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**THE CONTRADICTION INTERPRETATIONS OF
GENESIS 4:7—ELLEN G. WHITE VERSUS THE
THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION STUDY
COMMITTEE POSITION 1**

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Abstract

Reflecting a widespread tension throughout the world of biblical interpretation, Ellen G. White and the Theology of Ordination Study Committee Position 1 (TOSC1) propose contradictory interpretations of Genesis 4:7. Given the content of Genesis 4:7, which addresses issues relating to psychology and authority, which are often connected with Genesis 3:16 and gender, and its use by the TOSC1, the promotion of the TOSC1 interpretation of Genesis 4:7 within Seventh-day Adventist circles as well as broader Christianity will encourage further unpleasant confrontations concerning the issues related to the psychology of gender and authority in Scripture.

Keywords: psychology, gender, ordination, Cain, Abel, Adam, Eve, sin.

Introduction

Two of the more discussed and complex verses in Scripture are found in Genesis 4:7 and Genesis 3:16. In a popular modern English (NASB) rendering of them,

“If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.” (Gen 4:7)

To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you shall bring forth children; Yet your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.” (Gen 3:16)

The purpose of this study is not to break down all of the controverted interpretive and linguistic features of these two biblical verses (which are much debated), aside from noting that most scholars identify two of the key terms in

these passages as “desire” (*ʔešāqâ*) and “rule/master” (*māšal*). Rather, the purpose of this study is to shed some light on the significance of the biblical psychology of gender¹ revealed through these two passages in the light of the interpretations given to them by Ellen G. White and the recent Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) papers published between 2012 and 2015 for the benefit of the General Conference delegates and lay members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.² Specifically, this article will point out a contradiction between White’s writings and the views shared in all of the published positions by the members of

¹Secular psychology is the science of behavior and mind, including conscious and unconscious phenomena, as well as feelings and thoughts. As a social science, it seeks to classify individuals into groups by establishing general patterns and principles describing the diversity of humanity. In such a task, certain “more functioning,” “less functioning,” exceptional, and abnormal behavioral and thought patterns may be identified, alongside a wide range of normative or typical patterns. To give an example of a normative issue of relevance to this study, secular psychology has determined that a majority of people are heterosexual in their orientation and behavior, with a minority expressing alternative sexual orientations. The question a biblical theologian and psychologist might ask, then, is this—does Scripture proscribe, predict, or expect heterosexual orientations to be “typical”? If it does, then Scripture provides data concerning this psychological question. As such, then, “biblical psychology” refers to the notion that Scripture provides data explaining or affirming certain ideal, normative, or abnormal features about the human mind, in either a sinless or sinful condition. For example, the supposition that men and women think “differently,” or that typically (or normatively) males and females are attracted to each other and not to their own gender, are questions that a psychology of Scripture might address. Other possible psychological features that theoretically could appear in Scripture might relate to basic personality distinctions—introversion or extroversion, etc. As will be discussed in the present study, the question will be raised whether or not Scripture provides specific data relating to whether or not men or women are more psychologically prone to a sinful propensity for the desire to lead or control other people, particularly their spouses.

²It should be briefly noted that the purpose of the TOSC, created by the administrators of the church, was to gather scholars and other influential figures together to determine the current perspectives held throughout the Adventist world, and to produce papers that could be used as resources for the delegates (and lay members) to consider prior to voting on a policy proposal related to the ordination of women under regional (divisional) jurisdiction in 2015. The TOSC was not to be considered a body with “power to act,” nor should its opinions be considered as anything other than those of its individual members. That is, whether a delegate supported or opposed the vote on the ordination of women should not be interpreted to mean that a delegate adhered to the specific biblical interpretation of a given paper within the TOSC.

the TOSC adhering to Position 1 (TOSC1),³ which opposes the ordination of women, concerning their exegesis of Genesis 4:7 and its relationship to Genesis 3:16.

However, despite the focus of the TOSC upon the issue of ordination, this article is not addressing ordination per se nor the issue of gender roles in ministry. Instead, this article is merely pointing out (1) a significant shortcoming in the scholarly rigor of a majority of the TOSC members who commented on these passages and (2) the potential implications of their interpretation. Notably, most of these scholars would normally acknowledge an awareness of White's commentary on a Scriptural passage, and they have not hesitated to cite her for support on other occasions where appropriate, in harmony with the Adventist Church's official position on her writings.⁴ Furthermore, it should be pointed out that the issue of the psychology of gender revealed in these two passages is of consequence in itself, even aside from the issues of ordination and gender roles,

³Specifically, the TOSC formed three major Positions. Position 1 opposed the ordination of women for positions of authority within the church, deeming it unbiblical, from their perspective. Position 2 interpreted Scripture as supporting the ordination of women to all ministry roles within the church. Position 3 emphasized that Scripture seems to indicate general or preferred natural gender roles that encourage male leadership but that in certain missional contexts and situations, it is acceptable for women to be ordained to leading positions of ministry.

⁴Seventh-day Adventists teach that "the Scriptures testify that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and we believe it was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested" ("Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, 2016, accessed July 11, 2018, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/sdafundamentalbeliefs>). Unfortunately, left implicit in such a statement is the possibility that her writings may (1) correct a widely accepted non-Adventist understanding of Scripture, or (2) provide clarity to an otherwise ambiguous passage. In either case, it is difficult to reconcile her submissive status to Scripture with her prophetic authority. This tension has not been "resolved" within Adventist scholarship. As such, it must be made clear that while White's writings are not to simply override or supersede Scripture's teachings, nor form the basis of doctrine, they do, nevertheless, at times offer what she herself claimed to be inspired insights upon difficult passages that Adventists take seriously as they conduct their exegetical studies—it may be that further study of the biblical languages and their historical contexts may affirm her interpretation. Yet, if not, in any case, it has been the general assumption that such controverted instances do not concern core or fundamental teachings that are not perhaps demonstrable through other passages of Scripture, that is, through a *tota Scriptura*. Rather, her own testimony always remained that "the Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony" (Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* [Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1958], 1:416).

and thus the issue of psychology addressed herein is worth discussing on its own merits if a common future understanding and harmony is to be hoped for within Adventism, let alone Christianity, concerning the issues pertaining to gender within the church context and society. It is also worth noting that the view of those adhering to TOSC1 on these passages is shared by many other scholars outside Seventh-day Adventist circles, and the relationship between the two verses has encouraged a complex variety of interpretations not shared in this article. However, below I will focus especially on describing the positions advanced in the TOSC papers and White's writings. In addition to focusing on issues relating to the psychology of gender and authority, I will also include a few further thoughts within the Adventist context concerning some broader theological issues relating to White's views on these passages.

The TOSC1's Understanding of Genesis 3:16 and 4:7

In the final *TOSC Report*⁵ issued after the June 2014 meetings, the authors for the section on Position 1 state,

Once [Adam and Eve's] relationship was broken and distorted by sin, it was necessary for God to enforce Adam's role by way of command. The principle itself had not changed, but the woman must now accept his "rule over" her (Gen 3:16), although *her new sin-borne desire was to rule over him (note the similar meaning of the terms in the close parallel a few verses later, in Gen 4:7)*. The change was . . . in moving from a harmonious, willing cooperation with Adam's leadership to a different relationship that would include tension within the human family between the two genders. As a result, harmony could only be preserved by the (now unnatural) submission of the woman to the man.⁶

The above commentary references an earlier TOSC paper by Paul Ratsara and Daniel Bediako, delivered July 2013—*Man and Woman in Genesis 1–3: Ontological Equality and Role Differentiation*.⁷ Ratsara and Bediako state the following as their interpretation of Genesis 3:16 and Genesis 4:7:

⁵*General Conference Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) Report* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2014), accessed July 11, 2018, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/final-tosc-report.pdf>.

