

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

1 TIMOTHY 3: WHO CAN BE AN OFFICER? AN EXEGETICAL AND HISTORICAL
STUDY

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Introduction

During the 20th Century, the restoration of women in professional and relational settings was championed by the voices of both male and female alike. Theologians, politicians, psychologists, doctors, and pastors, women started to take roles where they had not been before, due to the push of the feminist movement and other historical contributions, such as war and the creation of new job categories. While the restoration is not yet fully complete, given that there are countries where women do not enjoy the liberties of suffrage, education, and professional equality, women today enjoy more freedoms than they did 150 years ago.

Around the mid-20th Century in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a conversation started to develop as to whether women could occupy the office of the pastor and serve as ministers of the gospel in the same capacity as their brothers in Christ. This conversation was influenced by the restoration of women in the professional settings of society.¹ The discussion brought much biblical study and deep engagement among scholars, pastors, and members alike. The church's official position since then reflects that women can serve in "all service and positions of leadership."² However, women in the position of pastoral leadership are unable to be ordained, which limits them to ascend to higher positions of leadership, such as conference president, division president, or general conference president of the church. The church has reserved the delegation of ordination for male minister's only. This position seems a bit incoherent given that the structure set up by the church finishes at the point of ordination.

¹ Leona Glidden Running, "A Survey of Current Secular Trends which have raised the Issue of The Role of Women in the Church," a paper presented at the General Conference's Role of Women in the Church Study Committee, September 16–20, 1973, Danville, OH.

²North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, Working Policy, (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2017), C48 10.

Since this has been the official position of the church, many have engaged in the conversation of whether females ought to be ordained. The controversy has escalated over the past few decades, and after three votes at the General Conference, women are still unable to be ordained. They are only to be commissioned, a delegation that allows women to receive some of the privileges of ordination, but does not permit them to escalate in the leadership ladder. After much study and prayer, the church has been reluctant to allow this practice. The oddity, however, is that while many consider this matter to be only in regards to ordination, many of the discussions in churches, scholarly articles, sermons, and published books gear towards the idea of women exercising their gifts for the ministry.

Therefore, it is the aim of this document to evaluate the grounds upon which the church made a decision to allow women to be pastors. Is the current policy informed in a biblical manner to ascertain the role of women in positions of leadership? In order to answer this question from the biblical standpoint, the document will present an analysis of 1 Timothy 3, an exegesis of the text with some evaluations of where does the problem commence and how to move towards a more consistent interpretation of the passage. Included in the document, there will be a critique to the current interpretation and application of the passage in our church is inconsistent, given that there is disparity in the proportions of officers when it comes to the gender ratio. Afterwards, a historical analysis of how Adventists have approached the matter of ordination for deacons/overseers and how consistent they have been in the application of the same towards female pastors. Moreover, the document will provide a succinct discussion on the hermeneutical method to follow the exegesis and historical matters presented. Conclusions will be arrived at and shared at the end of the paper with some implications not only for the professional restoration of women, but also the relational one.

Presuppositions/Stances on Issues

A paper would not be one without acknowledging some of the presuppositions through which I arrive at the text. At this point, only the stances on presuppositions/difficult texts will be mentioned, a more elaborate answer to the issues will come after the analysis of the text in question.

First, the discussion on 1 Corinthians 11 and subordination in terms of authority has its own place outside of the pastoral epistles, which is the matter of focus of this document. The issue does not only involve female and male relations, but also divine interactions between the members of the trinity. Thus, one cannot ascertain a definite conclusive answer for the matter of subordination without being honest to oneself and letting the text be as it is, inconclusive and underdetermined in the matters of authority and the meanings of κεφαλή.³

