincing to those who challenge us? Will our reasons sound convincing to us?

Most importantly, will our reasons sound convincing to God?

The ultimate issue in this life is whether, as followers of Jesus, we will trust our heavenly Father enough to do, out of love for Him, what He asks of us. Will our actions show that we really believe His Word? Will we demonstrate our trust that He knows best, and that His will is better than ours?

So we stand at a crossroads. The choices we make will set our course from this point on. We must follow Scripture; we must “turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go” (Joshua 1:7 RSV).

### Affirmations

We have established that within the partnership of equals in the home and in the church, it is the man who is to fulfill the primary role of headship/leadership. This principle of headship is still valid today, as it has been since creation.

- This position best explains the absence of biblical precedent for ordaining women, evident not only in the male priesthood of the Old Testament but also in the failure of Jesus to appoint a single female as an apostle.
- It explains why, when a replacement was sought for an apostle (Acts 1:15-26), even though women were present and undoubtedly met most of the requirements set (vv. 21-22), a male was chosen—because “it is necessary to choose one of the men [*andron*, from *aner*] who have been with us” (Acts 1:21).
- The headship principle also explains why the New Testament has no record of any woman being ordained as an elder or pastor.

- Finally, the headship principle alone can adequately explain the explicit prohibitions of women from exercising the leadership functions of elder or pastor (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6; 1 Timothy 2:11-14; 1 Corinthians 14:34).

This understanding of the crucial issues at stake regarding women's ordination, therefore, leads to the following affirmations.

1. While maintaining the fundamental equality of male and female, the Scriptures assign a leadership role to men and a supportive role to women. These role differences—in both the home and the church—were established at creation *before* the fall and reiterated *after* the fall.
2. While Scripture calls women to labor in gospel ministry, it does not call them to fulfill the oversight/leadership roles which ordained elders and pastors are called upon to exercise.
3. While the Holy Spirit calls and empowers women with spiritual gifts for the work of ministry, the Spirit does not contradict Himself by calling women to the office of ordained elder or pastor from which they are excluded by the same Spirit's instruction in the written Word.
4. While the church is entrusted with the responsibility of recognizing and commissioning qualified women to perform certain unctions of ministry, the church does not have the authority to authorize the ordination of women to the headship/leadership role of elder or pastor, since Scripture teaches that those holding this office must be males.

### **Basis of Affirmations**

These affirmations are based on the belief that on every issue of faith and practice, Scripture alone should be the norm. Because Scripture is the inspired and trustworthy revelation of God's will, and because all the books of the Bible ultimately are the product of one divine mind, its teachings in one part do not contradict those of other parts. Finally, these affirmations are based on the assumption that Bible-believing Christians must always be willing to learn,

accept, believe, and do whatever the Bible teaches, however unpopular it may appear in their contemporary culture.

Ellen G. White wrote:

“Men in this age of the world act as if they were at liberty to question the words of the Infinite, to review his decisions and statutes, endorsing, revising, reshaping, and annulling, at their pleasure. If they cannot misconstrue, misinterpret, or alter God’s plain decision, or bend it to please the multitude and themselves, they break it. We are never safe while we are guided by human opinions; but we are safe when we are guided by a ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ We can not trust the salvation of our souls to any lower standard than the decision of an infallible Judge. Those who make God their guide, and his word their counselor, follow the lamp of life. God’s living oracles guide their feet in straight paths. Those who are thus led do not dare judge the word of God, but ever hold that his word judges them. They get their faith and religion from his word” (*The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, February 21, 1899 , p. 113).

Therefore, on this question of women’s ordination as on other matters, we must remember that “The Bible is its own interpreter, one passage explaining another. By comparing scriptures referring to the same subjects, you will see beauty and harmony of which you have never dreamed” (*Testimonies for the Church* , 4:499).

### Appeal to the Church

If the Seventh-day Adventist church prayerfully seeks Bible guidance rather than pragmatic or socio-cultural considerations, the church will be led to adopt a biblically consistent position on the issue of women’s ordination. Many dedicated and God-fearing church members, unaware of the biblical evidence, have supported ordination of women and in some cases have been ordained as women elders. We believe that if our church seeks to be bound to “the Bible and the Bible only” on this question, many of these

will willingly and courageously reverse their position to come into alignment with the Bible (Acts 17:30).

If the church seeks to be led by the Holy Spirit through His written Word, that Word will pierce through our confusion (1 Thessalonians 2:13; Psalm 19:7-9; John 8:32), avert the threat of national churches and congregationalism in our worldwide church, and bring us together “in the unity of the *Spirit*” in “the unity of the *faith*, and of the *knowledge of the Son of God*” (Ephesians 4:3, 13).

These affirmations and convictions have important implications for how the Seventh-day Adventist church should respond to women in ministry:

**1. Reaffirm the Role of Women in Ministry.** Notwithstanding male leadership of the church, (i) the fact that men and women are equal, having a complementary relationship between them, and (ii) the fact that Scripture calls women to labor in ministry suggest that:

The Seventh-day Adventist church should make provision that will encourage a greater participation of women in ministry. This may include stronger support for their training at the Seminary, adequate and fair remuneration of women for their labor and, in some cases (such as in team ministries), their being authoritatively commissioned for roles and duties that are not in violation of biblical teaching.<sup>124</sup>

Of the many lines of ministry, women could be encouraged to participate in the study, teaching and preaching of the gospel in personal and public evangelism; to be involved in ministries of prayer, visitation, counseling, writing, and singing; to labor as literature evangelists, health evangelists, to raise new churches, and to minister to the needy; to serve in positions of responsibility that do not require ordination as pastors or elders, serving as colleagues in partnership with ordained men at the various levels of the church organization; to teach in our institutions and seminaries; and above all, to minister to their children at home. The list, within Biblical limitations, is almost endless.

**2. Reconsider the Practice of Ordaining Women as Elders.** In view of the biblical teaching that only qualified men may legitimately perform the headship role of elders and overseers in the church,

The Seventh-day Adventist church should prayerfully and courageously *reconsider* previous church council actions which have brought us to the “dilemma” identified by the NAD, which results from the inconsistent and “clearly untenable” position the church presently holds. When the teaching of Scripture is clearly perceived, turning away from a wrong practice evidences genuine repentance.

**3. Reject Gender-Inclusive Ordination.** In view of the biblical teaching that the Bible makes no distinction between the office of elder and pastor, and in view of the fact that in both cases only a man may exercise headship,

The Seventh-day Adventist church should reject the proposal at the forthcoming GC Session to grant each division of the world church the right to “authorize the ordination of qualified individuals *without regard to gender*,” a request designed to commence the unbiblical practice of ordaining women as pastors. A willingness to do what is right, however unpopular and unpalatable, is a sign of maturity, spiritual growth, or sanctification.<sup>125</sup>

**4. Resist the Lure of Congregationalism.** In view of the fact that in our unique system of world-wide church organization “ordination to the ministry is recognized by the Church worldwide” (*Church Manual* [2010], pp. 28-29), and the fact that restricting the validity of a minister’s ordination to certain geographical or divisional boundaries will open the door towards national churches and ultimately to congregationalism in the church,

The Seventh-day Adventist church should vote against the motion at the GC session that, “*After your prayerful study on ordination from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the reports of the study commissions, and;*

*After your careful consideration of what is best for the Church and the fulfillment of its mission,*

*Is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No.*

*If approved, the request will disrupt the worldwide unity that presently operates in the church.*

**5. Reaffirm Fidelity to Scripture.** The Seventh-day Adventist church has always found its commission, direction, and mandate in Scripture—a principle expressed in the first article of our fundamental beliefs, which states, “The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His [God’s] will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history.” Therefore,

The Seventh-day Adventist church should use this issue of women’s ordination to reaffirm its commitment to biblical authority, to a sound method of interpreting Scripture, and to an attitude of trust and respect for the teachings of the Bible.<sup>126</sup>

Because the Christian church’s authority is *delegated* to it from Jesus Christ, its authority must be exercised within the limits He has imposed in Scripture. The church cannot, out of its own wisdom and discretion, legislate for itself doctrines, practices or policies which conflict with the Word of God in Scripture. It has authority only to *declare* the Word of God, not to *enact* its own choices out of harmony with that Word.

For this reason the Seventh-day Adventist church has always sought to remain within the bounds set by the Holy Spirit in His written Word. This historic position, this priceless legacy, we must ever cherish and uphold, at whatever cost. This is why we must maintain biblical fidelity on the issue of women’s ordination.

### **A Test of Loyalty**

The church should not accept these appeals, or any other, uncritically. Rather, like the Bereans of old, the church should search the Scriptures “with all readiness of mind” and determine whether

the conclusions arrived at in *Searching the Scriptures* are in harmony with the teachings of the Bible (Acts 17:11).

If they are not, our investigation should be corrected by the Word of God. On the other hand, if what we have discovered in this study passes the test of biblical scrutiny, the appeal should be taken seriously. For Scripture urges us, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Holding fast to that which is good should be the ultimate goal of any serious study of the Bible. “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).