⁶*TOSC Report*, 43 (emphasis supplied).

⁷Paul S. Ratsara and Daniel K. Bediako, "Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3: Ontological Equality and Role Differentiation," Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, July 23, 2013, accessed July 11, 2018, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/man-and-woman-in-genesis-one-thru-three.pdf>. Note especially 39–42, 45n148. See also Bediako's further affirmation of this work in Daniel K. Bediako and Josiah B. Andor, "The Desire of the Woman: Genesis 3:16 Revisited," in *Journal of AILAS African Theological Association* 8, no. 1 (2018): 1–13.

The close proximity between 3:16 and 4:7 is reason enough to carefully compare the two passages. As in 3:16, 4:7 presents a tension between *ʿšūqā* and *māšal* with striking structural similarity:

3:16 And against (*ʿel*) your man [is] your desire (*ʿšūqā*); but he must rule (*māšal*) over you

4:7 And against (*ʿel*) you [is] its desire (*ʿšūqā*); but you must rule (*māšal*) over it

In 4:7 sin’s “desire” (*ʿšūqā*) and Cain’s “rule” (*māšal*) occur in a context where sin seeks to overpower Cain, but Cain is encouraged to rule over it. The woman’s “desire” (*ʿšūqā*) and man’s “rule” (*māšal*) in 3:16 occur in a similar context where the woman’s desire is to have mastery over the man.⁸

One can plainly see here that Ratsara and Bediako are seeking to harmonize the parallels between the two passages, and juxtaposing Adam and Cain, respectively, against Eve and “sin,” placing Eve and her desire in a negative or unfavorable position.

Noteworthy is that Ratsara and Bediako’s view of July 2013 was generally shared, with some nuance, by Ingo Sorke in his July 2013 paper, *Adam, Where Are You? On Gender Relations*, as he focuses more on the “rule” than “desire.”⁹ There Sorke asserted,

In Gen 4:7, however, the use of the term [*māšal*] points to a more defined function: “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, *but you should rule over it.*” Here [*māšal*] “to rule over,” to dominate is a necessity for spiritual survival. It is in no way abusive or oppressive; in fact, to “rule over” is essential in mastering sin. In fact, Genesis 3:16 and Genesis 4:7 bear striking similarity:

Gen 3:16 אֶל-אִשְׁתְּךָ תִּשְׁקָתָהּ וְהָאָדָם יִמְשַׁלְּךָ

Your desire will be for your husband, and he should/will rule over you.

Gen 4:7 וְאֵלֶיךָ תִּשְׁקָתוֹ וְאַתָּה תִּמְשַׁלְּבֶנּוּ

Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.

Sin must be ruled over, or sin will rule over a person. *Thus the meaning of [*māšal*] in Genesis 3:16 is a male-focused domination as a guard against the desire for future disobedience*

⁸Ratsara and Bediako, “Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3,” 41.

⁹Ingo Sorke, “Adam, Where Are You? On Gender Relations,” Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, July 2013, 26, accessed July 11, 2018, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/adam,-where-are-you.pdf> (note also 23n86, where Sorke references the very article by Ellen White in the *Bible Echo* that will later contradict his own position taken on page 26 of his article, as will be discussed below).

and sin: the man's responsibility to guard against disobedience is renewed. The issue is not male dictatorial dominance but leadership-driven deliverance.¹⁰

Here Sorke endorses the same view as shared by Ratsara and Bediako concerning the meaning of *māšal*.

Ratsara, Bediako, and Sorke's interpretation was later concurred with in John W. Peters's January 2014 paper, *Restoration of the Image of God: Headship and Submission*.¹¹ Peters, citing Ratsara and Bediako,¹² similarly suggests that

strong evidence has been set forth that ʔšūqâ (desire) with the preposition 'el should be translated as "desire against" rather than "desire for" (with a different preposition 'al) as in Song of Solomon 7:10 [in which ʔšūqâ (desire) also appears with the preposition 'al, meaning for, "I am my beloved's, And his desire is for me"]. Thus the Fall did not bring about headship in marriage. The Fall brought about a distortion of previous roles, not the introduction of new roles. The distortion was that Eve would now rebel against her husband's authority, and Adam could misuse that authority to rule forcefully and even harshly over Eve. [In other words,] the woman's desire for mastery [over the man] is reversed by the authority bestowed on the man to "rule."¹³

Again, as can be seen here, Peters accepts Ratsara and Bediako's interpretation of Genesis 3:16 and Genesis 4:7, while further articulating its psychological implications for men and women as he sees them.

A detailed study of the TOSC papers reveals that the above interpretation of Genesis 3:16 and Genesis 4:7 is the only published, and thus certainly dominant, position existing amongst those adhering to Position 1. Yet, its influence extends beyond the individual official TOSC papers or the TOSC1 summary. For example, the above interpretation of Genesis 3:16 and Genesis 4:7 is also clearly articulated in the January 2014 document, *Evaluation of Egalitarian Papers*,¹⁴ authored by Gerhard Pfandl and cosigned by Daniel Bediako, Steven Bohr, Laurel and Gerard Damsteegt, Jerry Moon, Paul Ratsara, Ed Reynolds, Ingo Sorke, and Clinton Wahlen:

The Hebrew word *ʔshuqab* appears three times in the OT (Gen 3:16; 4:7; Song 7:11). In Genesis 4:7 God says to Cain, "And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire [*ʔshuqab*] is for you, but you must rule [*mashaʔ*]

¹⁰Sorke, "Adam, Where Are You?," 26 (emphasis supplied).

¹¹John W. Peters, "Restoration of the Image of God: Headship and Submission," Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, January 2014, accessed July 11, 2018, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/restoration-of-the-image-of-god-headship-and-submission-john-peters.pdf>. Note especially 22n73–75.

¹²Peters, "Restoration of the Image of God," 22n74.

¹³Peters, "Restoration of the Image of God," 22n73 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁴Gerhard Pfandl et al., "Evaluation of Egalitarian Papers," Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, 2014, accessed July 11, 2018, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/evaluation-of-egalitarian-papers.pdf>.

over it” (Gen 4:7 ESV). Sin will seek to rule over Cain, but Cain is encouraged to rule over it. The woman’s “desire” (*ʿshuqah*) and man’s “rule” (*mashaʿ*) in 3:16 occur in a similar context. But now it is *the woman who desires to have mastery over the man*, a path which she had taken by having the man eat of the fruit, with devastating results. Adam was rebuked for having listened to the voice of his wife (3:17). *Eve is now told that although she may seek mastery over her husband, he is to rule over her*. Yet, this ruling is not to be a dictatorial rule of force, but a rule of love and care for the woman. Paul seems to have understood Genesis 3:16 in this way (1 Tim 2:13, 14). *There is no reason to go outside of the early chapters of Genesis to a much later and very different context such as the Song of Solomon for an understanding of ʿshuqah when Genesis itself is so clear*.

While 3:16 is directed at Eve, the same desire by some women to dominate men is seen more generally in the way they relate to male-based authority in the church (cf. 1 Tim 2:11-15), which is an extension of the family. This means that woman’s desire and man’s rule cannot be restricted to the marriage context alone.¹⁵

Once more, it appears clear that Pfandl et al. agreed with Ratsara and Bediako’s interpretation; although their original 2013 paper is not cited here, both of them also cosigned this document, and here they further explain the implications of the text as they see it, including its potential psychological implications for men and women, as Peters had also shared.