Second, given that the previous passage from 1 Timothy 3, 1 Timothy 2, deals with some relational factors between males and females (e.g. authority, submission, etc.), some matters ought to be clear. The authority which Paul does not allow women to “exercise” over man is not one of spiritual leadership in the general public space, but a careful application of Paul to the background of the Ephesian church. Some of the issues which plagued the church include the cultic implications of the temple of Diana/Artemis, where cultic prostitutes would exercise authority over man, the spread of false teachings through women in the community, and the genealogical fallacy through which many regarded Eve as higher than Adam and not equal (see below). Moreover, the language of the passage in this instance may be referring to a specific example of a woman disrupting the teachings and the order of the worship.⁴ Therefore, the

³ Teresa Reeve, “1 Corinthians 11:2–16 and the Ordination of Women to Pastoral Ministry,” a paper presented at the General Conference’s Theology of Ordination Study Committee, January 30, 2014, Columbia, MD, 19–20.

⁴ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, 46. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), lxxix—lxxvi.

limitation in the manifestation of authority does not have to do with women being able to teach and deliver the message of truth, but rather, it is an application to the immediate context in which Timothy is working.

The paper will follow a restoration model of hermeneutics proposed by Jiri Moskala and Richard Davidson. While there are different approaches to the text (liberal, feminist, classical, etc), the restoration model is one of the most fit to approach the text.⁵ There are a couple of reasons why this approach is preferred over the others. For example this method's hermeneutical lens followed evaluates the text as the word of God and tries to ascertain the meaning of the passage under the ideal of bringing the world that is a little closer to the world that ought to be. Moreover, the restoration model considers all the sources from both Testaments and lets the tensions stand, without the need of glossing over, or making the interpretation fit what the interpreter desires. Lastly, while there are other reasons, the restoration model is preferred as it follows a structure of looking beyond this world and not conforming to it, but seeing the way in which matters will be in the Kingdom.

Having approached these presuppositions/stances on issues, the analysis of the background thus commences.

Background of the text: Ephesian lifestyle

The text is a letter of Paul to Timothy. In it, he writes counsel to Timothy for the purpose on maintaining order and correct teaching in the church. According to tradition, Timothy is a minister at the church on Ephesus where the text locates him during this period of

⁵ Jiri Moskala, "Back to Creation: Toward a Consistent Adventist Creation—Fall—Re-Creation Hermeneutic (Biblical-Theological Reflections on Basic Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics Applied to the Ordination of Women)," a paper presented at the General Conference's Theology of Ordination Study Committee, July 22-24, 2013, Baltimore, MD.

correspondence with Paul. Moreover, tradition places him during this time, reinforcing the data from the scriptures.

The letter from Paul details some of the issues at hand in the church of Ephesus. William Mounce points out that there were multitudinous issues at hand when considering the Ephesian Heresy.⁶ However, he makes clear that “whatever were the specific elements of the heresy, it was a different gospel from Paul’s gospel.”⁷ Moreover, the annals of history establish the cultic background of the city, the affluent commerce routes, and the strategic military positioning as some matters which made political and spiritual issues collide and engage in the conversation among Christians of the time.

Two issues of important consideration when it comes to the subject at hand, women in ministry, are the cultic environment of the city and the relations of males and females at the time.

The temple worship of Artemis was widely common in the Ancient Greek society. While a secondary deity, she occupied a popular position among the people. The cultus had many priestesses at the head of the service, which “consisted of sacrifices and of ceremonial prostitution.”⁸ The whole ordeal was preceded by a chief priest with the title of Megabyzos.⁹ Having this in mind, it is understandable that Paul limits the authority of women over man given that the cultic practice of the town was to have sexual relations and sacrifices from the leadership of women.

Another important consideration of the background is the manner of interaction for men and women and its relation to the Pauline letter. The city of Ephesus followed a typical Ancient

⁶ Mounce, Ibid.

⁷ Mounce, Ibid.

⁸ James Orr, "Entry for 'Diana; Artemis' — International Standard Bible Encyclopedia," Bible Study Tools, accessed December 11, 2017, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/diana-artemis.html>.

