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Chapter 7

Shapes of Ministry in the New Testament

P. Gerard Damsteegt



The author of chapter three in *Women in Ministry*, a professor of New Testament and Christian Origins, provides an overview of the forms of ministry that existed in the New Testament and early church.¹ The purpose of the chapter is to warn against “structural fundamentalism” on church organization which, he explained, is “the idea that one pattern of church organization and ministry was laid down once and for all time.”²

The author tries to prove his point by asserting that the Bible does not provide us with a specific organizational pattern for the church. Instead, he argues that there were two types of ministry. One type he calls a charismatic ministry, to which persons were called by Christ or His Spirit. The other type he designates as an appointive ministry, to which persons were appointed by the church. Its organizational structure developed from a one-level appointed ministry to two levels, and later on to three levels of ministry.³

The seven men appointed in Acts 6 to “serve tables” the author sees as an example of a one-level appointed ministry. He calls these men “elders.”⁴ Sometime later, he says, a clear distinction emerged between elders and deacons, indicating a two-level ministry. It was not until the beginning of the second century, under church father Ignatius in Asia, that a three-level ministry developed, consisting of bishops, elders, and deacons.⁵

Further evidence of the changing pattern of church organization, the author argues, was that the church’s leadership included women. The “small and

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exclusive circle” of charismatic ministry of the twelve male apostles developed “to an ever-expanding circle” which ultimately included Junia, a woman apostle.⁶ The appointive ministry included Phoebe, a woman minister.⁷ From this he concludes that Scripture does not forbid women from being ordained as elders and ministers “if ‘ordination’ simply means credentialing.”⁸

1. A Charismatic and an Appointive Ministry in the New Testament?

The author suggests that it will be “convenient to distinguish between two types of ministry” in the New Testament, “based on the mode of reception.” The first he designates a “charismatic ministry.” This ministry is composed of people who have been called by Christ or the Holy Spirit, “since it was marked by the bestowal of a spiritual gift.” The second is the “appointive ministry,” which is made up of persons “appointed by the church.”⁹

Although the author admits that “this distinction was not always a sharp one,”¹⁰ he finds it a convenient way to explain his view of women’s involvement in the leadership of the church. Junia was appointed by God as an apostle, representing the charismatic ministry. Phoebe was appointed by the church as a minister and represented the appointive ministry.¹¹ Let us examine this theory in the light of Scripture.

Are People Called by God or the Church? Is a ministry where people are chosen by God different from a ministry where people are chosen by the church? The New Testament origins of the Christian church may be traced to the time when Christ, the true Head of the church, called the twelve apostles and ordained them to preach the gospel and heal the sick (Mk 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16). Mrs. White stated that at this time the “first step was taken in the organization of the church.”¹² As the twelve patriarchs were the representatives of ancient Israel, “so the twelve apostles stand as representatives of the gospel church.”¹³ This scene reveals a very close relation between Christ and His church. At this time He called the apostles to form with Him the nucleus of the Christian church.

The next time an apostle was chosen occurred after the death of Judas. The 120 disciples prayed earnestly to the Lord for insight into who should be chosen to fill the vacancy left by Judas. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Matthias was selected to replace Judas as an apostle (Acts 1:21-26). Here we observe the close connection between the Spirit and the church in selecting a person to fill a vacancy in the apostolic office. It is important to notice the participation of the church in the selecting process. The disciples selected the names of the candidates for the apostolic office and, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, drew the right person.

A few years later, on the Damascus road, Saul the persecutor was confronted with a divine revelation of Jesus Christ who chose him to become His special witness. Mrs. White noted that his conversion experience revealed “important principles” regarding how God works through His church.¹⁴ From this experience

one learns that although Christ had selected Saul as a “chosen vessel” (Acts 9:15), “the Lord did not at once tell him of the work that had been assigned him.”¹⁵ He placed him in connection with His church to learn the truth and God’s plan for his life. “Christ had performed the work of revelation and conviction; and now the penitent was in a condition to learn from those whom God had ordained to teach His truth.”¹⁶

It is clear, therefore, that in choosing His special messengers and bestowing special gifts on them, God does not bypass the authority of His organized church. Rather, He uses the church to confirm His work. Again one observes the intimate relationship between God’s calling a person and the confirmation of this call by the church.