However, even the above works do not exhaust the extensive recent published attention addressing Genesis 3:16 and Genesis 4:7 by those adhering to the TOSC1 interpretation. Ratsara and Bediako’s view also appears cited favorably within an appeal organized by Gerard Damsteegt alongside various other individuals,¹⁶ representing the apparent broadest uncritical acceptance of this interpretation with many signatories, in response to an Andrews University

¹⁵Pfandl et al., “Evaluation of Egalitarian Papers,” 7 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁶“An Open Appeal from Faculty, Alumni, Students, and Friends of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary To Faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary regarding the Recent Statement on the Unique Headship of Christ in the Church,” *Adventist Review*, October 2014, 6, accessed July 11, 2018, https://www.adventistreview.org/assets/public/news/2014-10/242011032-Appeal-to-the-Seminary-Faculty_1_.pdf. The signatories listed are as follows: Steven Bohr, Thomas R. Cusaack, Laurel Damsteegt, P. Gerard Damsteegt, Jay Gallimore, Michael Hasel, C. Raymond Holmes, James Howard, Don Macintosh, Phil Mills, Leroy Moore, Kevin Paulson, John W. Peters, Gerhard Pfandl, Eugene W. Prewitt, George Reid, Edwin E. Reynolds, Daniel Scarone, Dolores E. Slikkers, Ingo Sorke, Steve Toscano, Mario Veloso, Karl Wilcox, Robert Wilcox, and Dojcin Zivadinovic. Evidently, none of these individuals noticed or disagreed with Ratsara and Bediako’s interpretation of Gen 3:16 and Gen 4:7, such that the substance of the document was changed. Rather, notably, the appeal had only one academic footnote, and it referenced Ratsara and Bediako’s July 2013 paper affirmatively.

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary statement on headship.¹⁷ Further still, two other TOSC1 advocates, Clinton Wahlen and his wife Gina, in their recent book *Women's Ordination: Does it Matter?*,¹⁸ and David C. Read, in his positive review of the Wahlens' book,¹⁹ endorse the basic position outlined by Ratsara and Bediako.

What is remarkable about the above situation is that in no instance in any of the above works is Ellen White's interpretation of Genesis 4:7 mentioned even though she did offer an explicit interpretation on multiple occasions. Given that, to my knowledge, most of the above authors and signatories would esteem her opinion worthy of consideration, it is remarkable that over the few years that the TOSC discussion took place, White's clear interpretation was not explored nor incorporated into their scholarly interpretation of Genesis 4:7, which surely does have implications, as they all observed, for Genesis 3:16.

Contrary to the comment in Pfandl et al.'s interpretation, as will be presented below, it seems that Genesis 4 is *not* so clear. The negative understanding, and its psychological implications, that so many leaders of the TOSC1 have expressed concerning *ʾel* and its relationship to *māšal* in Genesis 3:16 is not conclusive if Genesis 4:7 is cited for support, as all of the above papers have done, and Ellen White's writings are consulted and regarded with respect. Below I will share White's interpretation of Genesis 4:7 and also elaborate briefly on her interpretation's significance for both a biblical psychology of gender as well as for some additional broader theological issues.

¹⁷“On the Unique Headship of Christ in the Church: A Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary” Andrews University, September 2014, accessed July 11, 2018, https://www.andrews.edu/sem/about/statements/9-19-14-updated_web_version-unique_headship_of_christ_final.pdf.

¹⁸Clinton Wahlen and Gina Wahlen, *Women's Ordination: Does It Matter?* (Silver Spring, MD: Bright Shores, 2015), 65. Endorsements of the book are penned by George W. Reid, Gerhard Pfandl, Sikhu Hlatshwayo, Ingo Sorke, and Shelley Quinn. The Wahlens explain, “After the Fall, there would be a power struggle. God tells Eve that her desire will now be “toward” (*ʾel*) her husband (vs. 16). The Hebrew preposition *ʾel* can be translated either positively (‘for’) or negatively (‘against’). When it describes an action ‘of a hostile character,’ it should be translated ‘against.’ This meaning makes more sense in view of Genesis 4:7, which uses nearly the same wording. In that verse, God warns that sin’s desire would be to control Cain, but that he must rule over it. Similarly, in 3:16, God warns Eve that now, because of sin, ‘your desire will be against your husband’ (vs. 16). She will want to dominate and control him (as happened already in her urging him to eat the forbidden fruit)” (ibid).

¹⁹David Read, “Why Women’s Ordination Matters,” review of *Women's Ordination: Does It Matter?* by Clinton Wahlen and Gina Wahlen, *ADvocate*, June 14, 2015, accessed July 11, 2018, <https://advocate.com/articles/2015/6/14/why-womens-ordination-matters>.

Ellen G. White's Understanding of Genesis 4:7

In contrast to the interpretive translation found in most popular Bible versions today, Ellen White does not support a rendering of Genesis 4:7b along the following lines: “Sin is crouching at the door; and its [sin’s] desire is for you, but you must master it [sin].” In such an interpretive translation, especially when contrasted with Genesis 3:16 as noted above, the “desire” is the action of some *metaphorical beast of sin or some spiritual influence of sin*, and our rule over sin, like Cain’s, should be the same as a man’s rule over his wife. Such a juxtaposition places Eve in an unfavorable pairing with “sin,” suggesting some rather negative psychological implications for women and gender relations—are women truly *specifically* suffering under either a curse or fallen sinful condition that makes them somehow more naturally rebellious against the wishes of their husbands in a differentiated way from how all sinful humans prefer self-interest over caring for another person?

It so happens that White directly addressed and interpreted Genesis 4:7 (interestingly using her King James translation, which in this instance happens to preserve some subtle Hebrew gender cues absent in most modern English translations²⁰) on multiple occasions, with several other comments elsewhere supporting her alternative view. For example, in an article entitled “Abel’s ‘More Excellent Sacrifice,’” printed in the *Signs of the Times* in Australia, White wrote,

When Cain saw that his offering was rejected, he was angry with the Lord and with Abel; he was angry that God did not accept man’s substitute in place of the sacrifice divinely ordained, and angry with his brother for choosing to obey God instead of joining in rebellion against Him. Notwithstanding Cain’s disregard of the divine command, God did not leave him to himself; but He condescended to reason with the man who had shown himself so unreasonable. And the Lord said unto Cain, “Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.” Genesis 4:6, 7. The choice lay with Cain himself. If he would trust to the merits of the promised Saviour, and would obey God’s requirements, he would enjoy His favour. But should he persist in unbelief and transgression, he would have no ground for complaint because he was rejected by the Lord.

Abel’s offering had been accepted; but this was because he had done in every particular as God required him to do. *If Cain would correct his error, he would not be deprived of his birthright: Abel would not only love him as his brother, but, as the younger, would*

²⁰For a technical discussion and interpretation of the Hebrew that supports White’s overall interpretation, see Joachim Azevedo, “At the Door of Paradise: A Contextual Interpretation of Gen 4:7,” *BN* 100 (1999): 45–59.