⁹ Ibid.

Greek line of thought with the male at the head of the household and the female as a subject to whom the male ought to rule, as evidenced in the household codes of the time.¹⁰ The city did not deviate from the social status quo and maintained the conceptions from other Ancient Greek societies. The church, in a similar vein, did not seem to challenge the structure of male and female relations, as evidenced by the writings of the New Testament, such as Ephesians, Colossians, Titus, and 1 Timothy.¹¹

The writing from the following sections and our chapter in question, 1 Timothy 3, follows a standard model of Pauline writing with the majority of the letter addressed to the male kind, given that the participants or correspondents of the letter are usually male. However, it is interesting to notice that Paul does take time throughout the letter to uplift women and mention some of the work that they can do in the church,¹²¹³ a rather unusual aspect of writing in the documents of the New Testament Era.

Having mentioned some of the contextual considerations, this document now arrives at the point of main discussion, 1 Timothy 3.

1 Timothy 3: Inconsistency in Interpretation

The passage is a list of qualifications for overseers and deacons. While the letter is written in mostly masculine language, following the tradition of the time, there are some nouns that allow for the consideration of women to exercise these leadership positions. The pronoun *τις* in verse 1 and the word *γυνή* in verse 11 reveal the possibility for any gender to be an elder and for women to be included in the diaconate. While some have argued against this possibility on the account

¹⁰ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 552.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Unless otherwise indicated, all references have been taken from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version Containing the Old and New Testaments: ESV*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007).

¹³ 1 Timothy 3:11, 4:4,11.

of some phraseological features and the plain reading of the text¹⁴, the lexical evidence opens the possibility for all to serve under these ministries. The starting point for the discussion is at the deacon level, given that it is more explicit in its language use. Before one takes the conversation of women into the function of the overseer, usually regarded as a “higher” position, it is crucial to determine whether they can serve the “lower” role. At this point, it will be important to notice that Seventh-day Adventists support female deacons and their functioning in the church.

The passage from 1 Timothy 3 list some of the qualifications for deacons. Some of them include the deacons being “reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, [and] not being greedy for money” (v.8). It continues with the qualifications up to v. 10, until the introduction of the gender inclusion through *γυνή* in v. 11. Syntactically, the sentence from v. 11 is a continuation of the requirements from vv. 8–10. Moreover, the same sentence also partakes of the requirements following the sentence, such as being “the husbands of one wife, [and] ruling their children and their own houses well.”¹⁵

There has been wide dissension in regards to how to translate the word *γυνή* in this instance¹⁶, given that it can give a different meaning to who can be a deacon. If the word is translated as “women”, it opens up the possibility for both genders to be part of the office of the diaconate. Otherwise, the translation of *γυνή* as “wives” closes that possibility on the basis of the

¹⁴ Clinton Whalen, “Is “Husband of One Wife” in 1 Timothy 3:2 Gender-Specific?,” a paper presented at the General Conference’s Theology of Ordination Study Committee, January 23, 2014, Columbia, MD.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Authors that favour the “women” translation include Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 265–267, J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: Timothy I & II, and Titus*, Harper’s New Testament Commentaries, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 83–84, William Hendriksen, and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995) 132–133, R. C. H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961) 598–599. Some are neutral like Gordon D. Fee, and W. Ward Gasque, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIBC, 13, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988), 88–89, and Thomas D. Lea, and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, NAC, 34, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 119–121. Others prefer the wife translation such as Mounce, *Ibid.*, 202–205.

pastorals and verse 11 would then be regarded as the spouses of the deacons and not women who would enter into the service of the church by being deacons. Given that the translation is a key matter for this text, one must analyze the usage of *γυνή* in the New Testament.