Several years later, speaking through certain prophets and teachers of the church of Antioch, the Holy Spirit chose Saul, also named Paul, and Barnabas to preach the gospel to the inhabitants of Asia Minor. Yet again we notice the role the church plays in setting these disciples apart for service. After fasting and prayer, the leaders of the church ordained them by the laying on of hands and sent them forth (Acts 13:1-3). During this missionary journey both were called apostles. Paul dated “the beginning of his apostleship in the Christian church” to the time of his formal ordination to the gospel ministry.¹⁷

In the calling of Paul and Barnabas, we see that although they were chosen by the Holy Spirit for a unique ministry, “the Lord works through appointed agencies in His organized church.”¹⁸ It is through His church that God affirms His appointments to office and confirms whatever gifts that He has bestowed upon individuals in harmony with the Scriptures. In the official ordination of Paul and Barnabas, the church confirmed their divine call and mission. Mrs. White remarked that “God has made His church on earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will.”¹⁹

Even when God selected some to be apostles, this gift operated in harmony with the organized church, not independent of it. Like Paul and Barnabas, Timothy also received the laying on of hands by the ministers of the church (1 Tim 4:14).

Similarly, a closer look at the appointive ministry reveals an intimate interaction between the Holy Spirit and the church. The first appointment of officers took place in Jerusalem when the church chose and ordained seven deacons. This was not done by the church only, but in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. The Bible mentioned that these seven men were “full of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:3). In describing the implementation of a new organizational structure for the church, Mrs. White said that “the apostles were led by the Holy Spirit.”²⁰ Again one notices the unity between the Holy Spirit and church leadership in the operation of the church.

Later on Paul set forth more clearly the relation between spiritual gifts and their relation to the church. Instead of two distinct ministries operating in the church, he revealed that the ministry of believers with special spiritual gifts was to

function within the appointive ministry structure, especially when everyone who has repented and has been baptized has received “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). The metaphor of the church as a body with many members is a perfect illustration of the unity of ministries in the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-27) instead of the operation of two distinct types of ministries, a charismatic or gift-based ministry and an appointive ministry.

Mrs. White commented that “every member was exhorted to act well his part. Each was to make a wise use of the talents entrusted to him. Some were endowed by the Holy Spirit with special gifts—‘first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.’ 1 Corinthians 12:28. But all these classes of workers were to labor in harmony.”²¹

To distinguish between a charismatic ministry and an appointive ministry, therefore, seems artificial and difficult to justify in the overall pattern of the New Testament ministry. In the so-called charismatic ministry, persons are called by the Lord while the church confirms the calls. In the appointive ministry persons are called by the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Trying to determine God’s part and the church’s part is rather difficult because both work intimately together.

2. Was Junia a Female Apostle in the Charismatic Ministry?

In discussing the charismatic ministry in the New Testament, the author argues that it included a female apostle. This view he bases on Paul’s recommendation to the believers in Rome. Here Paul wrote: “Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me” (Romans 16:7, KJV). The author asserts that the text reveals Junia as a female apostle.

Whether the person was a woman (Junia) or a man (Junias) has been debated for many years. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* mentions that the proper name “may be the name of either a man or a woman.”²² *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* favors Junias instead of Junia because “the context suggests that he was a man, hence should be called by the masculine name Junias, as in the RSV.”²³ It points out, however, that because the list in Romans 16 mentions several households (Rom 16:3, 13, 15) some commentators believe that “the Christian referred to was the wife of Andronicus, hence should be called by the feminine name Junia.”²⁴

The author of the chapter in *Women in Ministry* mentions that this name is “commonly taken to be Junias,” a masculine name, and admits that it is “impossible to determine on the basis of grammar alone whether the name should be Junias or Junia.”²⁵ However, from a computer search of available non-biblical Greek and Latin sources he is convinced that the text refers to “a female apostle named Junia.”²⁶

Was Junia a Woman? In evaluating this question one finds that there are only three references to the name Junia or Junias in the non-biblical Greek

literature that were included on the CD-ROM database our author used. The first reference is by a pagan writer Plutarch (ca. A.D. 50-ca. 120), the second is by Epiphanius (A.D. 315-403), and the third by Chrysostom (A.D. 347-407). These last two writers were church fathers. Plutarch refers to a woman, Junia, the wife of Cassius and sister of Brutus. Chrysostom refers to Rom 16:7 and speaks of Junia as a woman. Epiphanius, however, mentions that Junias was a man who became bishop of Apameia of Syria.²⁷ It seems that the evidence of these Greek sources is inconclusive in determining whether this person is a man or a woman.

What is the author's reason for discarding the possibility of the masculine name Junias in the Greek literature? He suggests that the Epiphanius source is "spurious" and "can be characterized as a late attempt to masculinize what had originally been feminine."²⁸ He provides no evidence, however, why it should be considered spurious or for the assertion that Junia was indeed changed to Junias by a later copyist.²⁹

The author also cites Latin sources which use this name. The Latin pagan sources he has access to all refer to women. Among Christians, the first writer to comment on Rom 16:7 is Origen, whose commentary on Romans is only available in a Latin translation. Origen has two references to this person. The first reference mentions Junia, a woman, the second Junias, a man.³⁰ Here we see that the Latin sources also are not conclusive.