*be subject to him. Thus the Lord declared to Cain, "Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him."*²¹

Here one can see that White is clearly juxtapositioning Cain with Abel, not Cain with "sin" as a metaphorical beast or spiritual influence. Interestingly, this passage from White also appears in the 1896 edition of the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*,²² although it is absent from the earlier and more widely reprinted 1890 edition of the same general book.²³

As can be seen above, White observes that the masculine pronoun "his" in English matches best with Abel as the antecedent, not a "beast of sin." Although she probably was not aware of it, the Hebrew noun for "sin" (*khata'ab* or *khatta't*, which means sin or sin/purification offering) here is feminine, and the suffix for "desire" is masculine, and thus in this instance the King James rendering using a masculine pronoun is a legitimate translation although not a common one today. Importantly, however, White did not share her above interpretation on merely one occasion. White had earlier written an article entitled "Cain and Abel Tested," in *The Signs of the Times*:

The Lord was not ignorant of the feelings of resentment cherished by Cain; but he would have Cain reflect upon his course, and, becoming convinced of his sin, repent, and set his feet in the path of obedience. There was no cause for his wrathful feelings toward either his brother or his God; it was his own disregard of the plainly expressed will of God that had led to the rejection of his offering. Through his angel messenger, God said to this rebellious, stubborn man: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." "If thou doest well"—not having your own way, but obeying God's commandments, coming to him with the blood of the slain victim, thus showing faith in the promised Redeemer, who, in the fullness of time, would make an atonement for guilty man, that he might not perish, but have eternal life.

"And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." Abel's offering had been accepted; but this was because Abel had done in every particular as God

²¹Ellen G. White, "Abel's 'Excellent Sacrifice,'" *Signs of the Times [Australia]*, April 8, 1912, 230 (emphasis supplied).

²²Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets, or the Great Conflict Between Good and Evil as Illustrated in The Lives of Holy Men of Old* (London, UK: International Tract Society, 1896), 59–60. This edition, absent from the popular Ellen G. White Research CD-ROM available from the Ellen G. White Estate, is available for free online in PDF form at books.google.com, accessed July 11, 2018, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=UI0xAQAAMAAJ&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA25>.

²³The edition that one is most likely to see in book form today is a reprint of Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets: The Conflict of the Ages Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1890, 1913). This version excludes White's more detailed comments on Cain and Abel, as seen above in the later revision.

required him to do. *This would not rob Cain of his birthright. Abel would love him as his brother, and as the younger, be subject to him.*²⁴

As can be seen clearly here, White sees the angel's message to Cain in connection with the issue of Cain's status as the firstborn possessing a birthright. It seems this is at least partially the reason Cain is frustrated that Abel is not following his lead. Yet the angel admonishes, if Cain will do what is correct, then Abel will willingly submit to Cain's brotherly leadership.

The above two instances of White's interpretation may be the clearest, but they are not exhaustive of the times she expressed her understanding of Genesis 4:7. Even earlier, suggesting a consistent viewpoint throughout her life, White commented on the context of Genesis 4:7 in her book *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 3, sharing that "Cain being the eldest, would not listen to his brother,"²⁵ and accordingly, after Cain experienced the rejection of his sacrifice,

the angel inquires of him the reason of his anger, and informs him that if he does well, and follows the directions God has given, he will accept him and respect his offering. But if he will not humbly submit to God's arrangements, and believe and obey him, he cannot accept his offering. The angel tells Cain that it was no injustice on the part of God, or partiality shown to Abel; but that it was on account of his own sin, and disobedience of God's express command, why he could not respect his offering—and *if he would do well he would be accepted of God, and his brother should listen to him, and he should take the lead, because he was the eldest.*²⁶

Although White does not quote Genesis 4:7 on this occasion, merely alluding to it, as can be seen, she still clearly and consistently held to an interpretation of Genesis 4:7 that placed the relational tension of "desire and rule" between Cain and Abel, not Cain and "sin."

Given the obvious textual parallels between Genesis 4:7 and Genesis 3:16, there is clearly more to be said concerning Genesis 4:7 and its connection with Genesis 3:16, as noted so often above by the TOSC1 advocates. In a contrast that cannot but serve as a critical insight into White's understanding of Genesis 4:7 and its psychological implications for Genesis 3:16, note the following wording in two passages from White:

Cain invites Abel to walk with him in the fields, and he there gives utterance to his unbelief and his murmuring against God. He claims that he was doing well in presenting his offering; and the more he talks against God, and impeaches his justice and mercy in rejecting his own offering and accepting that of his brother Abel, the more bitter are his feelings of anger and resentment.

²⁴Ellen G. White, "Cain and Abel Tested," *Signs of the Times*, December 16, 1886, 753 (emphasis supplied).

²⁵Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1864), 3:48.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 48–49 (emphasis supplied).

Abel defends the goodness and impartiality of God, and places before Cain the simple reason why God did not accept his offering.

The fact that Abel ventured to disagree with him and even went so far as to point out his errors, astonished Cain. It was a new experience; for Abel had hitherto submitted to the judgment of his elder brother; and Cain was enraged to the highest degree that Abel did not sympathize with him in his disaffection. Abel would *yield* when *conscience* was not concerned; but when the course of the God of Heaven was brought in question, and Cain spoke derisively of the sacrifice of faith, Abel was courageous to defend the truth.²⁷

Now notice White's words in a personal letter she wrote to Mary Loughborough concerning her public behavior toward her husband John in 1861:

I wish in all sisterly and motherly kindness to kindly warn you upon another point. I have often noticed before others a manner you have in speaking to John in rather a dictating manner, the tone of your voice sounding impatient. Mary, others notice this and have spoken of it to me. It hurts your influence.

We women must remember that God has placed us subject to the husband. He is the head and our judgment and views and reasonings must agree with his if possible. If not, the preference in God's Word is given to the husband where it is not a matter of *conscience*. We must *yield* to the head. I have said more perhaps upon this point than necessary. Please watch this point.²⁸

There are many conclusions and further questions one might draw from the above insights from White. I will not pursue them all here, except to note that both wives and younger brothers are to be more willing to "yield" except in cases of "conscience." As such, in any case, White did clearly view the psychological dynamics between husbands and wives as parallel in some way to the psychological dynamics of older and younger brothers. Noting that Ratsara and Bediako helpfully observed that the preposition *'el* precedes the object of the "desire" in both 4:7 and 3:16, and then noting that White considers the "desire" a *positive* thing in 4:7, indeed it could be considered a reward to Cain for doing the right thing that Abel will desire, or return again with his love toward him, hints that both desires should be read *positively*, not negatively as Ratsara and Bediako unfortunately concluded.

What is clear from White's collective interpretation of both passages is that God did not uniquely place women under some unique psychological curse wherein they would suffer some gender specific negative "desire," making them "subject" to men in some unique way as women, as is asserted in the TOSC1 papers. This is because identical language is used for both passages. The curse upon the woman's "desire" uses the same language as that which describes Abel's

²⁷White, "Cain and Abel Tested," 753 (emphasis supplied).

²⁸Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 6:126 (emphasis supplied).

“desire” in a *positive* way. How the husband’s headship in marriage and the birthright of the firstborn son relate precisely, and the potential changes that the Fall may have wrought upon both these institutions, are matters for another study. That these two narratives and their parallel wording (noted by all scholars) ties them so closely together does invite further research down some interpretive lines that the TOSC1 members have not thus far pursued.