A surface analysis of the word signals the usage of *γυνή* to be around 214 times¹⁷. From these, a standard translation has employed the word “woman” in its singular and plural forms about 130 times over the 83 times of “wife” in its corresponding parts. Therefore, one can determine that the translation “woman” could be more likely given its numerical majority in the translation of the word. However, a simple majority argument is not enough basis for the word to be translated in such a fashion over its other possibilities. Therefore, one must also look at the intra-textual and inter-textual usages of the word in order to ascertain consistency within the word of God. Moreover, Paul’s idiolect comes at play and must be evaluated in order to know which word to employ.

When it comes to intra-textual references, the pastoral epistle of 1 Timothy uses the word 9 times. In it, the translation of women over wife is favored at around 67% by most translations given the context of the passages of the epistle.¹⁸ However, the verse in juxtaposition, v. 11, is rather ambiguous in its context allowing for the freedom for either translation. Paul’s idiolect at this point favours the “women” translation on the grounds of the letter. However, he also wrote other letters, which are of importance when evaluating this passage. On the basis of intertextual analysis of those letters, the word is better translated as “women”, given the usage of *διάκονος* on Rom. 16:1, which designates Phoebe, a woman, as a deacon of the church.¹⁹ If one were to

¹⁷ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Coded with Strong’s Concordance Numbers* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Darius Jankiewicz, “Phoebe: An Early Church Leader” in *Women and Ordination: Biblical and Historical Studies: Seventh-Day Adventist Leaders and Scholars Explore an Important Issue Facing the Church*, ed. John W Reeve, (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 231–235.

translate γυνή as wives would raise a problematic case for the consistency among the scriptures given the mention of a female deacon within the text.

The translation of γυνή as women and not wives, then, allows women to serve in the capacity of deacons and maintains the consistency among the passages of the canon. This translation, however, raises an issue with the traditional conception of “husband of one wife” as a gender specific requirement for the office of the diaconate. The phrase μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα while clear in its literal nature is challenged by the “women” translation. A woman cannot be a μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα in its literal correspondence, unless the phrase means faithfulness in the marital covenant rather than the direct meaning of the language. This is the proposition from this document.²⁰ The construction μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα is less likely to be expressing its literal meaning given the usage of γυνή in the intratextual and intertextual references of the New Testament. If it were so, the intertextual reference of Phoebe would be challenged and there would be no place for women deacons in the church.²¹ Moreover, the author of the first epistle to Timothy uses a corresponding phrase for women, ἐνὸς ἀνδρὸς γυνή, on chapter 5, signaling that the usage of the phrase in verse 1 is not unique in nature, but follows Greek standards of gender construction.

In addition to the reasons above, for the translation of γυνή as “wives” to be completely employed, a direct disregard of the syntactical nature of the passage would have to be in place. The passage clearly shows the inclusiveness of women in the deacon category through linguistic and stylistic formation.²²

²⁰ See Nancy Vyhmeister, “The Bishop, Husband of One Wife: What Does it Mean?” Ministry Magazine, October 2005, accessed November 14, 2017, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2005/10/the-bishop-husband-of-one-wife-what-does-it-mean>, for a discussion on the matter.

²¹ An assertion that would contradict the traditional understanding of the church in many centuries, including the understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

²² Ekkehardt Mueller, “Husband of One Wife—1 Tim 3:2”, Biblical Research Institute, 7.