There are always two choices that face us any time we encounter biblical truth. Are we going to accept it? Or will we reject it? Thus, just as with any other unresolved theological question (such as baptizing practicing polygamists, embracing homosexual lifestyle, divorce and remarriage, abortion, racism, fighting in the wars of one’s tribe or nation, etc.) the critical question for us today regarding women’s ordination is: What should be our attitudes toward the conclusions arrived at in our *searching the Scriptures*?

Those who are seeking to know and to do God’s will greet the discovery of any Bible truth with joy and repentance. Whereas they once lived in darkness, they now rejoice because the Holy Spirit has not only led them into all truth but also because He has called them out of darkness into God’s marvelous light. The truths of God’s word are like living water that quenches their burning thirst, or like living bread from heaven to satisfy their hungering souls. Their only regret is that they remained in error for so long without knowing the Bible’s precious truths.

In genuine humility and repentance, those seeking to know and to do God’s will commit themselves to a greater study of God’s word for answers to every problem they face. Through their own experience, they have come to appreciate the truth in the words of Ellen White:

“We should not take the testimony of any man as to what the Scriptures teach, but should study the words of God for ourselves. If we allow others to do our thinking, we shall have crippled energies and contracted abilities. The noble powers of the mind may be so dwarfed by lack of exercise on themes worthy of their concentration as to lose their ability to grasp the deep meaning of the Word of God. The mind will enlarge if it is employed in tracing out the relation of the subjects of the Bible, comparing scripture with scripture, and spiritual things with spiritual” (*Steps to Christ*, pp. 89-90).

But another group of Christians responds differently to the discovery of biblical truth. Set in their own ways, and not eager to do what the Bible teaches, they find the emergence of biblical truth discomforting and unsettling. “The teachings and restrictions of God’s Word are not welcome to the proud, sin-loving heart, and those who are unwilling to obey its requirements are ready to doubt its authority” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 111).

Thus, even if the conclusions of one’s searching the Scriptures should prove to be biblically sound, this second group of Christians will look for ways to fight against the truth; they find it too humiliating to acknowledge that they may have been wrong.

Instead of being faithful to the inspired writings of Moses, David, Isaiah, Matthew, Peter or Paul, they would rather cling to the opinions of their self-appointed experts—be they popes, pastors, professors, parents, or personal acquaintances. In so doing they forget the warning by Ellen G. White:

“Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 595).

What then should be our individual and collective responses to the teaching of Scriptures regarding the ordination of women to the headship office of elder or pastor?

Our response to this truth, like any other truths in the Bible, determines whether we really believe that every Bible truth is a revelation of Christ, who is the Truth. He Himself said, “*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me*” (John 5:39). Our response to the above question also determines whether or not we believe that Jesus knows what is best for us and has revealed it to us in Scripture.

### Personal Testimony

I know that what I have said about the joy of obedience is true, for I have experienced it, even as I have seen the power of God working through both men and women.

A number of years ago in my country of Ghana, West Africa, I became a Christian after years of search for the truth. I became a Seventh-day Adventist because of the church’s uncompromising insistence on a “thus saith the Lord” for every doctrine and practice. At that time, fidelity to Scripture was not scornfully labeled “narrow-mindedness,” “obscurantism,” or even “fundamentalism.”<sup>127</sup> It was simply being faithful to Christ and His written Word.

In those days my faith was established by the television and radio programs of the church that filtered down to us. These organs of the church repeatedly asserted, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

- “*It Is Written*” maintained that man should not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.
- “*Faith For Today*” inspired wavering believers to have faith in God.

- When the pulse of courage was low, “*Breath Of Life*” assured us of God’s power which is able to revive us again.
- When we were tempted to sing the popular tunes of the world, losing a clear sense of our distinctiveness, “*The Voice of Prophecy*” proclaimed, “Lift up the trumpet, and loud let it ring! Jesus is coming again!”, reminding us that we are “a voice crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord.”

The courage of biblical convictions was not seen as “fanaticism,” “rigid authoritarianism,” or even “intolerance.” Neither was the assertion that the Seventh-day Adventist church *is* (not will be, or may be) “the remnant church” viewed as being “triumphalistic” or “exclusivistic,” or even as fostering spiritual pride or arrogance.

I understood then, just as now, that our church was uniquely raised to proclaim a distinctive message for the end time. The mission of the church demanded that we not follow the Christian crowd in setting aside Bible truth. The knowledge that the doctrines and practices of my newly found faith were scriptural gave me a determination to stand for biblical truths, no matter the cost (cf. Revelation 2:10; 12:11).

The members of the Adventist church there—men and women, lay people and pastors, educated and illiterate—believed that ministry was, and still remains, the calling of every Christian. They all united in doing the work of soul-winning.

In order to share our faith, groups of us traveled to unentered villages and towns, slept on dirt floors in mosquito-infested areas, got up early at dawn, and after prayer and Bible-study, proclaimed our message on the street corners. During the day, we visited the people in the village, praying for them, helping them where needed, and then opening the Word of God to them.

In the evenings we held lay evangelistic meetings. While these were going on students on the various campuses—mostly non-Adventist institutions—were also active in evangelizing their schools; literature evangelists, the “Dorcas Society” (welfare ministry), the

Sabbath School department, etc., were all united in doing the work of ministry.

Worship was exciting. Lay speakers and pastors preached Bible-based sermons. Prayer meetings were packed. Testimonies confirmed what God was doing in the lives of ordinary people. The church was like a school, where the elders and pastors equipped us for ministry. Worship was so vibrant that we had no need to import marketing techniques from commerce or some experiments from mega-churches “to attract young people.” In fact, the reason why our church was about 70% young people was that they were excited about *searching the Scriptures*.

During Bible study, we (scholars and non-scholars, laypeople and pastors, men and women) wrestled with difficulties as we sought *biblical* answers to problems we faced. We believed that

“We cannot obtain wisdom without earnest attention and prayerful study. Some portions of Scripture are indeed too plain to be misunderstood; but there are others whose meaning does not lie on the surface, to be seen at a glance. Scripture must be compared with scripture. There must be careful research and prayerful reflection. And such study will be richly repaid. As the miner discovers veins of precious metal concealed beneath the surface of the earth, so will he who perseveringly searches the Word of God as for hid treasure, find truths of the greatest value, which are concealed from the view of the careless seeker. The words of inspiration, pondered in the heart, will be as streams flowing from the fountain of life” ( *Steps to Christ* , 90-91).

My experience with *searching the Scriptures* was the major reason why I became a Seventh-day Adventist. Since then, the words of the song “Go and Inquire” by William A. Ogden have expressed the desire of my heart:

### **Go and Inquire**

1 Searching the Scriptures, the blessed Scriptures,  
Seeking the Saviour day by day,  
Striving to learn the wondrous story,—  
What does the blessed Bible say?

### **Refrain**

*Go and inquire, the King commandeth;  
Ask of the Lord for me and thee;  
Knock at the open door of mercy,  
Where there is pardon full and free.*

2 Searching the Scriptures, the blessed Scriptures,  
Seeking to know the heav'nly way,  
Trying to reach the golden city,—  
What does the blessed Bible say?

3 Searching the Scriptures, the blessed Scriptures,  
Seeking the wand'ers by the way,  
Trying to point a soul to Jesus,—  
What does the blessed Bible say?

In part, on this issue of women's ordination as elders or pastors, just as on all other theological issues, this is why I plead that we must *search the Scriptures*. And having searched the Scriptures, and discovered "what the Bible say," we must make a decision of faith by doing what is right, even if it seems unpopular and unpalatable to us.

Faithfulness to God always involves a cost (Matthew 16:24-26). But what is more costly than what it cost Jesus to save us? Loyalty to Christ may cost us our pride, but it will surely give us a free conscience.

"God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view. Would that all who have not chosen Christ might realize that he has something vastly better to offer them than they are seeking for themselves. Man is doing the greatest injury and injustice to his own soul when he thinks and acts contrary to the will of God. No real joy can be found in the path forbidden by Him who knows what is best, and who plans for the good of His creatures. The path of transgression is the path of misery and destruction" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 46).

So we must ask ourselves: On this question of women's ordination, should we risk the displeasure of God in doing what seems right in our own eyes? Should we not seek a Scriptural basis for empowering women for ministry and avert the potential "divisiveness and disunity," "embarrassment," and "dishonor upon this church that we love"?

The experience of the Berean Christians teaches us that whenever we establish our faith and practice by searching the Scriptures, many new believers—both men and women—will be added to the church: "Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men" (Acts 17:12 RSV; note also v. 11, and Acts 1 and 2).

### Worthy Examples

In some cases a loving obedience to Christ and His written Word may cause pain. But Jesus Christ, the church's Head and the true "Shepherd and Bishop of our souls," has set us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21, 25). In the face of death He could say, "Not My will, but Yours, be done," a decision that was immediately rewarded with help from heaven (Luke 22:42-43).

His own mother, Mary, also leaves us an example of complete submission to the will of God. In becoming the Messiah's mother before she was married, she faced circumstances that would bring her abuse and derision; yet she said, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said" (Luke 1:38 NIV).

Later, though she was highly "favored of the Lord" and a faithful disciple of Christ (Luke 1:28, 30; Acts 1:14), in the upper room she submitted to the biblical guidelines for the choice of a male apostle to be added to the eleven (Acts 1:20-26). Mary speaks to all of us—women and men—on this issue of women's ordination, as well as on every other issue, when she says, "Whatever He [Christ] says to you, do it" (John 2:5).