Unfortunately, the TOSC1 interpretation of Genesis 4:7, alongside its implications for Genesis 3:16, is incompatible with White’s view, and encourages a disharmony between the genders above and beyond the natural disharmony that sin creates between people of all genders, relations, and ages, as is brought out forcefully by the narrative of Cain and Abel. The negative juxtaposition of sin desiring to rule Cain and Eve desiring to rule Adam has serious implications for how we understand human psychology, which is manifested in innumerable subtle ways within various human cultures. It should not need a plain explanation, but I will offer one for clarity’s sake. In cultures where male domination over (and possibly abuse against) women is common and condoned, the last thing men (let alone Christian men) need to hear is that their wives are suffering under some specific condition (either a natural sinful one, or worse, a divine curse) inspiring them with a desire to rebel against their husbands. The notion that husbands should stand vigilantly prepared to put their wives in their “proper place” when they inevitably rebel, given that they can hardly resist instigating such rebellions, is in itself a very problematic supposition, even an evil idea. It encourages the notion that any desire of a woman to lead in *any* way in a context involving men is sinful, in a way *distinctly unique to women*, which is an incredible argument that short-circuits any serious discussion about the nature and presence of sinfulness in men and women, as well as the leadership abilities of women in general, including Ellen White. Rather, White offered the following counsel to such dictatorial men: “Never utter the word that the husband is the head of the wife.”²⁹

²⁹Ellen G. White, *Adventist Home* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1952), 117. The seriousness of the situation is illustrated, in part, through White’s comment that “when God made man He made him rule over the earth and all living creatures. So long as Adam remained loyal to Heaven, all nature was in *subjection* to him. But when he rebelled against the divine law, the inferior creatures were in rebellion against his rule” (White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 59), and thus no longer in any willing subjection; man’s rule over the animals must now be imposed. Thus the TOSC1 view (unintentionally) virtually places Eve in the same position as the animals—in peaceful subjection before the Fall but in rebellion after the Fall, when man’s headship must be imposed. Such a comparison is a logical outgrowth of the TOSC1 position that places Eve in a negative conceptual relationship to sin. This view is, in fact, dangerous because it contrasts Eve not only with sin but also with the position of animals, lowering the dignity of her humanity. Furthermore, because within the TOSC1 view Eve is placed in subjection before *and* after the Fall, this makes her position comparatively *worse* than the animals after the Fall since she is now both in a divinely

Of course, it should be pointed out that not all of the negative implications of the TOSC1 position were necessarily intended by the various advocates of the TOSC1, such as in the papers by authors not cited. Some may have simply not thought it through completely nor considered precisely how their stance *might* be understood by others. In any case, this study shows the significance of such considerations and why one must be careful to consider of what implications may follow from one's conclusions.

*Ellen G. White's Understanding of Eve's
Curse and Gender Equality*

The subjects of gender distinctions and roles in marriage, the church, and society are very complicated matters that this paper is not specifically addressing. Yet there is one additional point that must be mentioned here on the timing, nature, and purpose of the "subjection" that Eve was placed under at the time of God's curse upon her in Genesis 3:16 in connection with the view advanced about this by advocates of the TOSC1. Given that Eve's subjection is proximally and thematically related to Genesis 4:7, and it also contradicts a specific interpretation given to it by White, it is worth addressing briefly.

In the highly influential TOSC1 paper by Ratsara and Bediako, the following quote from White is given:

In the creation God had made her the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with His great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other. Eve had been the first in transgression; and she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was now placed in subjection to her husband.³⁰

This quote is interpreted by Ratsara and Bediako to mean that during the curse of Genesis 3:16, God "now . . . *placed*" Eve "in subjection," in other words, God *returned* Eve to a position of subjection. In Ratsara and Bediako's words, "before the entrance of sin, there was no need for the woman's subjection to be imposed" because it occurred naturally, but after the Fall, "[to impose subjection upon Eve] was the only way for the divinely-instituted creation order to be maintained," thus Eve "was now placed in subjection."³¹ This reading, however, appears clearly incompatible with White's other statement on this narrative, demonstrating a

imposed subjection *and* is cursed with a female-specific desire to rebel, making her psychological condition unenviably pitiable.

³⁰White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890), 58.

³¹Ratsara and Bediako, "Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3," 43.

consistent disengagement between the TOSC1 and White's view on the pertinent passages in Genesis.

While there may be some ambiguity to White's commentary on Genesis 3:16 in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, her interpretation of Genesis 3:16 in *Testimonies*, volume 3, is quite clear.

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.³²

In other words, White's interpretation of Genesis 3:16 is actually very direct and to the point. Eve was an equal of Adam's *before* the Fall, but in some mysterious manner made unequal or inferior to him *after* the Fall, in a way that seems to parallel Abel's relationship to Cain, which also takes place in a post-Fall context. In any case, Eve's subjection is not delineated in some gender specific way in the biblical text, insofar as Abel is subjected to Cain with identical language—in both cases, their close matrimonial-familial relational connection seems to be of greater importance than any psychological principle concerning gender. Yet the point at present is that the TOSC1 view, wherein Eve was *returned* to subjection through the words, "he shall rule over you," is incompatible with White's interpretation of Genesis 3:16, and the TOSC1 error is a compounded one that includes a contradiction with White's interpretation of Genesis 4:7.

Other SDA and TOSC Interpretations of Genesis 4:7

As can be seen above, the TOSC1 advocates frequently opined upon their interpretation of Genesis 4:7 and its potential application to Genesis 3:16. However, the TOSC1 advocates were not the only ones to offer commentary on Genesis 4:7 within the TOSC. In this section, I will highlight the other two TOSC documents or papers to offer an interpretation of Genesis 4:7, and then I will briefly highlight one much earlier but well-known work from M. L. Andreasen, which appears to have set the popular but unfortunate precedent for ignoring White's interpretation within the Adventist context.

The first example would be from the Trans-European Division's Biblical Research Institute document, "The Mission of God through the Ministry of the Church: A Biblical Theology of Ordination—With Particular Attention to the

³²Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 3:484.

Ordination of Women” (2013),³³ which was submitted to the TOSC. Unfortunately, Bertil Wiklander et al. also somehow overlooked Ellen White’s interpretation.³⁴ Their suggestion is that the “sin/serpent ‘desires to have Cain’, but he must ‘take charge of the sin/serpent by offering a right sacrifice.’”³⁵ While this is a popular interpretation, and similar to the one advanced by advocates of TOSC1 even though Wiklander applies his understanding of it differently, it is still incompatible with White’s view and lacks the positive undertones that White’s view encourages concerning how Cain and Abel’s relationship could have been restored to harmony within the context of a fallen world.

However, the TOSC paper by Position 2 advocate Richard M. Davidson, who supports the ordination of women, provides a breath of fresh air for this study. He remarkably represents the *only* TOSC member who acknowledges and utilizes an awareness of White’s interpretation of Genesis 4:7, including a more likely application of its meaning for Genesis 3:16. Davidson’s paper, “Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations,”³⁶ offers a penetrating review of the literature and interpretations for Genesis 4:7 and Genesis 3:16. For his interpretation of Genesis 4:7, Davidson, concurring with fellow Adventist scholars Joachim Azevedo, and also more recently, Jacques Doukhan, suggests that the best translation of Genesis 4:7 would be, “a purification-offering [a male sacrificial animal] lies down at the door [of the Garden], and to you will be his [Abel’s] desire and you will rule [again as the firstborn] over him [your brother].”³⁷

³³Bertil Wiklander et al., “The Mission of God through the Ministry of the Church: A Biblical Theology of Ordination—With Particular Attention to the Ordination of Women,” Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, November 2013, accessed July 11, 2018, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/trans-european-division-brc-report.pdf>. The following individuals also contributed significantly to the document: Audrey Andersson, Jan Barna, Daniel Duda, Raafat Kamal, Janos Kovacs-Biro, Laurence Turner, and Cedric Vine. Unfortunately, it seems that none of these individuals were aware of White’s interpretation of Gen 4:7.