Having analyzed the “lower” level, the diaconate, one then ought to move to the “higher” level of organization, the overseer. The qualifications for the deacons are derived, textually, from the overseer, given that Paul writes about this office first during this chapter. Thus, one can find many of the same principles for selection in both 1 Tim. 3:1–7 and vv.8–13. One that has been explicitly mentioned is the “husband of one wife.” This seems to be the only “gender restrictive” requirement from this section. The analysis of the phrase, on the other hand, points towards the direction of inclusion of women in this role as well. However, in this section, there is no explicit mention of any lexical form of the word “women”. Thus, a *prima facia* reading of current translations may make it seem as if the office of the overseer is reserved for males only.²³ The pronoun τίς, however, enlarges the conversation and permits anyone to be in that leadership place. The pronoun is indefinite pertaining to both male and female, which opens the ground for any gender to desire the work of the overseer. When this translation is properly applied in conjunction with the understanding of the “husband of one wife” phraseology, one can see the inclusivity of all for the purpose of the overseer ministry. While there are no explicit mentions of female overseers in the New Testament, it is important to understand that the apostle is not limiting the office to males, but opening the leadership to all of those who desire the noble task. Moreover, the word overseer is seldom used in the New Testament to ascertain a set of functions, but rather they are ascribed under the presbyter, a lexical item used in both female and male versions.

One can see that the analysis of the text renders the possibility that both male and female can have spiritual leadership positions in the church. This stands in consistency with the teachings of Jesus, as he called all to himself for the purpose of teaching, preaching, and reaching others for

²³ See Appendix 1 for a comparison of current translations.

the kingdom. The New Testament, furthermore, does not place any limitations as to how involved they can be in ministry, even in the matters of direct spiritual teaching. When one keeps the background of 1 Timothy in mind and faithfully considers the matter of spirituality, then one arrives at the conclusion that all who desire the work of the overseer are able to do so.

Historical Approach of Adventists

The Seventh-day Adventist church's decision to allow women deacons and overseers/elders is thus exegetically sound. Moreover, given that the office of the pastorate has come from the traditional conception of the overseer, the church is also correct in appointing women for the task of the gospel ministry. One question that remains unanswered, however, is Why do Adventists refuse to ordain women pastors?

Adventists have a long history with the ordination question. They have brought it up for discussion since 1879 when understanding who are to be the ones administering baptism all the way into 2015 with the vote to not allow Divisions to decide upon the question of Women's Ordination.²⁴ The church has had different conversations about the matter and at different occasions, up to 7 so far, dating back to the Movahen Camp papers unto the most recent with the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC).²⁵ However, the matter has not been settled, as theologians are still debating the matter and pushing towards the denial or acceptance of Women's Ordination as a practice²⁶. Instead of attempting to engage in a circular, and maybe unending conversation, this document will shift into proposing that the reason why Adventists do not ordain women is because they do not follow their statements to their logical conclusions, nor

²⁴ "GC Session Actions," Adventist Archives, accessed December 5, 2017, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-session-actions>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The current conversation in the Adventist Church involves the procedural discipline of dissenting Unions/Divisions that are not acting according to the vote of the General Conference of 2015, but ordain women following their consciences and their interpretation of the text.

they enforce their current policies. Furthermore, I will propose that the issue is not about women being ordained, but women being in positions of leadership, which “conflicts”, as some put it, with gender roles.

The General Conference Session in 1885 states that it is “Resolved, That females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination for the work of the Christian ministry.”²⁷ It would be logical that at the time, the meaning of ordination was different than today, as the 1879 document reveals.²⁸ The documentation states that the term is setting apart for some official position. Therefore, they were proposing for women to be set apart for the pastoral work in order to advance the cause of the gospel. While this ordination does not necessarily equal the meaning of the term in later Adventist literature, it is interesting that the church in 1885 desired to separate women for pastoral work, something that is highly debated today.²⁹ This position is quite progressive for the time and even before women had their full rights of suffrage and wages.

Moreover, in July 16, 1975, the church decided that “Deacons Must be Ordained.”³⁰ After the analysis of the passage from 1 Timothy 3, and seeing that both genders can perform the functions of the diaconate, one can conclude that not only male deacons are to be ordained, but also female deacons. Given that elders must also be ordained, if they meet the qualifications, one can see that the ordination of female elders is also a logical conclusion, given that females are also permitted to be overseers on exegetical and theological grounds. The church manual, moreover, establishes that an elder in order to be functioning within the church has to be ordained. If Adventists

²⁷ Ibid., GC actions of 1885.