Finally, the apostle Paul leaves us an example of total surrender of our aims and ambitions to the cross of Christ. If, like him, we all—men and women, church leaders and members, scholars and people of other professions—also reckon ourselves as "crucified with Christ" and seek to live by the principle, "Not I but Christ" (Galatians 2:20), our spirit will be like his.

When we are called upon to make decisions of costly discipleship, the kind suggested when we seek to do God's will on the issue now facing our church, this spirit of Paul, aptly described by Leonard Ravenhill, must always be ours:

The apostle Paul "had no ambitions [for himself]—and so had nothing to be jealous about. He had no reputation—and so had nothing to fight about. He had no possessions—and therefore had nothing to worry about. He had no 'rights'—so therefore he could not suffer wrong. He was already broken—so no one could break him. He was 'dead'—

so none could kill him. He was less than the least—so who could humble him? He had suffered the loss of all things—so none could defraud him.”<sup>128</sup>

As we continue *searching the Scriptures*, may this spirit of faithful, obedient surrender to Christ and His Word fill us, marking us as a people, so that together we can proclaim His name with power to a world that needs to see Jesus’ life and love lived out in human beings today.

### Endnotes

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- 124 See Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 9, 1895, p. 434. See also C. Raymond Holmes, *The Tip of an Iceberg*, pp. 79-85; cf. William Fagal, “Ellen White and the Role of Women in the Church,” available from the Ellen G. White Estate.
- 125 A similar request was made at the 1995 GC session in Utrecht 20 years ago. See the petition of the North American Division (NAD), as discussed by the NAD president in his published address to the 1994 Annual Council (“NAD’s President Speaks on Women’s Ordination,” *Adventist Review*, February 1995, pp. 14, 15). See also the article by C. Mervyn Maxwell, “A Response to Elder Alfred C. McClure’s Address to the Annual Council,” in the Spring 1995 issue of *ADVENTISTS AFFIRM*.
- 126 See Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, “Inspired Book or Inspiring Booklet? Biblical Authority in an Age of Theological Pluralism,” in the Spring 1995 issue of *ADVENTISTS AFFIRM*; cf. *Receiving the Word*, pp. 157-168.
- 127 In some scholarly circles today, the term “fundamentalist” is hurled at anyone who refuses to accept all the latest unbiblical fads in theology. In a lecture given in Wycliffe Hall at Oxford University, the English scholar Gordon J. Wenham aptly describes the situation: “I suspect that if either you [a student] or your lecturers discover during your study that you are a Sabellian montanist or semipelagian gnostic [these were christological heresies in the early church], it will not cause over-much excitement. Such deviants are common place today and in this pluralistic society are usually accepted without much fuss. However, should you be diagnosed as a fundamentalist, your fate may be very different. In the modern theology faculty fundamentalism is the great heresy. It is regarded as nearly as dangerous as the HIV virus and is treated with similar fervour but with rather less tact and sympathy” (Gordon J. Wenham, “The Place of Biblical Criticism in Theological Study,” *Themelios* 14/3 [1989]:84).

Bible-believing Christians should not be intimidated by any pejorative labels calculated to induce Christians to accept some “progressive” ideas (often a theological codeword for deviations from Scripture).

- 128 Leonard Ravenhill, *Why Revival Tarries* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1959), p. 173, cited by Stephen F. Alford, *Not I, But Christ* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1995), pp. 55-56.

# Chapter 12

## The Speech from Silence

(A Response to Passionate Pleas)

*“Beware when you have no problems. Then you’ve really got a problem. Problems are like landmarks of progress.”*

—Scott Alexander

*“The real problem in any problem is flight from that problem. ... Face your challenges head on and conquer them—with God’s help. Not FRIGHT nor FLIGHT, but FIGHT—in His might.”*

—Samuel Koranteng-Pipim

What, then, is my response to the passionate pleas for me to jump into ongoing theological debates in the church? What should I say to you, Brother Emmanuel, in response to your plea for me to not be silent on this matter of women’s ordination?

You are not alone in asking me that question. Several have asked: Why has the author of *Must We Be Silent* been silent? How can he afford to be silent, when so much is at stake on issues being debated in the church?

In this final chapter of *Courage*, I will attempt an explanation for my apparent silence—an attempt that, I’m afraid, will cause the book to receive harsh treatment from certain quarters of the church. But I have to, for when Eagles are silent, parrots make lots of noise. Or as we say in Africa, “until lions write their own history, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.”

So, Yes, I will answer your question. And I will be very candid—even though I am fully aware that some may question my right to write. Some, because they believe that sinners saved by grace are not qualified to write or speak (which view essentially disqualifies

they themselves and everyone else). Others because I have touched their ideological sacred cow and called into question some of their innovative interpretations of Scripture (which attitude seriously questions their own honesty in theological inquiry).

Still others—and they're well-meaning— because they think now is not the time to speak or write on the issue (which assertion assumes that our times are in their hands) or that the sacred duty to clarify, articulate, or defend the truth is the prerogative of only a privileged few (a troubling view that masks their arrogance, hypocrisy, or cowardice). To such, I can only respond in the words of E.G. White:

Now is the time for God's people to show themselves true to principle. When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our COURAGE and firmness the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, COURAGE from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 136).

And there are yet others who have always been opposed to my apologetic messages—by voice or pen—either because I am African or because they misconstrue my candid evaluation of aberrant views as evidence of theological fault-finding, if not pride.

Let me say to such that (i) though I write as an African, my citizenship is Heaven; (ii) though I have tried to write carefully and compassionately, I plead guilty with explanation for the serious tone and provocative style with which I fault the theological arguments. In the words of A. E. Housman, "I have spent most of my time finding faults because finding faults, if they are real and not imaginary is the most useful sort of criticism."<sup>129</sup>

In our age of theological pluralism, telling the truth is perceived as a revolutionary act that invites the ire of those whose pet agendas have been challenged. Thus I expect this work to receive harsh

treatment. But I draw courage from the words by E. G. White stated earlier on:

“I know that which I now speak will bring me into conflict. This I do not covet, for the conflict has seemed to be continuous of late years: but I do not mean to live a coward or die a coward, leaving my work undone. I must follow in my Master’s footsteps.”<sup>130</sup>

Brother Emmanuel, my simple answer to your question is: *I have not been silent*. And in the remainder of this chapter I will explain.

### I Have Not Been Silent

During the past 25 years—when many did not see what was coming, nor understood what was at stake—I already addressed these issues in my apologetic works. And these works are still available for all who want to study the issues.

### Published Works

Here’s a list of the major works that have addressed the issues and their years of publication:

- ***Searching the Scriptures: A Call To Biblical Fidelity* (1995)**—shows that the women’s ordination issue is a theological issue, not a cultural issue;
- ***Receiving the Word: How New Approaches Impact Our Biblical Faith and Lifestyle* (1996)**—shows how the use of a wrong methodology (or hermeneutic) is the reason why some thought leaders within our ranks are questioning our long-held beliefs and practices;
- ***The Spirit of Truth: Key Issues on Biblical Inspiration & Interpretation* (1997)**—a follow up work to *Receiving the Word*, as I engaged the views of a prominent North American Adventist University President.

- ***Must We Be Silent: Issues Dividing Our Church (2001)***—challenges the arguments often used to justify homosexuality, women’s ordination, separate Black and White Conferences in North America, contemporary liberalism, new worship and preaching styles, etc.
- ***Here We Stand: Evaluating New Trends in the Church (2005)***—my articles in this 810-page volume have addressed such issues as the development of Fundamental Beliefs, evolution/creation, gospel gimmicks and new forms of preaching, prayer, spiritual warfare, worship styles, grounds for divorce, GC session decisions, and true and counterfeit unity.
- ***Not for Sale: Integrity in A Culture of Silence (2008)***—exposes the culture of cowardly silence and why all of us are responsible for this situation.

The above apologetic works are available at our EAGLESONline website. This is not the Dark Ages, when works could be easily banned by unilateral edicts or decrees by imperial or religious leaders. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where interested persons can easily purchase a book on the Internet or download it on their electronic devices.

By the way, we must question the agendas behind the actions of any individual— whether Church leader, member, Christian institution, organization, or ministry—who attempts to ban, boycott or withhold the message of truth from others on account of its flawed messenger.

Does truth cease to be truth because the messenger of the truth subsequently failed? If so, what shall we say concerning the truth preached by Noah, David, Solomon, Elijah, Isaiah, Jonah, Peter, etc. before they each sinned? What about the truth they preached after their failure and repentance? Do we throw away their messages in the Bible?

Incidentally, E.G. White used strong words to describe the actions of certain church leaders who sought to ban good books because of the subsequent failure of the authors. She described the actions of such leaders as “a fatal delusion because they are not under

the control of the spirit of God. . . .They walk in blindness as did the Jews.”