³⁴Wiklander et al., “The Mission of God through the Ministry of the Church,” 200–201.

³⁵Wiklander et al., “The Mission of God through the Ministry of the Church,” 201.

³⁶Richard M. Davidson, “Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations,” Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, July 2013, accessed July 11, 2018, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/should-women-be-ordained-as-pastors.pdf>. Note esp. 74n100, 75n117, 76n129, 77n130. Davidson does not cite White in this paper, but he has long been aware of White’s interpretation and has noted her contribution elsewhere, such as in Richard M. Davidson, “Shame and Honor in the Beginning: A Study of Genesis 4,” in *Shame & Honor: Presenting Biblical Themes in Shame & Honor Contexts*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, 2014), 43–76.

³⁷See Azevedo, “At the Door of Paradise,” 45–59, 59; and also Davidson, “Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors?,” 76n129. For another recent treatment of this passage that generally concurs with Azevedo, see Jacques B. Doukhan, *Genesis*, Seventh-day

This view is very much in harmony with White's overall commentary on the relevant passages, as will be seen below. Concerning Genesis 3:16, Davidson draws the logical conclusion that God *blessed/cursed* women with a loving desire *for* (possibly including, though not necessarily exclusively, sexual desire) their husbands *in spite of sin* while placing women under their husbands to preserve harmony in a world where many kinds of minor disagreements beyond moral issues would exist.³⁸ This interpretation also concurs with White's understanding that Eve's punishment would still serve as a blessing to them both if followed.³⁹ In other words, Eve was cursed into a position of subordination in Genesis 3:16, but God still intended this new situation, which resulted in the headship of the husband, to result in a blessing to them both if both the husband and wife would first submit to God.

At the same time, however, it must also be observed that certain authority or governance privileges, in the matrimonial-familial context or other secular/civic contexts, are not necessarily fully equivalent to spiritual or "religious authority,"⁴⁰

Adventist International Bible Commentary (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2016), 103–107, 119–121. Here Doukhan has shifted his view of the Hebrew in such a way as to be more in harmony with White, in contrast to his earlier article "The Subordination of Women Revisited: A Contextual and Intertextual Exegesis of Genesis 3:16," in *Meeting with God on the Mountains: Essays in Honor of Richard M. Davidson*, ed. Jiří Moskala (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 2016), 7–20.

³⁸Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 13–80, esp. 55–80.

³⁹"It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was now placed in subjection to her husband. Had the principles joined in the law of God been cherished by the fallen race, this sentence, though growing out of the results of sin, would have proved a blessing to them; but man's abuse of the supremacy thus given him has too often rendered the lot of woman very bitter and made her life a burden" (White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* [1890], 58–59).

⁴⁰Ellen White makes plain in her account of the rebellion of Korah that the priestly office and authority were to be distinguished from civil authority. That is, the Hebrew people in the wilderness were a theocratic or "religious state," led by Moses as their civil administrator, while Aaron and his house received what had formerly belonged to the firstborn son of every family after Abraham—namely, the responsibility of the priesthood. Both types of offices, the chief administrators and the high priest and other priests, were further distinguished from the prophetic office, which had its own authority and which had been demonstrated by Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, the latter two of which also had some civil authority. Previously, Abraham had held both the priestly and civil administrative offices together, but under the new nation of Israel, they were to be divided. Notably, while God recognized that there must be a position for human administration and judgments, God ideally intended no kingly office to be held at the human level of civic authority. Why this is interesting is because White does refer to husbands and wives as kings and queens, creating a contrast between the family and the religious nation. The complex division of authority God intended within the nation was

especially after Christ's time on earth. The roles of judge/ruler, prophet, priest, bishop/minister, elder, and husband are not synonymous or identical, and without any question, women occupied at least two of the above positions. That is to say, it is problematic to derive any rigid application from the above to contemporary ministry contexts.

The last interpretation by an Adventist that I wish to briefly note is from M. L. Andreasen. In his book, *The Sanctuary Service*, Andreasen suggests, in what would be a long-lasting interpretation within Adventist circles, that "sin" desires us as it did Cain, and we must "rule over it"⁴¹ as Cain was admonished to do. Why this particular interpretation, which is somewhat reflected in the TOSC1, is problematic, especially in relationship to some of the more negative aspects of last generation theology and perfectionism that Andreasen encouraged, I will briefly expound on below because they directly contrast with White's more extended interpretation of Genesis 4:7.

Genesis 4:7 and Righteousness by Faith

The message of Genesis 4:1–16, as White understands it, offers more theological significance and is worthy of greater consideration than it seems most of her readers have previously observed. Below I will share some additional poignant quotations from White to further flesh out the context surrounding Genesis 4:7, as shared above, that supports the general interpretations of Azevedo, Davidson, and Doukhan.

Put briefly, already within a context of sin, the message to Cain that Abel would desire, or simply return toward, a position of loving and listening to Cain is a message of *reward* to Cain. It is the angel's method of encouraging Cain to do the right thing. If Cain did what was *right*, Abel would be of a mind (psychologically)

seen repeatedly throughout the Old and New Testaments. Of course, Christ occupies the only true union of these three authoritative spheres. What remains unclear is how these three spheres or offices continue in the New Testament era within the church. Arguably, the minister or "bishop" occupies none of them exclusively as they are understood in the Old Testament. That is, because there are no systematic meritorious rituals performed and we reject sacramentalism, it would seem there is also no true civil authority over members by any religious leaders in our secular context. The prophetic gift is determined by God alone, and clearly women can be chosen for this. Conversely, while the husband is granted certain limited matrimonial-familial authority over the wife, this does not necessarily entail any broader limitations of women in civil offices nor any specific spiritual, religious, or prophetic authority over women by virtue of gender. See the comments in White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890), 141, 382, 395–396, 603–606; White, *Adventist Home*, 115–118; and Ellen G. White, *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1989), 27–31.

⁴¹M. L. Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1947), 15–16.

to naturally follow his elder brother Cain's lead and listen to him with brotherly love. If Cain would *not* do what was right, he would lose his natural psychologically conditioned leadership privileges as the firstborn—his little brother would no longer look up to him. But more can be said concerning the context of Genesis 4:7 that White brings to light.

There is a deeper layer to the elder brother versus younger brother dynamic at work here in White's understanding of this passage. Interestingly, she provides direct insight into the object of Cain's selfish pride—a lack of willingness to be dependent *upon Abel*. White penned,

The Lord gave Cain and Abel directions regarding the sacrifice they were to bring Him. Abel, a keeper of sheep, obeyed the Lord's command, and brought a lamb as his offering. This lamb, as it was slain, represented the Lamb of God, who was to be slain for the sins of the world. Cain brought as an offering the fruit of the ground, his own produce. *He was not willing to be dependent on Abel for an offering. He would not go to him for a lamb.* He thought his own works perfect, and these he presented to God.⁴²

Here it is clear that White does see significance in the occupations of Cain and Abel. Only the younger brother, Abel, was able to provide a lamb for Cain. And this *dependence* upon his younger brother Abel stoked the flames of hatred as much as did the fact that Abel would not follow Cain, the elder brother's, example.