²⁸ Ibid., GC actions of 1879.

²⁹ Paul S. Ratsara and Daniel K. Bediako, “Man and Woman in Genesis 1–3: Ontological Equality and Role Differentiation,” a paper presented at the General Conference’s Theology of Ordination Study Committee, July 23, 2013, Columbia, MD, 15–49.

³⁰ Ibid., GC actions of 1975.

understand women to be able to perform both functions, by policy they are to be ordained. A thought that stems out of this conclusion is that if biblically pastors are based out of the elder designation, they ought to be ordained as well. Thus, the lack of consistency at the level of the pastorate is puzzling from the perspective of the policy.

An important feature to remark at this level is the conclusions arrived at during the General Conference Session of 1985. The documents at that time explained that while the discussion on ordination³¹ had to be deferred, the church ought to take affirmative action for placing women in positions of leadership within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As a logical conclusion, it would follow that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has increased their efforts in the initiative of involving women in the work of ministry during the last 30 years. However, the statistics are quite appalling. According to the North American Division, “Today in the Adventist Church there are more than 140 women clergy serving as church pastors, chaplains, and in church leadership positions.”³² The number supposes more than 140, but essentially less than 150, this range is quite a low number when considering the statements made by previous General Conference Sessions of taking “affirmative action” towards including women in the work. Moreover, one would expect a church with more than 50% female membership in their records³³ to include more inclusive representation in the spiritual leadership of its people.

Difficult Passages: Are they applied in their right context?

Why has our church then, not followed the actions voted by the different sessions of the General Conference in putting women into spiritual leadership? The answer lays within the

³¹ The ordination in question here is ministerial, and not about the diaconate or eldership.

³² V. Michelle Bernard, "History of Female Leaders in the Adventist Faith," North American Division Ministerial Association, accessed November 14, 2017, <http://www.nadministerial.org/article/368/for-nad-pastors/pastor-life/women-clergy/why-the-nad-needs-women-pastors/history-of-female-leaders-in-the-adventist-faith>.

³³ David Trim, “Report on Global Research, 2011–13,” a report presented at the Annual Council of Seventh-day Adventists, 2013, Silver Spring, MD.

biblical text and the church policy. The usage of certain Scriptures outside of their intended meaning and our lack of clarification towards whether women can be pastors are some of the reasons why Adventists have not followed their actions from previous General Conference Sessions.

Certain scriptural passages have been used to counter the idea that women can be pastors. Biblical passages that delineate “gender roles” usually are transposed from their context and applied to the conversation of women in ministry and ordination. Some of the reasons for this transposing is because interpreters follow the idea that the church is an extension of the family. Thus, if it applies at the relational level of husband and wife, it must also apply towards the ministry.

The usage of texts, such as Ephesians 5, 1 Corinthians 11, and 1 Timothy 2 are some of the examples that people use in order to substantiate the position that women are not to be in pastoral ministry. The main idea behind these passages is that women cannot be at the head of leadership positions given that the passages express that “man are the head of women” and “women cannot exercise authority over males.” A more proper terminology for this manner of approach to the issue is called headship theology, which is based out of Ephesians 5:22–23 and 1 Corinthians 11:3–5. Headship theology states that the principle of headship states the need of submission from one party to another and that while reciprocity may come outside of the order of authority, it is not necessary.³⁴ However, the interpretation of the scriptures is not made in a literalistic sense, but within a hermeneutical framework (see section below). An honest analysis of the passages, moreover, will yield some conclusions.

³⁴ Edwin Reynolds, “Biblical Hermeneutics and Headship in First Corinthians,” a paper presented at the General Conference’s Theology of Ordination Study Committee, July 23, 2013, Columbia, MD, 18–34.