Here are her exact words, when she wrote to Uriah Smith in connection with the failure of Jones and Waggoner,

“It is quite possible that Elder Jones or Elder Waggoner may be overthrown by the temptations of the enemy; but if they should be, this would not prove that they had had no message from God, or that the work that they had done was all a mistake. But should this happen, how many would take this position, and enter into *a fatal delusion because they are not under the control of the spirit of God. They walk in the sparks of their own kindling, and cannot distinguish between the fire they have kindled, and the light which God has given, and they walk in blindness as did the Jews.*”<sup>131</sup>

May the Lord help us to see through the agendas and spirit driving calculated efforts that are made to prevent people from messages of truth that God chooses to teach through His flawed messengers.<sup>132</sup>

### **Audio/Visual Messages & Other Resources**

Besides the published works listed above, I have, through the grace of God, also addressed many other issues in audio and video sermons, as well as in presentations or lectures at major church events and conferences, university campuses, GYC meetings, churches, retreats, and camp meetings. These include touchy issues like the emergent church and spiritual formation, ministry to youth, signs and wonders, and many more. Though attempts were made by certain interest groups and leaders to make sure they are not available, many of these resources are still readily available at our EAGLESONline website ([www.EAGLESONline.org](http://www.EAGLESONline.org)) and different YouTube channels.<sup>133</sup>

My voice was also heard through published works in popular and scholarly publications, and in books—including co-authored works. And they were heard in classrooms around the world

where through lectures in theology, ethics, and missions at both undergraduate and graduate levels. They were also heard on many secular university campuses around the world as I presented the Word of God in its simplicity and profundity. And, as one of the intellectual architects in the establishment and growth of Ghanaian churches in Europe, Canada, and the U.S.A., my voice was heard as I engaged different church leaders in those countries on behalf of the Bible-based vision and mission of Ghanaian churches in the diaspora.

Thus for more than a quarter of a century—between 1984 (when I first arrived in the United States as a student) and 2011 (when I resigned from denominational employment on account of my spiritual failure), my voice has not been silent on theological issues in the church. My voice was heard—loud and clear, not just in North America where I am based, but around the world—wherever I was invited to speak or teach.

### **At General Conference Session Floors**

Since 1985 (when I first attended a GC session), I have, also by divine appointment, attended all the GC sessions to date—New Orleans (1985), Indianapolis (1990), Utrecht (1995), Toronto (2000), St. Louis (2005), and Atlanta (2010)—serving as an official delegate in five of the six sessions (Atlanta being the exception). And on all occasions (in both my official and personal capacities), my voice has been heard—loud and clear—on key issues that have to do with our distinctive message and mission.

As a delegate, I have spoken forcefully at the previous two sessions where the issue of women's ordination had come up for discussion (1990 and 1995). The only GC session I will not attend since then to speak on the issue is the forthcoming 2015 session in San Antonio, Texas. Because of my self-inflicted wound of spiritual failure in 2011. That is the price we pay for sin. Regretfully!

But here is my recollection of some major highlights of previous GC sessions I have attended and how my voice was heard:

**1985 New Orleans, Louisiana:** The issue was the need for an African representative at the GC headquarters. In preparation for this session I crafted a document on behalf of African students at Andrews University, explaining why Africa needs a representative at the General Conference headquarters. Our voices were heard—before, during, and after—the GC session.<sup>134</sup> At the 1985 GC session an African was elected for the first time to the headquarters of the world church: A Field Secretary, then became a GC Vice-President, and retired as the Executive Secretary.

**1990 Indianapolis, Indiana:** The major event was women's ordination—which was rejected overwhelmingly. Though many were not aware, the issues of homosexuality and even “infant baptism” came in disguised in some seemingly-innocuous *Church Manual* revision items. But, thankfully, these were nipped in the bud.

In the aftermath of this GC session action, trouble started brewing in North America because of rebellious ordinations and the claim that the issue of women's ordination is a cultural issue that must be addressed by each region of the world church. With talks about revisiting the issue again—at the next GC session in Utrecht, I published my book *Searching the Scriptures* (1995)—a work that clearly explained that the issue is theological—not cultural.

**1995 Utrecht, Netherlands:** The major issue was North American Division's (NAD's) request for the ordination of women in Divisions that would permit it, arguing that the issue is a cultural one. A compelling presentation against the motion argued that the request for regional ordinations conflicts with three major doctrines of the church: (i) The doctrine of the church, (ii) the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures; (iii) the doctrine of the unity of the body of Christ.<sup>135</sup>

When after the defeat of that NAD request, proponents started arguing that the reason the “rest of the Church” defeated the request from “the church of the West” was because of their *immature* method of biblical interpretation, I

produced my book *Receiving the Word* (1996) to show how contemporary higher criticism has infected many of our thought leaders, and hence the reason for erosion of faith in our beliefs and lifestyle practices.

A follow-up book, *The Spirit of Truth* (1997) was my response to a document titled, “Embracing the Spirit,” circulated as an “Open Letter to the Leaders of Adventism” by a liberal Seventh-day Adventist scholar and college administrator. In this document, the author expressed concerns about the impact of *Receiving the Word* in the Church. My rebuttal (*In the Spirit of Truth*) further clarified questions about the Bible’s inspiration, authority, and interpretation.

**2000 Toronto, Canada:** The major issue was divorce and remarriage, and how certain delegates from “the church of the West” staged parliamentary coup d’état to vote into the Church Manual “abandonment” as additional grounds for divorce. They did so when a majority of “the rest of the Church” was absent. Reflection on this event and others led to my writing *Must We Be Silent?*(2001)

**2005 St. Louis:** The major issue was the 28th Fundamental Belief which was added to the original 27. The occasion called for the book *Here We Stand* (2005), a work I edited. In it, I addressed a number of issues—history of fundamental beliefs, preaching & gospel gimmicks, prayer warriors, prayer walks, & spiritual warfare, worship styles, Issues on Creation, homosexuality, divorce and remarriage, and church unity.

**2010 Atlanta, Georgia:** The major issue was ordination of deaconesses; the crisis of youth leadership was in the air, and brewing at that time was “spiritual formation” and “emergent spirituality”—It was an issue I took up at a GYC conference later at the end of that year under the title: “*Trojan Horses.*” This series of lectures I delivered at the December 2010 GYC session would have become the basis of another book in 2011. But this was not possible because of my spiritual failure that year.<sup>136</sup>

**2015 San Antonio, Texas:** The major issue is women's ordination. *Again.* This defining issue has implications on how we interpret the Scriptures and the unity of the Church. I will NOT be a delegate.

Brother Emmanuel, from my published works, audio and video messages, ministry related activities, and my voice and vote at previous GC sessions, it should be clear that I have not been silent. Unlike some waffling thought leaders, my voice has been loud and clear. It is this voice that some have tried to silence, as they used different pretexts in their attempt to “disappear” my works from public knowledge. I am compelled to share this information with you, because, as we say in Africa, until lions write their own history, the story of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.

Perhaps you can now begin to understand why my spiritual failure in 2011 became the Trojan horse for the calculated attempt to place a worldwide ban on my works, remove them (books and audio/visual messages) from circulation, and prevent me—even in my personal, professional capacity as a non-denominational employee—from writing, speaking, training, or working for a living. And why pressure was mounted to ensure that I never get rebaptized, or if at all, I have to wait for “several years”—at least till after the 2015 GC session.

I hope this may help explain why my name was hijacked by certain “anonymous Adventists” for their slanderous web sites and Facebook pages so that whenever my name is put into search engines, it will show their uncomplimentary posts, false accusations, and slander. Why well-meaning organizations were “strongly encouraged” (sometimes with threats of boycott) from distributing any of my audio and video messages or making them available for free downloads. These included series of messages that shaped a generation of young people worldwide. This unprecedented action awaits a future response.

And without going into details now, you can perhaps begin to understand why my baptism—one year before the 2015 GC session—created such a stir in certain quarters. Why efforts and pressure were mounted to delegitimize the baptism, and in some cases

mount a campaign of slander. All with the goal to “finish, vanish, banish, or tarnish.” Sadly, for various reasons, some well-meaning people were carried along in the campaign. By God’s grace, I am sure that one day, the dust will settle, and all will get to fully see the great controversy behind all the drama.

Since my voice hasn’t been silent all these 25 years, what should I now do in response to the passionate pleas from you and many others, urging me to jump into current theological discussions as things heat up for the GC session?

### **My Response To Passionate Pleas**

Brother Emmanuel, in regard to the previous question raised above, let me share with you the same response I gave to a Pastor friend in North America, who had written to me six weeks before your phone call. He was pleading with me to speak up on the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) situation, which at that time had embroiled Andrews University campus. Others had written similarly in connection with the emergent church or spiritual formation issues.

In response to these pleas, I wrote the following on March 15, 2015 (exactly six weeks before your dawn phone call) and shared it with close friends. I am sharing a slightly edited version with you also, inasmuch as you bear a similar concern. (Towards the end, I’ll reply to your specific request regarding the women’s ordination issue). Here’s what I wrote:

1. I’m right now focused on outreach to the unreached segments of society—by voice and by pen, and through the literature ministry. I therefore feel no burden at the moment to get bogged down in ongoing theological issues in the church.
2. Whatever I need to write on these hotly-debated issues in the church, I have already done in the past and my works are available in print and online via DRPIPIM.ORG website.
3. I will not jump into theological disputes in the church until after the 2015 GC-session. (My adversaries—both my ideolog-

ical and political foes and frenemies—deliberately orchestrated a campaign to silence my voice, ban my works worldwide, threaten a boycott of those who distribute them, slander my name to pressure Administrators, etc. because they feel that without my voice to contend with, they will have a much easier task at succeeding at their agenda. I think otherwise.