This was not the only time White offered such an interpretation of Cain's need. About a year later, she again wrote,

Cain knew that God desired him to bring a lamb without blemish. But he was a tiller of the ground, and he did not wish to *add to his offering a lamb of his brother's flock*. . . . [Cain] was angry that the offering of Abel, his younger brother, had been accepted, while his had been rejected. He was angry with Abel for maintaining that God is just.⁴³

One can see here that White again clearly interprets Genesis 4 in such a way to include Abel's occupation as a shepherd of sheep as significant. Cain had no lamb to offer without asking Abel for one.

The above passages are perhaps more clearly understood if the ambiguous meaning of "sin" is interpreted, as Azevedo, Davidson, and Doukhan suggest, as a "sin/purification-offering."⁴⁴ Thus the key point in the angel's message to Cain was that Abel's lamb offering was at the door or "gate of Paradise" awaiting his

⁴²Ellen G. White, "The True and the False," *Signs of the Times*, March 21, 1900, 178 (emphasis supplied).

⁴³Ellen G. White, "The Love that is of God," *Signs of the Times*, December 25, 1901, 818 (emphasis supplied).

⁴⁴Davidson, "Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors?," 76n129.

use of it if Cain would but submit to Abel's counsel.⁴⁵ That is, in the light of White's commentary and a careful analysis of the Hebrew and overall context, it should be considered possible that Genesis 4:7 is indeed best understood as follows: "If you do well Cain, will you not be lifted up? As you have not done well, fix the problem with the sacrificial lamb purification-offering that Abel has brought for you that is lying there stretched out by the door to Eden. Remember, after you correct your mistake Abel's desire will return to being for you as the older brother, and then you will again rule Abel as the eldest."⁴⁶

In any case, the above interpretation by White matters because it alters our theology, our psychology of gender and leadership, as well as our understanding of the nature of sin.⁴⁷ In other words, put simply, *we cannot rule over sin*. We submit to Christ, who takes away our sin, so we can rule over self through sanctified self-control. God wants to return us to a state of sanctified self-control. In the Genesis 4:7 context, Cain's ability to resist and avoid sin depended on his submission to and use of Abel's lamb offering (representing Christ), not any assertion of self over "sin" that would lead to ruling sin in any manner. Indeed, I have no idea what this would actually mean, taken literally, especially if applied to the context of Genesis 3:16 as so many have done.

To more clearly explain the above, it is necessary to return to the implications that an interpretation of Genesis 4:7 has upon Genesis 3:16, which will provide some poignant reminders of why interpreting Genesis 4:7 correctly should modify our understanding of the nature of sin as well as any biblical psychology of gender concerning the use of "desire" in Genesis 3:16. To put it plainly, ruling sin like men rule their wives is a *very* poor juxtaposition, the opposite of Christ's sacrificial headship over the church. This is because trying to "rule" a present and active sin or temptation, just as Eve was surely present and active in Adam's life, is like trying to control how often one steals—such as only on Tuesdays or when one does not think they will get caught. Given the active context of sin in Cain's life

⁴⁵"At the cherubim-guarded gate of Paradise the glory of God was revealed, and hither came the first worshipers. Here their altars were reared, and their offerings presented. It was here that Cain and Abel had brought their sacrifices, and God had condescended to communicate with them" (White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* [1890], 83–84).

⁴⁶I acknowledge the above rendering is disputable. Here I offer yet another alternative translation of Gen 4:7 that still better fits the Hebrew: "If you do well Cain, will you not be lifted up? Because you have not done well, the [inert and incomplete, i.e. *sinful*] sin-offering that [God's gaze rejected] is lying there stretched out by the door to Eden. Yet if you correct your mistake, then afterward Abel's desire will be for you, and you will then rule Abel again."

⁴⁷See the analysis of Gen 3:16 and Gen 4:7 by Michael F. Younker, "Rethinking Eve's Curse: The Biblical Psychology Behind the Gender Wars," *The Compass Magazine*, July 8, 2015, accessed July 11, 2018, <https://thecompassmagazine.com/blog/the-biblical-psychology-behind-the-gender-wars>.

(his deficient sacrifice and feelings of resentment and jealousy), the above analogy may be all too apropos. We do not want to rule over continuous feelings of resentment and jealousy; we want to *rid* ourselves of these feelings—the question is, how?

To rule over something assumes its *presence* and *activity*. Recall that Cain's only recorded sin in Genesis 4 was his neglect of an acknowledgment for the need of Christ—he was too proud to need anyone else (Christ or his brother). However, the actual Hebrew text points toward a very different theological point, alluded to above, that highlights sanctification by faith and its immediate and continuing effects upon our behavior. Thus, the very popular but likely mistranslation of the Hebrew in Genesis 4:7 may have contributed greatly to unfortunate views of perfectionism throughout Christian history, including aspects of the work of Andreasen. However, I believe Ellen White understood it best when she wrote,

The time has come when it is for our eternal interest to believe in Christ. 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' He is 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' He says, 'I will write My law in their hearts.' In those who come to Him in faith He will create a divine principle of holiness which will rule in the soul, enlightening the understanding and captivating the affections.⁴⁸

Christ desires that through him we rule ourselves by becoming free from sin, not rule sin. The issue here is not whether or not we can be obedient—it is the method and person through which we can be obedient and be regarded as such.

Although a direct link between Genesis 4:7 and Genesis 3:16 is not made by White and must remain tentative, were they to be compared in light of her interpretations of both verses above, it would appear that, within the context of a fallen world, *if* a husband follows the Lord and *depends upon* and highly regards his wife, God assures him that his wife who *also* submits to God will *also* lovingly submit to her husband over lesser matters in our messy sinful world. However, if the husband does not follow God's counsel, he cannot expect that his wife will or should willingly yield her judgment to him, particularly over that which relates to spiritual or moral matters where conscience is concerned. Furthermore, any extended application of these principles, from within the matrimonial-familial context of husbands and wives and siblings, to beyond, such as in the church, must be advanced cautiously and are not directly warranted from the context of these passages alone.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Ellen G. White, "The Touch of Faith," *Signs of the Times*, October 25, 1899, 691.

⁴⁹The context of this study warrants one additional specific comment. TOSC1 supporter Edwin Reynolds quotes Samuele Bacchiocchi to claim that "the writings of Paul do not assert the subordination of all females to all males but the subordination of females under their proper heads. In the home, the proper head is the husband or father. . . . In the church family, the proper head is not all males but the appointed male leadership of

*Additional Thoughts concerning Ellen G. White
on Genesis 3:16 and 4:7 within the Context of the TOSC*

The Bible does not provide gender specific psychological insights on Genesis 3:16 if one compares it to Genesis 4:7, as many scholars have done. Importantly, although any references to church leadership are absent from these verses, it is also clear that the psychology implied behind the phrases “desiring after” and

the elder or elders, who serve in the *role of father* to the entire church, both male and female (see 1 Tim 3:2-5)” (Samuele Bacchiocchi, “Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture,” in *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry*, ed. Mercedes H. Dyer [Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2000], 98, quoted in Edwin Reynolds, “Biblical Hermeneutics and Headship in First Corinthians,” Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, July 2013, 32n73 [emphasis supplied], accessed July 11, 2018, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/biblical-hermeneutics-and-headship-in-first-corinthians.pdf>).

However, this again appears to contradict Ellen White concerning the use and role of the concept of “father” in the church. She shared, “The oft-repeated ‘rabbi’ was very acceptable to the ear, but Jesus warned his disciples against this. He said to them: ‘But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.’