First, as aforementioned, the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11 is inconclusive and underdetermined in matters of authority, given that the passage mentions the relation between the Father and Christ as one of subordination, whereas statements from other scriptures signal a different conclusion. For example, the Son's subordination in authority to the Father would be difficult to explain, given the testimony of the scriptures in regards to their unity in purpose and authority. Moreover, Jesus' words speak to the sameness between the persons of the trinity and explicitly between Him and His Father in the gospels.³⁵ Following the headship principle, as many proponents do for this passage, one can see the lack of mutual submission as another important factor to deal with. If the submission is unilateral, there are no grounds for self-sacrificing love in the order of God's kingdom. The hierarchical model under which headship theology operates would make the death of Christ a command from the Father to the Son, rather than an act of volition from the King of the Universe.³⁶ In addition, the text signals relationships between divine subjects and the similarity of human subjects to do the same. However, the text is written under a society in which female rights are trampled upon and almost non-existent, a context different to the one in which we are dealing with today. In addition, the main purpose of the passage may not be the relation of divine persons or women and men in regards to authority and church leadership, but rather the manner and attire that believers were to wear during the service.³⁷ This passage, therefore, is quite difficult to interpret and should not be used for support against women in ministry until a more consistent interpretation comes to the table.

³⁵ John 10:30

³⁶ Among Adventists, the discussion elongates and deepens on the grounds of the writings of Ellen G. White. However, Nathanael Gibbs, "Subordinationism and Ellen White" (a paper for GSEM 620, Andrews University, 2017), 1–20, writes that the matter of subordination in the writings of Ellen White is quite complex and that one cannot be used to support the position of hierarchical conditions among clergy nor among divine counterparts.

³⁷ Reeve, *Ibid.*

Second, a visit to the Ephesian context of the time reveals that women are able to teach the word of God and not limited in authority to do so, which invalidates any argument with provenance from the Pauline passage on his letter to Timothy. The passage from 1 Timothy 2 would seem to limit the ability of women to teach. However, the background reveals that Paul is dealing with the Ephesian heresies of the day³⁸, rather than ascertaining a universal principle that stands throughout time. Further, one can see that the intertextual evidence of women having positions of leadership, as in the case of Phoebe as a Deacon (Rom. 16), or Priscilla as a fellow laborer of Paul (Acts 14), and even some of direct teaching to the Ephesian minister, as it is evident with Timothy's grandmother who taught him and instructed him in the doctrine of the Lord (2 Tim. 1:5, 3:15).

The last passage, Ephesians 5, also in the context of the Ephesian church, speaks in regards to the marital covenant relationship rather than the professional segment of life. Paul does introduce the idea of order within the marital context, which is correspondent to the tradition of the time. However, the concern of the apostle is not regarding the submission of women to men in the working setting, but the mutual cohesion and conciliation of women and men in their marital relationship. This is evidenced by the clear usage of the language throughout this portion of the passage. Moreover, it is interesting to notice the mutual submission that the Lord requires from both partners, a concept rather foreign to the ears of a 1st Century Greek/Jew/Roman, given that the topic was usually addressed towards women and not men.³⁹ The boundaries of the text clearly lay within the relational/marriage covenant, rather than the professional area. Therefore, this text when used to defend the idea of women not being able to be deacons, elders, or pastors,

³⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, lxxix—lxxvi.

³⁹ Keener, *Ibid.*

or any other position of leadership is a rather poor argument against the topic of women in ministry.

Framework: From Creation to Restoration

The Seventh-day Adventist Church as an organization which follows the Scriptures, then, should be consistent with their practices and statements, or as the popular phrase puts it, “talk the talk, and walk the walk.” In order to do so, a proper hermeneutical framework must be in place, for the purpose of arriving at consistency in the interpretation of difficult passages. Jiri Moskala, an Adventist theologian, has proposed a framework, based on the biblical narrative of creation-decreation-recreation.⁴⁰ This document resonates with that framework and proposes that when applied to the ideal of the restoration of women in our church today, one can advance certain ideas for the purpose of consistency.