How does the author explain this discrepancy in Origen's writings in favor of Junia? He assumes that the masculine name Junias "was probably introduced by later copyists. In the light of medieval tendencies to change Junia to Junias, we may apply the textual critical rule that the more difficult reading is to be preferred and conclude that the version which was more offensive to the sensibilities of later copyists is probably the original one."³¹ Based on these assumptions, the author expresses confidence that the text refers to "a female apostle named Junia."³²

Does this settle the issue? I do not think so. The author's method, using non-biblical sources to determine the meaning of the biblical text, should be avoided because of its speculative nature, especially in determining what is genuine and what is spurious. The contradictory witness of the church historical documents seems to indicate that we may never know the truth in this case.

Conflicting scholarly opinions mean that a person should think twice before arguing in a discussion on women's ordination that Junia was a woman, realizing that at this time there is no absolute certainty that she was a woman.

Was Junia an Apostle? Even if we assume that Junia was a woman, the next question we have to answer is whether Paul indicated that she was an apostle. In his letter to the Romans he wrote that Andronicus and Junia "are of note among the apostles" (Romans 16:7, KJV). What does this phrase mean?

Commentators are divided on this issue. Some think that Andronicus and Junia were apostles, while others interpret the text as a statement that they had a high reputation among the apostles. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*

states that “the meaning may be either that they were well known by the apostles or that they themselves were distinguished apostles.”³³

When Ellen White discussed the leadership of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) that decided theological matters, she mentioned that it was “the apostles and elders, *men* of influence and judgment,”³⁴ who decided the major theological issues. This indicates that there were no women apostles and elders or ministers at this time.

The view that Junia was a female apostle appeared first in the writings of the Catholic church father Chrysostom in the 4th century A.D.³⁵ However, before recommending this ancient commentator in support of an interpretation of Scripture, one may recall that this church father also interpreted the phrase “on the first day of the week” (1 Cor 16:2) as the Lord’s day and a day of rest.³⁶

The author admits that the phrase “among the apostles” (Greek *en tois apostolois*) is “somewhat ambiguous” but adds that it is “more probable” that Andronicus and Junia were apostles. His major reason is that it is “the most natural way to take the Greek.”³⁷ It seems that one could conclude that the person is an apostle, but again one cannot be absolutely sure.

If we assume that Andronicus and Junia were apostles, we may ask where in the church organization would they function? Here it will be helpful to look at the word “apostle.” In the Bible this word is not always used with the same meaning. At the beginning of the New Testament church the word was confined to the twelve apostles. As eyewitnesses of the ministry, death, and resurrection, and trained by Jesus Himself, they had a unique role in the leading the church in the spreading of the Gospel.

After the death of Judas Iscariot the apostles were looking for someone to take his place so that the number twelve would be maintained. Not just anyone could fill this place. Peter specified the person to be selected had to be an eyewitness of the ministry and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 1:21, 22). Two candidates were presented, but only one was chosen to fill the vacancy. These twelve continued to fulfill a special role in the proclamation of the Gospel.

During His ministry Jesus pointed out that the twelve would have a unique role to play in the judgment. When Peter inquired about their reward, Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt 19:27, 28, KJV). In the last book of the Bible, the unique place of the twelve apostles is again highlighted in the description of the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem, which will have on them “the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev 21:14, KJV).

The term “apostles,” however, did not remain limited to the twelve. There were others who were called apostles, though they had not been eyewitnesses of Jesus’ earthly life and resurrection. Here we think of Paul, who included himself along with the twelve apostles because he had seen the risen Lord by special revelation, was taught by Him, and was called by God to be an apostle of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13; 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1, 12).

Then there were others who were closely connected to the apostles but who could not claim to be eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, yet who were also called apostles. Among them were Barnabas, Apollos, Titus, Epaphroditus, and Silvanus (Acts 14:14, 4; 1 Cor 4:6, 9; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25; 1 Thess 1:1; 2:6).

For these persons, the word “apostle” had a broader meaning than belonging to the circle of the twelve. The word embraced the meaning of “messenger” or “those sent on an itinerant ministry.” They were sent by the various churches to proclaim the Gospel and to raise up new churches. If Andronicus and Junia were indeed apostles, they might fall into this category, serving as missionaries.

No matter how we interpret their role, it is important to keep in mind that the Bible does not mention anything about their specific activities or responsibilities. Any statement on their work and responsibilities is guesswork. This lack of information means that any appeal to Junia as an apostle does not qualify as an argument in support of the ordination of women to the office of a minister.