“By these words Christ meant that no man is to place his spiritual interest under another, as a child is guided and directed by his earthly father. This spirit, whenever encouraged, has led to a desire for ecclesiastical superiority, and has always resulted in the injury of those who have been trusted, and addressed as ‘father.’ It confuses the sense of the sacredness of the prerogatives of God” (Ellen G. White, “Denouncing the Pharisees,” *Review and Herald*, February 22, 1898, 117). Elsewhere White again affirmed, “Jesus also revealed their vanity in loving to be called of men Rabbi, meaning master. He declared that such a title did not belong to men, but only to Christ. Priests, scribes and rulers, expounders of the law and administrators of it, were all brethren, children of one God. Jesus would impress upon the minds of the people that they were to give no man a title of honor, indicating that he had any control of their conscience or faith” (Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy* [Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1878], 3:60). White’s point is clear—no man serves in the role of a “father” to the church in any sense corresponding to the true concept of what a father is, spiritually, to a child. “Let each member of the church be a living, active agent for God, both in the church and out of it. We must all be educated to be independent, not helpless and useless. Let it be seen that Christ, not the minister, is the head of the church” (Ellen G. White, “The Most Effective Agent for God,” *Signs of the Times*, January 27, 1890, 50). As such, the special role of the biological father and mother to their children is not simply “spiritually” reproduced in the church; rather, there *is* a distinct spiritual headship of the father in relation to the mother and their children that is unique to the family and not reproduced in the church. Thus, if there *is* a unique fatherhood within the family that is *not* in the church, then it is not clear in what sense the three types of authority that exist in the Old Testament or New Testament—civil administration (or kingly), priest/bishop, and prophetic—relate to fatherhood and headship. It may be that fatherhood has nothing to do with any of them directly.

“being ruled over” cannot be used to preclude various leadership possibilities because both Cain and Abel were offering sacrifices and serving as their own priests.⁵⁰ One must ask, would Abel, desiring his elder brother Cain’s familial leadership, have been ineligible for ordination or spiritual leadership because he was younger and ruled by Cain? In like manner, what role does the wife have spiritually in relation to her husband? Clearly, it seems the true spiritual leadership rested with the younger brother Abel in the account given in Genesis 4. Thus, a husband’s headship or the firstborn’s privileges (the status of firstborn could hold certain conditional spiritual blessings in the Old Testament but was primarily a temporal blessing in the eyes of many of its recipients; e.g., Esau and Jacob) primarily reflect general psychology under a condition of fallenness, not gender-based curses or sinful predispositions or the ability to offer sacrifices. Thus, the passages of Genesis 4:7 and Genesis 3:16 do reveal insights concerning general psychology within the context of sin but not about gender per se and its relationship to church leadership or ordination. Again, one must look elsewhere for such insights.

What remains unresolved concerns the ability of the TOSC1 to either incorporate or satisfactorily explain away White’s interpretation of both Genesis 4:7 or 3:16—indeed, they seem unaware of her interpretations. Concerning the latter, recall that White understood that

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. In many cases the curse has made the lot of woman very grievous and her life a burden. The superiority which God has given man he has abused in many respects by exercising arbitrary power. Infinite wisdom devised the plan of redemption, which places the race on a second probation by giving them another trial.⁵¹

From this passage and its context, it appears clear, while not *necessarily* excluding limited gender role differences, that Genesis 3:16’s “rule over” was not designed to *return* Eve to any *inferior* role she occupied after her sin but to *place her*

⁵⁰Interesting, White affirms that Abel was serving as a “priest,” notwithstanding Adam’s role as the priest of the original family. “Here were the representatives of the two great classes. Abel as priest offered in solemn faith his sacrifice. Cain was willing to offer the fruit of his ground, but refused to connect with his offering the blood of beasts. His heart refused to show his repentance for sin and his faith in a Saviour by offering the blood of beasts. He refused to acknowledge his need of a Redeemer. This to his proud heart was dependence and humiliation” (Ellen White, “Redemption—No. 2,” *Review and Herald*, March 3, 1874, 91).

⁵¹White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:484.

for the first time under a curse of subjection, one that included some sort of *inferiority*, which would require a *blessing* to survive—a loving desire *for* her husband. Furthermore, White's intriguing final comment that the race has been placed on a second probation may indicate that there is a better solution to seek in their second trial beyond hierarchical superiority and inferiority, a pathway beyond these distinctions on the way toward the Edenic ideal of a more truly harmonious and cooperative marriage that helps sanctify both marriage partners.

Additionally, thus far, no one in the TOSC has fully explained the significance of the manner in which Adam attained a *superior* status relative to Eve from their prior positions that is analogous to the way Cain was superior to Abel as the firstborn and what sin might have to do with these developments. Specifically, the TOSC1 view,⁵² in this case advanced most pointedly by Ratsara and Bediako, distorts the nature of the curse upon Eve and the role that superiority and subjection assume within it, placing their theoretical harmony between the genders upon what seems to be an untenable trajectory that contradicts the writings of Ellen White.

Conclusion

The texts in question, Genesis 4:7 in particular and its relationship to Genesis 3:16, have historically encouraged a diversity of interpretations. Within the Seventh-day Adventist context, this diversity remains evident, including within the recent TOSC studies that included a focus on the concepts of authority and gender. The Seventh-day Adventist Church and its theologians have historically given close attention to the writings of Ellen G. White. Unfortunately, as this study has revealed, in the recent TOSC papers, this attention to her writings was, without any explanation, generally absent (with the notable exception of Richard Davidson's work) concerning the texts in question. The consequences of this oversight are significant beyond even the TOSC's primary focus on the subjects of authority and gender because the biblical psychology of gender that our church promotes implicitly or explicitly is significantly impacted by how one interprets Genesis 4:7 and its relationship to Genesis 3:16. As has been shared in this study, the TOSC1 group has advanced a negative and possibly antagonistic interpretation of Genesis 4:7 and applied this to their interpretation of Genesis 3:16. Whether their interpretation is correct or not (and this study has provided references to biblical scholars and their linguistic studies that argue it is not), what cannot be

⁵²Yet even beyond the TOSC1, a number of other conservative Adventist scholars whose views sympathize with the TOSC1 have overlooked White's detailed commentary on Gen 4:7 and 3:16 and its full significance. For example, see Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Courage: Taking a Stand on a Defining Issue: Women's Ordination* (Ann Arbor, MI: EAGLESONline, 2015), 62; and Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1995), 81–82.

disputed is that the interpretation of the texts by TOSC1 is clearly incompatible with White's interpretation of Genesis 4:7 in particular, but also Genesis 3:16. Within the Adventist context, this is significant—As such I also offered some additional reflections on the potential theological insights that might be derived from a further study of White's writings and Scripture. In any case, given the implications of one's interpretation of these passages, it is clear that the biblical testimony concerning the psychological nature of women, their role in the family, their ministry for the church, and their place in society will remain unclear so long as the issues within the passages above remain either unresolved or obscured.

The ultimate purpose of this study is to hopefully draw our collective attention, both biblical scholars and all Seventh-day Adventists, to a greater awareness of the significance of the texts in question, as well as our historic interpretations of them, especially in relation to the writings of Ellen White. Through a renewed focus on these important passages of Scripture, it is hoped that we can proceed forward toward a better and clearer understanding of these passages and, thus, a more fully sound and biblical understanding of just what the Scriptures do teach about the psychology of gender, the effects of sin, and the nature of authority and ministry that corresponds to them.