First, one will be able to recognize the equality among the genders in the professional work and encourage roles of spiritual leadership in line with the current Adventist documentation. Moskala emphasizes the importance of recognizing the equality of males and females alike, in light of the *Imago Dei* that they both possess. Both genders, thus, become equally valuable and perform complementary roles for the work of ministry. Males and females, moreover, are encouraged to serve without discrimination for the cause of Christ. Another passage that supports this understanding is based upon the gospel commission of the Matthean account, given to all of those who are willing and able to share their faith. This line of thought is aligned with the understanding of the global church as stated in the church’s manual, working policy, and fundamental beliefs through the usage of inclusive language in their respective documents.

⁴⁰ Moskala, Ibid.

Second, an application of this biblical framework will make clear the need for proper behaviour between opposite genders, as a result of interpretation of difficult passages. Following Moskala's proposal, passages that contain difficult matters, such as 1 Corinthians 11 will be approached with humility and exegetical measures that reveal a consistent interpretation of the passage that does not rob it out of its true theological and exegetical meaning. While there is no definite answer for this unit as of yet, the conclusion oughts to look forward towards the restoration of people, specially women, to a position of equality and respect within the church and within the marital setting.

Third, following Moskala's proposal will yield out passages that are not contextually appropriate for the discussion of the topic in question or Women's Ordination. Passages, such as Ephesians 5:22-23, Genesis 3:16, and 1 Timothy 2:11, will be approached in their marital context/relational setting, and not brought up for discussion upon the strikingly different ambit of professional matters. Moreover, "supportive" passages for the same discussion that do not relate towards the women in ministry question, such as Galatians 3:28, will not be posited as answer, given its salvific motif and lack of application to vocational matters. Approaching the text through this framework will analyze the passages and only use those who are contextually appropriate for the purpose of answering the question.

Conclusion

The conclusions from the analysis of the passage are clear. The designation of elder/deacon can be appropriated to both genders as long as they meet the requirements for their apportionment to that office. The Seventh-day Adventist Church and its policy, moreover, is in alignment with what the Scriptures teach in regards to the appointment of elders/deacons. However, when it comes to the ordination of women, there are some inconsistencies.

First, the church does not ordain female pastors, but it does so at the other two levels, deacons and elders. Given that the position of pastoring is derived out of the elder designation, the church is inconsistent in applying the practice of ordination at the organizational level.

Second, the church recognizes that females are necessary for the work of gospel ministry, yet there are no significant increases in females in church leadership, since the statements from 1985. Moreover, the language in the policy is not the most consistent with the idea of including women in positions of leadership, which can deliver a mixed message to those trying to enter the ministry.

Lastly, the theological issue of women's ordination and its recent approach from the Theology of Ordination Study Committee does not seem to deal with the ordination question, but rather whether females can be pastors or not. There is a need for the analysis of the meaning of ordination and its change in Seventh-day Adventist literature throughout the early pioneers and the 20th century. Once those issues have been resolved, one can move forward to understanding whether ordination to the gospel ministry can be given to both genders. So why? Why do Adventists do not ordain women at the pastorate level? The conclusion that this document arrives is similar to that of Miriam Wood, a Seventh-day Adventist Church administrator and writer of an important paper against discrimination of women employees during the 1970's. She states, "Why? [Her question is in the context of unequal pay] Are our Seventh-day Adventist male leaders so insecure, so mediocre, yet so grossly convinced of their superiority that they cannot accept woman as equals? I hope not. I hope, and believe, that when the facts are made clear, our

leaders will show themselves to be courageous and unafraid to take the necessary steps for the correcting of unfairness to women employees.”⁴¹

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⁴¹ Miriam Wood, “Discrimination and the Adventist Women Employee” a paper presented at the General Conference’s Role of Women in the Church Study Committee, September 16-20, 1973, Danville, OH, 3.

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