For God has even more than 7,000 others who can speak out very effectively. And if these fail, the stones will cry out. My silence at this time therefore allows the cause of God to prevail without anyone claiming credit for it. (This was clearly evident at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee when God raised up many credible voices to speak up on the issue. Many others have done so in the past, and more will rise up in the present and the future, in response to God's call, to resist the ideological hijacks that threaten the sanctity and unity of our worldwide movement.)

4. If I have some thoughts on any of the current issues being debated, I'll share them privately with others who need to speak out.

5. Should I feel constrained to speak up on any issue right now, I'll do so under my own name—not as a pseudo-name or pet name. (I'm not totally convinced that I can make a strong biblical case for writing anonymously. On the contrary, I feel like Nehemiah, who when being urged to "hide" in the temple, replied "I will not go in" [Nehemiah 6:10, 11]). (This present work, *Courage*, is an example of how I feel constrained to speak, and to do so under my own name.)

6. Right now I see myself more as "an apostle to the Gentiles." While I care about issues within the church, at this moment my focus is the outside world, which is literally calling out to me from Macedonia (Acts 16:10). The focus and style of my current writing and ministry to the world is not merely about "putting bread on the table." Rather it is another form of evangelism that our church has never effectively pursued. Somebody must pioneer this line of ministry, and I feel privileged to be part of this new frontier of evangelism.

7. There is a time to speak and a time to keep silent. I believe that my silence on church issues during the past four years has helped people to understand a lot more about the politics behind the ill-treatment I have suffered on account of my failure—ill-treatment even from some otherwise well-meaning individuals. I will continue praying for the faithful sentinels in the church.

### **Painful, But Instructive Experiences**

Yes, the past four years have been very painful and at times very lonely. But I have sat quietly to allow accusations, half-truths, lies, and slander to go largely unchallenged. So true, that when eagles are silent, parrots begin to jabber. I have been severely tempted to address issues in non-Christian ways, but was constrained by the Word of God. I have seen well-meaning individuals, pastors, and administrators buckle under pressure from agenda-driven activists to the point that they betrayed the very biblical authority and the Gospel message they profess.

In near disbelief at the actions of overzealous church members, I have experienced

1. how it's very easy for us to falsely accuse erring ones among us, and brand sinners as criminals so we can shoot them or advance our agendas—whether personal, ideological, political, or even racial.
2. how we exploit the spiritual failures of our brothers and sisters to promote ourselves, our righteousness, our causes, our careers & advancement, or even to boost the ratings on our websites or to raise funds for our projects.
3. how we treat our erring ones, and shoot our wounded soldiers while piously pretending to love or care about them.
4. the pain we inflict with our unfounded accusations, half-truths, misrepresentation, impugned motives, whispered rumors, and ridiculous speculations—situations that could

## The Speech from Silence

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be averted if only we'll take seriously Christ's injunction in Matthew 18:15-18.

5. the utter disrespect we give to inspired counsel in the matter of unverified and/or uncomplimentary information, hearsays, gossip and different forms of tale-bearing.
6. the pain that although evil men wreck evil, often it's good men who wound the most; NOT the devils who have stabbed in the back, but the angels of compassion who fan the wound site with the blade of the wounding-knife still deeply embedded.
7. how we rest in the false piety of thinking adultery is the worst sin, without any care that the sins of pride, gossip, tale-bearing, petty jealousies and cowardly fear are equally deadly.
8. what it feels like to go through failure and hurt, and how it is only the grace of God in the heart that can effectively inoculate us against the poison of bitterness on account of what people do to us, say about us, and take away from us.
9. a little bit of how it would be like in the very last days, when the accuser of the brethren will dig up our past sins and, though forgiven, throw them against us.
10. how we rush to hasty judgements and how easy it is for a few overzealous or agenda-driven activists (whether well-meaning or misguided) to pressure members and leaders to take decisions that go contrary to sound biblical teaching.

On the part of church leaders,

1. I have watched as some have denied or misinterpreted basic biblical teaching on sin, repentance, confession, forgiveness, sanctification, restoration, baptisms, etc.
2. I have observed inroads of secular/naturalistic psychology in the thinking of decision-makers and how it is dethroning of the Word of God as the sole basis of our teachings on salvation (sin, repentance, justification, sanctification, restoration, etc.) and Christian growth.

3. I have witnessed how we can wax eloquent on our strong beliefs in the Bible and on our pet issues, but fail woefully to apply that same Bible in how we address issues on spiritual failure and restoration.
4. I have become more aware of the extent of the power wielded by ministers, and I am troubled by how they perceive the extent of their spiritual authority in the salvation of their fellow human beings, and end up being more popish than the Pope, when it is politically-correct to do so.
5. I have been troubled at how pastors in local congregations perceive their accountability: Are they most accountable to the Word of God, to their individual “conscience” or “feelings,” to their employers, or to their local congregation, or to some interest groups—within or without.
6. I have observed how church leaders can very easily jettison the Bible’s teaching either because of ignorance, clear thinking, pride, or the fear of losing their power or jobs.
7. I have been quite surprised by how difficult it is for people in power to admit they are wrong and correct the damage they inflict on others, or how they’d say one thing in the closet and do the opposite publicly.
8. I have watched the “group think” that obtains within the general polity of the church, how a few administrators can influence so many, and how their deviations from Biblical injunctions can be easily osmosized and rapidly mutate.

As for our end-time church preaching God’s encompassing grace,

1. I have witnessed how church discipline that ought to be redemptive or restorative has become retributive and persecutory.
2. I have noted the selective treatment we give to sinners and backsliders in our Church—treating them differently on the basis of their status, color, gender, and place of origin.

## The Speech from Silence

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3. I now know how lonely it can be inside the Church, as we shun, shame, and ostracize our brothers and sisters or treat them as lepers.
4. I have become fully aware of the inconsistency of our teaching and our actions on the issue of the church's stated mission to save the lost and backsliding.
5. I have become aware of how the Church, which ought to be a hospital for sinners, can easily be turned to a slaughter house where we butcher, feast on, and devour our fellow Christians.
6. I have observed how we are slowly establishing new criteria for baptism and rebaptism—outside that which is prescribed in the Bible, clearly established in the Spirit of Prophecy, or which we have adopted in our *Church Manual*.
7. I've seen the effect in the church when we play raw politics with sound principle, how our frowns, contempt, unkindness, and mean-spirited, holier-than-thou attitudes can affect those who have erred, and how our lack of forgiving and restorative grace can seriously damage our witness to the outside world.
8. I have discovered the urgent need to clarify the question of authority of the local congregation—the need to re-examine our current practice in the light of God's Word when it comes to the question of who exercises ultimate authority—is it Church administrators, their appointed pastors, their employees within congregations, the board of elders, local church board, or church members?

Through these painful experiences, I have learned the golden power of silence in the face of extreme provocation, reproach of friends and foes, misunderstanding, slander, intrigue, derision, ostracism, betrayals, and the wish by some that one would forever be banished away by God and man. I now understand why many prefer to hide their failures and failings, fearing ill-treatment; and why we must be careful not to confess our sins to human beings—for you never know what they'll do with it when it suits them.

Above all, I've witnessed how the power of compassion, sympathy, kindness, and forgiving love on the part of ordinary members and young people can actually nurse severely wounded eagles back to recovery and health, and to their soaring again. This, is perhaps, one of the most hopeful things for the church.

Disappointed and pained? Yes, but I have freely forgiven all. Undeserving though I am, having experienced God's pardon and forgiveness, I cannot withhold from others that which I was given freely. I therefore also, offer my forgiveness freely to those who, on account of my sin, have inflicted grievous hurt—deliberately or unwittingly.

As a result of the last four years, the Lord has laid the burden on my heart to address these crucial issues that we often take for granted, and which have proven challenging in recent times—especially in the aftermaths of my failure and baptism.

These troubling trends deserve far more attention than many think. For at stake are serious questions about salvation (how a person is saved), ecclesiology (the nature, authority and mission of the church), and Christian lifestyle (how a saved person lives his life in the sustaining grace of God). As I see it, these issues demand far more serious attention than the agenda of women's ordination, which has persistently been recycled with the sole aim to break through Biblical fences and thereby gain entrance into the Church—allowing in its wake many other false doctrines and practices.

By God's grace my courage and commitment remain strong—even stronger than before. And as the Lord permits, I will be speaking on these issues in the years ahead. I have moved on. I am re-discovering the joy of being actively engaged in ministry, especially without being employed, paid, or ordained by the church.

Yes, I am fully committed to the soul-winning work of the ministry. But I have no desire to fight for space in a crowded and stagnant pond of divisive ideological debates, when the vast ocean of salvation and reconciliation of sinners to God beckons us to explore its depths and fish. My top priorities at the moment therefore are:

## The Speech from Silence

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- i) frontier evangelism to the unreached and the neglected—by voice and by pen;
- ii) transformative leadership development through the training and empowering of young professionals and young adults—in my professional capacity;
- iii) resource development & literature ministry—producing and distributing good quality and affordable materials for the world.

This is what EAGLESONline has been providentially set up to do. And our two Centers of Leadership Development under the EAGLESONline umbrella continue to work with entities that share this same vision.

The above reasons explain why I have chosen not to be fully engaged and jump into the issues that will be debated and settled at the forthcoming GC session in San Antonio (July 2015).

To reiterate, I have already addressed these issues comprehensively in my previous works. Though banned by certain quarters of the church, those who are interested in unbiased understanding beyond groupthink find them to study alongside other resources out there. What I have shared with you is what I have been saying all along during the past 25 or so years.

Brother Emmanuel, your desperate phone call roused me from sleep, with the piercing question: “*Where are the African leaders on the matter of women’s ordination?*” You wanted to know why I have been silent—when non-African leaders around the world are actively campaigning for their position on women’s ordination.

I’m now in a position to give you a direct answer—in case you have missed the trees from the forest.

### **Why I Have Been Silent?**

You are not alone in posing that question to me. It will interest you to know that last week Monday, I was forced to reiterate the

essence of the above point, when I was being literally “pressured” by well-meaning church members, pastors, and administrators to add my voice to the women’s ordination issue which is in full steam in North America and around the industrialized world.

Less than one week before you placed your desperate phone call, and in response to persistent requests from faithful church members around the world, I wrote to explain why I have chosen to remain silent. I sent out the following message on April 27, 2015 (less than a week ago), and have publicly posted it on my Facebook and [www.drpipim.org](http://www.drpipim.org) apologetic website. It is my answer to you as well<sup>137</sup>:

In recent times, I’ve received lots of emails, asking why I have been apparently silent on issues that are presently being debated in the church. I have been urged to write or add my voice. Here’s my three-fold answer:

**1. Sometimes silence is as powerful as speech.** We learn this from Christ’s example—when He consciously refused to speak on the problem of Herod and Herodias, after John the Baptist’s message to the renegade couple had been rejected by them:

*“Christ might have spoken words to Herod that would have pierced the ears of the hardened king. He might have stricken him with fear and trembling by laying before him the full iniquity of his life, and the horror of his approaching doom. But Christ’s silence was the severest rebuke that He could have given. Herod had rejected the truth spoken to him by the greatest of the prophets, and no other message was he to receive. Not a word had the Majesty of heaven for him.”* (*Desire of Ages*, p. 730).

**2. Whatever I personally need to say on the current issues being debated in the church, I have already said**—and my works are still available and accessible to all who care for truth, despite the calculated efforts to ban them or suppress their witness.<sup>138</sup>

**3. I'm presently focused on soul-winning**—actively reaching out to folks who are most difficult to reach with our distinctive biblical message. My priority is not on endless chatters that generate more heat than light, and which contribute little to soul-winning.

Frankly, much of what's going on today is a distraction. The motivation is not so much about proclaiming sound theology, but more about legislating ambient ideology. Not about light from God's Word, but more about our manufactured strobe-lighting. If you're genuinely confused by the noises in the church, I challenge you to apply this simple Truth test from the pen of EG White:

*"Truth is straight, plain, clear, and stands out boldly in its own defense; but it is not so with error. It is so winding and twisting that it needs a multitude of words to explain it in its crooked form"* (Early Writings, p. 96).

In short, my silence is my speech. "We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light" (Plato). Alas, that seems to be the case in certain quarters of our church today. We prefer the adornments of pretty white lies to the simplicity of naked truth.

The real question, therefore, is whether we shall repent and follow the example of J.N. Andrews when he said: *"I would exchange a thousand errors for one truth."*

Peace!

Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, PhD  
April 27, 2015

### Conclusion

Finally, Brother Emmanuel, I am aware of the aggressive campaign that is going on with the issue of women's ordination. As I stated earlier, it was the Trojan horse that reared an ugly head in the protests against my baptism and subsequent attacks on the church where I was baptized, the minister of that church, the minister I personally invited to baptize me, some of those who attended the service, or expressed their support in one way or the other, and initiated in the church a new low in the arena of slander and gossip.

Instead of rejoicing that a repentant sinner had returned, the concern that echoed on many pro-women's ordination online sites was the dire implications for their campaign, seeing that I had been re-baptized ahead of the GC session. They swung into renewed action to discredit the baptism, double up their campaign of slander so that no one will quote or refer to anything I have said in the past, or listen to anything I may say now or in the future. Sadly, they were able to get some to either knowingly or blindly join their protest to prescribe a new baptismal requirement unknown to the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, or the *Church Manual*.

I knew that if I speak against their pet agenda, some of my relentless adversaries and frenemies will come up with some other tricks at their sleeves. They, and their anonymous agents and political allies, will attempt to shift the discussion away from a focus on the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy—and from the glorious message bequeathed to us—to the flawed messenger, whether real or imaginary.

It has been interesting to watch, and sobering to reflect on the futility of actions that are targeted at a few of the known voices, when God has always accomplished His purposes through the unknowns and unexpected. To allow God to do His work, I chose not to speak on the issue. I have however taken the pains to give you an in-depth answer in response to the questions you raised when you called me.

You owe it to God, to yourself, and to your baptismal vows to take time to study more about the issues and form your own

## The Speech from Silence

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independent opinion that is dependent on the Bible. I have merely sought to steer you in that direction. As I tell others who also echo your question, those who want to know my views on the current debate can do so through my previous works. Truth is truth, it doesn't age with time, so the books are still very relevant.

To the extent that my views align with the Bible and shed more light on the mind of God on the issue, these resources, though banned by ecclesiastical fiat, executive orders, and threats of boycott by agenda-driven individuals, will continue to be relevant years from now, even long after the flawed messenger through which they were produced is gone from the scene.

While I have however chosen to speak through my silence, God, in His characteristic fashion, has raised up others to speak out. Some recent sources that will be most useful to you are listed in **Appendix** at the end of the book. (The sources listed in the Appendix are in addition to the materials found on the “Women’s Ordination” link my own apologetic website (DRPIPIM.ORG),

Brother Emmanuel, I have chosen to put my response in this form so that you can share with anyone who wonders about the same question you posed in your phone call this morning—namely, “Where Are Our African Leaders on the Issue of Women’s Ordination?” I will do likewise at my end.

I do not know where the African leaders you seek are. Therefore I cannot speak for them. However, I do know that as a member, YOU have the right to speak in ways that the Spirit leads and 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology allows. Only make sure that you do so prayerfully and Biblically, with words that will stand the test of time and uphold divine standards and biblical culture. Perhaps yours is the voice through which God’s truth will be more clearly illuminated to souls that genuinely seek for His light.

Much hangs on our forthcoming GC session decisions. We are facing a grave crisis. It is sad that so many are keen to bend truth to fit contemporary ideologies and interests. Even more sadly, those who do not love truth will believe a lie. It is a sobering thought, but it’s true: Sometimes, after God has made every effort to shield us

from the dangers of our ways, He has no choice but to give us what we want, including deception. May God save us from our preferred patterns of apostasy.

I for one, believe with all my heart that, regardless of the outcome of the next GC session debate on the issue of women's ordination, God's Will will be done. Our own individual responsibility is to be faithful. Even when we fall, to get up and get back in the Christian journey. We might not all make it to heaven without scars, but we can all, regardless of falls and wounds, be faithful unto death.

Thank you, Brother Emmanuel, for giving me time to respond to your weighty question: "Where are the leaders...?" Yours is a call for courageous leadership in a time of crisis. For, in the words of the Ghanaian proverb, "*An army of sheep led by a lion can defeat an army of lions led by sheep.*" Or, as explained by E.G.White,

To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, COURAGE from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason. {5T 136.2}

"It's time!" YOU are the African leader you're looking for.

COURAGE!

Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, PhD  
www.EAGLESONline.org  
www.drpipim.org  
May 3, 2015

### Endnotes

- 129 A. E. Housman, *Selected Prose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. xii.
- 130 *The Southern Work*, p.10. E. G. White made the above comment in the context of the Black/White racial issue in her day. For a detailed

## The Speech from Silence

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- discussion on this issue, see Section 3 of my *Must We Be Silent: Issues Dividing Our Church* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Berean Books, 2001), pp.299-441.
- 131 Letter 24, 1892, p. 5. to Uriah Smith, Sept. 19, 1892; (*Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 1, (nos. 19-96) 1981 MR, No. 37).
- 132 As I indicated in the opening chapter of this book, much has been said by certain individuals, interest groups, organizations, and church administrators about my failure and baptism. But “at the appropriate time in the future, I will address the theological, ethical, missiological, and legal issues that were involved in the unprecedented attempt to silence my voice and slander my name on account of my past sins.”
- 133 The resources are found at: EAGLESONline: <http://eaglesonline.org/resources/audio/>; YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=samuel+pipim](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=samuel+pipim).
- 134 “Strategy for Africa.” A paper presented, on behalf of the Pan-African Club of Andrews University, to the General Conference Resource Group of the African Planning Committee at the Wenniger Hall of the SDA Theological Seminary, February 20, 1986. (Available at Adventist Research Center, James White Library).
- 135 Dr. P. Gerard Damsteegt’s presentation at the 1995 Utrecht GC session is available at: <http://ordinationtruth.com/2013/03/10/p-g-damsteegt-presentation-utrecht-general-conference-session/>.
- 136 GYC is a grassroots movement of young people. This youth-initiated and youth-led movement of Seventh-day Adventists come from diverse backgrounds, but are united in a common commitment to serious Bible study, intense prayer, uncompromising lifestyle, and boldness in sharing Christ with others ([gycweb.org](http://gycweb.org)). It was birthed through our ministry to public university students in Michigan. To read some of the sermons and presentations that galvanized this movement, see Sikhululekile Hlatshwayo Justin Kim and Stephanie Quick, eds., *For This Purpose: A Compilation of Sermons and Presentations from GYC* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Generation of Youth for Chris, 2008). A history, detailing why and how GYC came into being has been provided by one of its founders: Israel Ramos, “What Adventist Young People Really Want,” in *Here We Stand: Evaluating New Trends in the Church*, edited by Samuel Koranteng-Pipim (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Adventists Affirm, 2005), pp. 61-70. See also my *From Ministry to Movement: The Potential of Public Campus Ministry* (2010). For an insightful, first-hand account of the politics that was played with the rise and growth GYC, see my “A Grassroots Youth Revival Movement: The Untold Story of the Struggle & Triumph of GYC (With A Timeline and Background To Major GYC Events, Meetings, & Documents),” available at:<http://drpipim.org/seminar-handouts->

contemporaryissues-101/126-a-grassroots-youth-revival-movement.html.

- 137 <http://drpipim.org/seminar-handouts-contemporaryissues-101/416-whyamisilent.html>.
- 138 For example, the left panel of my apologetic website, WWW.DRPIPIM.ORG, has a list of some of the issues I have already addressed. Specifically, in my book *Must We Be Silent*, and in other works like *Here We Stand*, *Receiving the Word*, and *Searching the Scriptures*, I have offered biblically-compelling responses to the contemporary issues tearing our church apart. (Much of the arguments today are recycled versions of the same old arguments that have been weighed and found wanting).

# Appendix

## *A List of Some Useful Materials on Women's Ordination*

### **A. Popular Audio-Visual Sites, Responses, & Resources**

1. An 8-minute video animation titled “**Adventist Women’s Ordination Crisis Overview.**” This work that was produced on April 8, 2015, is one of the best summaries of the issues at stake:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e\\_OytbgyfUY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_OytbgyfUY)
2. **Women In Ministry Site**—a very informative site that discusses “Women Pastors and the Bible” from an Adventist Perspective:  
<http://www.womenministrytruth.com/>
3. **Secrets Unsealed Website**—provides audio/video and text materials dealing with relevant issues on women’s ordination  
<http://www.secretsunsealed.org/womens-ordination/>
4. A website by “Council of Adventist” Pastors in North America called **Ordinationtruth.org**. It offers up-to-date responses to the pro-ordination campaign and propaganda:  
<http://ordinationtruth.com/>

### **B. Here is a tentative list of some printed and online resources dealing with the ordination question:**

1. *Prove All Things: A Response to ‘Women in Ministry’*, by Mercedes H. Dyer (ed.)—a definitive rebuttal of the arguments in a pro-ordination work that was produced by some Andrews University Seminary professors.
2. *Strange Fire: Understanding the Hot Topic of Women’s Ordination* by Doug Bachelor and Dwight Hall.
3. *Reflections on Women’s Ordination*, by Stephen Bohr.

4. *Women Pastors, Why Not?: Bible Illuminations*, by Louis R. Torres
5. *Women's Ordination: 31 Popular Arguments and Biblical Answers*, by Eugene Prewitt.  
Available for free download at: <http://www.bibledoc.org/>
6. *The Adventist Ordination Crisis: Biblical Authority or Cultural Conformity*, by a collection of TOSC members and others who uphold the biblical position of the Church.  
Available at: [http://www.afbookstore.com/item/i/BK-AOC/n/The\\_Adventist\\_Ordination\\_Crisis/](http://www.afbookstore.com/item/i/BK-AOC/n/The_Adventist_Ordination_Crisis/)
7. *Women's Ordination: Does It Matter?* by Clinton & Gina Wahlen.  
Available at: <http://www.womensordination.com/purchase/>

### **C. More Scholarly Articles from the “Theology of Ordination Study Committee” (TOSC)**

1. A Summary Position of TOSC Scholars Against Women's Ordination (Scholars find no evidence in Bible and Ellen G. White's writings to support the ordination of women to the gospel ministry).  
<https://www.adventistarchives.org/position-summary-1.pdf>
2. “A Theology of Ordination: An Integration of Bible and Ellen G. White's Writings”—by P. Gerard Damsteegt.  
<https://www.adventistarchives.org/a-theology-of-ordination-an-integration-of-bible-and-ellen-g.-white%E2%80%99s-writings.pdf>
3. Ellen White, Ordination, and Authority, by Jerry Moon.  
<https://www.adventistarchives.org/ellen-white,-ordination,-and-authority.pdf>
4. “Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3: Ontological Equality and Role Differentiation”—by Paul S. Ratsara and Daniel K. Bediako.  
<https://www.adventistarchives.org/man-and-woman-in-genesis-one-thru-three.pdf>

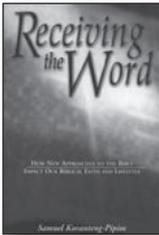
5. “Women of the Old Testament: Women of Influence,” by Laurel Damsteegt.  
<https://www.adventistarchives.org/women-of-the-old-testament.pdf>
6. “Evaluation of Egalitarian Papers”—by Gerhard Pfandl with Daniel Bediako, Steven Bohr, Laurel and Gerard Damsteegt, Jerry Moon, Paul Ratsara, Ed Reynolds, Ingo Sorke, and Clinton Wahlen  
<https://www.adventistarchives.org/evaluation-of-egalitarian-papers.pdf>
7. “Adam, Where Are You?: On Gender Relations”—by Ingo Sorke  
<https://www.adventistarchives.org/adam,-where-are-you.pdf>
8. “Restoration of the Image of God: Headship and Submission”—by John Peters.  
<https://www.adventistarchives.org/restoration-of-the-image-of-god-headship-and-submission-john-peters.pdf>
9. “Biblical Hermeneutics and Headship in First Corinthians”—by Edwin Reynolds.  
<https://www.adventistarchives.org/biblical-hermeneutics-and-headship-in-first-corinthians.pdf>
10. “Sorke—Response to Angel Rodriguez”—by Ingo Sorke. <http://ordinationtruth.com/featured/sorke-response-to-angel-rodriguez/>
11. “Gender differentiation?”—by Ingo Sorke.  
<http://ordinationtruth.com/2014/08/01/gender-differentiation/>
12. “Response to Rodriguez’s Critique on Headship”—by John W. Peters.  
<http://www.womenministrytruth.com/free-resources/articles-and-documents/id/1772/response-to-rodriguez-s-critique-on-headship-by-john-w-peters>
13. “Evaluation of Egalitarian Papers,” by Gerhard Pfandl.  
<https://www.adventistarchives.org/evaluation-of-egalitarian-papers.pdf>



# Selected Works by the Author

Readers can obtain the following works through:  
Remnant Publications (where the author serves  
as a special consultant on Bible projects):  
[www.remnantpublications.com](http://www.remnantpublications.com); 1-800-423-1319) or  
EAGLESONline ([www.EAGLESONline.org](http://www.EAGLESONline.org);  
or [info@EAGLESONline.org](mailto:info@EAGLESONline.org))

## APOLOGETIC BOOKS



### Receiving the Word

Pages: 368

ISBN 978-1-890014-00-1

*Receiving the Word* has an innocent title; but it deals with a very explosive issue—namely, biblical authority and interpretation. It is this issue that has divided the church into “conservative” and “liberal” camps. The book insightfully explains how new approaches to the Bible has left many students in our institutions confused and produced a generation of preachers, Bible teachers, church leaders, editors and publishers who are unsure of some of the church’s long-standing beliefs and practices. *Receiving the Word* also explains how a faulty view about the Bible and its interpretation can shipwreck the faith of any Christian.

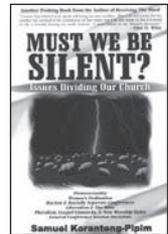
### Must We Be Silent?

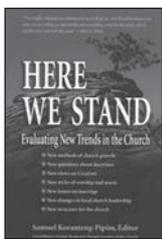
Pages: 640

Softcover ISBN 978-1-890014-03-2

Ebook ISBN 978-1-890014-30-8

*Must We Be Silent* deals with forbidden subjects. It tackles the most contentious and politicized issues to have plagued our church in recent times—namely, homosexuality, women’s ordination, racism and racially separate conferences, liberal higher criticism, and congregationalism and its new worship, preaching, and leadership styles. The book not only challenges the false ideologies that are making their way into the church, but also presents the sound biblical alternatives.





## Here We Stand

Pages: 811

ISBN 978-0-967762-21-0

At a time when it has become fashionable for church leaders, scholars, and members to be vague as to where they stand, the book *Here We Stand* has offered a biblically compelling response to some of the new trends in the church—namely, new methods of church planting and church growth; new questions about our doctrines; new views on Creation; new styles of worship and music; new issues on marriage; new changes in local church leadership; new structure for the church.

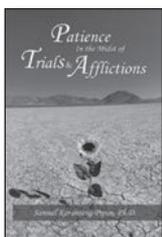
## OTHER BOOKS

### Not for Sale

Pages: 192

ISBN 978-1-890014-09-4

*Not for Sale* is a call to daily self-examination--and action. It highlights the consequences of the cowardly silence all too often displayed by some otherwise good and well-meaning people. Contending that silence, neutrality, or indifference in times of crisis is a criminal act, if not a betrayal of faith, this book makes an urgent plea against choosing to do nothing in the face of wrong-doing.



### Patience in the Midst of Trials and Afflictions

Pages: 136

ISBN 978-1-890014-04-4

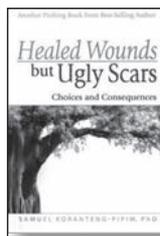
Every human being, at one time or the other, is bound to experience some trials and afflictions. These are painful, prolonged, or deep suffering that severely test the resiliency and character of a person. *Patience In the Midst of Trials and Afflictions* insightfully argues that trials and afflictions are gifts from God. They are the lemons God squeezes to produce lemonades in our lives. They are the heat and pressure He applies to our lives in order to produce in us the beautiful diamond of patience. The purpose of this small volume is to explore the nature of patience as it relates to trials and afflictions, and to show how we can benefit from our precious gifts of trials.

## Healed Wounds but Ugly Scars

Pages: 192

ISBN 978-1-890014-11-7

Wrong choices. Bad decisions. Painful Wounds. Whether self-inflicted or caused by others, pain is a part of life we all experience. And while there's always forgiveness for our sins, the consequences are not always removed. Our wounds may heal, but the ugly scars remain. *Healed Wounds, but Ugly Scars* is intended to caution against making wrong choices in our journey through life—choices that have far-reaching consequences for ourselves and others. More importantly, the book is designed to help us retrace our steps back to healing, to lead us to the One who alone can help us live with our ugly scars.



## This is Love: Closer Relationships, Deeper Love, & Higher Spirituality

Pages: 192

ISBN 978-1-890014-08-7

Love is a universal human desire—and heart-ache. It has powerfully influenced—for good or for evil—the character and actions of humanity. Because love vividly colors every aspect of life, love poems, love songs, love plays, love proverbs, and love literature can be found in virtually every nation. But do we really know what true love is? *This Is Love* attempts to answer this question. By employing love poems, love quotes, love notes, love gems, and love thoughts the book creatively explains what love is—and is not.

## Six More Chances

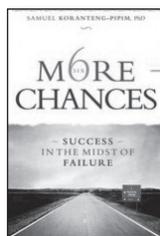
Pages: 192

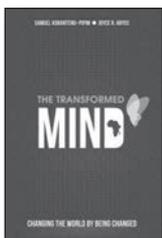
Hardcover ISBN 978-1-890014-14-8

Softcover ISBN 978-1-890014-15-5

E-Book ISBN 978-1-890014-16-2

*Six More Chances* takes another look at failure—whether personal, professional, or spiritual. The book compellingly argues that setbacks in life shouldn't set us back. They are stepping-stones. In stepping on the stones we move upward and forward.





## The Transformed Mind

Pages: 302

ISBN 978-1-890014-17-9

*The Transformed Mind* is a provocative and inspiring volume. In it two influential Ghanaians jointly speak to the world through issues facing Africa. The Introduction to their book boldly announces: “The stage is set. The world is our audience, Africa our aisle, and Ghana our pulpit. We speak as citizens of a world to come. And we’re passionate about the issues we address, in the hope that you will be challenged to change your world.”

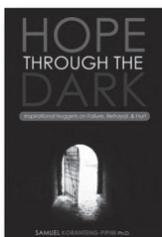
## Africa Must Think

Pages: 96

Softcover ISBN 978-1-890014-20-9

Ebook ISBN 978-1-890014-23-0

*Africa Must Think* delivers 30 hard-core messages to challenge and inspire anyone who seeks to understand Africa’s problem and desires to be part of its future. Although the title calls upon “Africa” to think, discerning readers will immediately recognize that this work is actually speaking to all continents! *Africa Must Think* transcends Africa and Africans. It is actually a collective call to humanity, as the author said: “Although I write as a Ghanaian, African or Black person, the world is my audience. For I write as a citizen of the world to come.”



## Hope through the Dark

Pages: 96

Softcover ISBN 978-1-890014-21-6

Ebook ISBN 978-1-890014-22-3

*Hope Through the Dark* argues that without the dark, we cannot clearly see the stars. Thus, the dark moments of adversity often reveal some of life’s most valuable gifts or blessings. In 30 short chapters of inspiring nuggets, the book captures some of the precious lessons the author has learned during his journey through the gloomy night of failure, betrayal, loneliness, and ill-treatment. For all who are dealing with doubt and discouragement on account of failure and hurt, the author writes: “The journey would not be easy. But through God’s grace and mercy, you can have hope through the dark. And you can confidently say, ‘It is well—even in the well.’”

## Good Night

Pages: 192

Hardcover ISBN 978-1-890014-26-1

Softcover ISBN 978-1-890014-24-7

Ebook ISBN 978-1-890014-25-4



Suffering, sickness, and death are very real. From the morning we're hatched from the womb, till the night we're dispatched to the tomb, our lives are matched with pain and grief. But we ought not despair when our days are dark or when we bid farewell to loved ones! Good night shouldn't be goodbye, for there'll be a good morning.

There is coming a day,  
When no heart aches shall come,  
No more clouds in the sky,  
No more tears to dim the eye,  
All is peace forever more,  
On that happy golden shore,  
What a day, glorious day that will be.

The book—*Good Night*—speaks hope to hearts that are burdened. It offers comfort to those who are grief-stricken on account of suffering, sickness, or death—whether the anguish of adversity is their own or that of those near and dear to them.



## The African Giant

Pages: 128

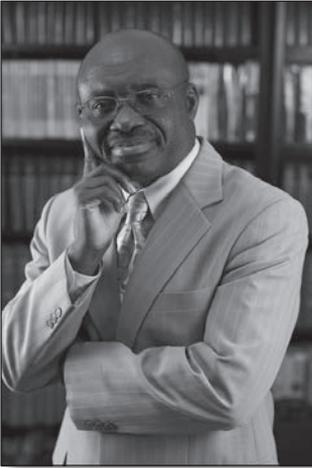
Softcover ISBN 978-1-890014- 27-8

Ebook ISBN 978-1-890014- 28-5

*The African Giant* argues that “Africans are like the elephant in the zoo...” The book speaks to all Africans and friends of Africa on some of the contemporary issues of Pan Africanism and the African Renaissance, and the role of the youth in the new scramble for Africa. The book is equally relevant to the challenges facing other developing countries in Asia, South & Central America.



## About the Author



Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, PhD—a US-based Ghanaian author, inspirational speaker, leadership trainer, and advocate for youth empowerment—was trained in engineering and systematic theology. In 1998 he received a PhD in systematic theology, specializing in biblical authority & interpretation, and ecclesiology (doctrine of the church). His doctoral dissertation was titled “The Role of the Holy Spirit in Biblical Interpretation: A Study in the Writings of James I. Packer.”

Between 1995 and 2000, he served as a member of the General Conference’s Biblical Research Institute Committee (BRICOM). His name is listed as one of the denominational theologians who reviewed the scholarly articles contained in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (2000), which is volume 12 of the “Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary” series. Dr. Pipim has served as a delegate to five General Conference sessions (1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005).

He promotes excellence and “mind liberation” as the basis of transformational social change on the continent of Africa. Dr. Pipim is a provocative and inspirational writer, having authored and co-authored more than twenty books—including his bestselling works *Receiving the Word*, *Must We Be Silent?*, *Here We Stand* (editor), *Patience in the Midst of Trials and Afflictions*, *Healed Wounds but Ugly Scars*, *This Is Love*, *God Is Faithful*, and *Not for Sale*.

Dr. Pipim has spoken extensively around the world at events for youth, students, and young professionals. His public Bible lectures on a wide variety of subjects are presented in a winsome, dynamic, and crystal clear way that engages both the hearts and minds of his audiences, whether secular or religious. For 12 years, he served as a

Director of Public Campus Ministries, ministering to students, faculty, and staff at The University of Michigan. In that role, he grandfathered and mentored influential grassroots youth and young adult organizations around the world.

He currently directs the EAGLES and ANANSE Centers for Leadership Development. Besides his popular “Why,” “Excellence” and “Africa Must Think” lectures, Dr. Pipim regularly conducts transformative leadership trainings for different professional, civic, educational, and religious groups. He also serves as a special consultant on Bible projects for Remnant Publications. His most recent books include *Six More Chances*, *The Transformed Mind*, *Africa Must Think*, *Hope Through the Dark*, *Good Night*, and *The African Giant*.