3. No Specific Church Organizational Structure in the New Testament?

In explaining the appointive ministry, the author argues that the New Testament reveals no specific model of church organization that we should follow today. He bases his position on the theory that the early church organization developed from a one-level ministry seen in the election of the seven men in the Jerusalem church, who could be called interchangeably elders or deacons, to that of a two-level ministry of elders and deacons mentioned in Paul’s later letters. This ministry came to include female ministers. Early in the second century this structure expanded to a three-level ministry of bishops, elders and deacons.

A One-level Model of Ministry? The author’s argument for a one-level ministry postulates that at first the seven men appointed in Acts 6 were elders. This view he bases on a number of assumptions:³⁸

First, the claim that the seven men were “deacons” is based on concepts and distinctions that have developed later. “Mrs. White simply calls them ‘officers.’”³⁹ Acts 6 does not mention the title “deacon,” nor does the entire book of Acts. It does, however, mention the title “elder.”

Second, the first time the word “elders” appears is in Acts 11:30. Here, Paul and Barnabas deliver the famine relief for the believers in Judea to the elders, whom the author assumes to be the officers appointed in Acts 6. He infers that “the kind of work for which the seven were appointed in Acts 6 is said to be done by elders in Acts 11:30.”

Third, the appointment of elders in Acts 14:23 “resembles somewhat” that of the appointment of the officers in Acts 6. Fourth, Acts 15 mentions only two offices in Jerusalem—apostles and elders.

Based on these assertions, the author concludes “that the church at this early stage knew of only one appointive ministry, which Luke designated ‘elder.’”

Obviously this new view conflicts with an earlier Adventist view that the seven were “deacons.” The author tries to harmonize these views by supposing that the Jerusalem church in Acts 6 had a one-level ministry which united the offices of elder and deacon into one person.

He suggests that “we recognize that to begin with there was only one appointive ministry that could be called either *diakonos* (suggested by *diakonein* in Acts 6:2), a word describing function, or *presbyteros*, a word describing dignity.”⁴⁰ In his view, at this early stage there was only a one-level ministry where each of the seven elected officers could be called “interchangeably either deacon or elder,”⁴¹ depending on whether one wants to emphasize their function or their dignity.

Can the Seven Men be Called “Elders”? This question should be answered with a firm “no” because the author’s assumptions are not supported by the evidence.

First, there is no sufficient reason to conclude that the seven were not deacons simply because the title “deacon” does not appear in the book of Acts. In Acts 6 the church instituted a division of labor. The apostles decided to dedicate themselves exclusively to “prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4) while the seven were to take care to “serve tables” (Acts 6:2). Here the Greek word “serve” is *diakonein*, which is associated with the word *diakonos*, from which our word “deacon” comes. It is therefore quite natural to designate those who “serve tables” as “deacons” to distinguish them from those whose work focuses on ministering the Word.⁴²

Second, there is no proof that the elders in Acts 11:30 who received relief funds are the same persons who distributed it, such as the seven men in chapter 6 did. This is simply an assumption. In the execution of this relief effort, it seems only natural that funds from outside of Judea should be sent to the elders in charge. These elders, as the overseers of the church, would be responsible for allocating the finances to the deacons in charge of distributing to the needy. Furthermore, the Bible mentions that the funds were to assist the believers in Judea and not just to those in Jerusalem (Acts 11:29). This makes it even more imperative to hand over the funds to the elders to make sure that the whole area of Judea would reap the benefit.

Third, just because selection for both offices followed a similar procedure—the apostles prayed when they appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23) and when they appointed the seven (Acts 6:6)—this does not mean the seven were elders. Again, to say that they were elders is only an assumption, without evidence. Close comparison between these two appointment services reveals a marked difference. During the selection of the elders, in addition to praying, they fasted (Acts 14:32). As the elders occupy the highest office in the local church it seems only appropriate to fast in addition to simply praying. Fasting is not mentioned in connection with the appointment of deacons (Acts 6:6). This difference may well indicate that these two services pertained to an ordination of different officers.

Fourth, the fact that Acts 15 mentions only the offices of apostles and elders, but omits deacons, does not mean that there were no deacons. The Jerusalem council was held to deal with doctrinal issues. These issues were to be settled by the apostles and elders in charge of the spiritual leadership of the church, not by deacons. This may explain why deacons were not mentioned.

Fifth, the suggestion that Mrs. White called the seven simply “officers” is incorrect. In discussing the appointment of the seven, several times she called them “deacons.”⁴³ When I discussed this point with the author, he mentioned that he already had discovered this mistake. However, he still felt that this did not at all invalidate his contention that the seven were elders.

The above evaluation reveals that the author’s theory that the church at this early stage knew only of “one appointive ministry, which Luke designated ‘elder’”⁴⁴ is incorrect. The concept of a one-level ministry is based on invalid assumptions and interpreting texts out of their contexts.

The absence of solid biblical evidence invalidates the theory that “in the earliest period, what can be said of ‘deacon’ also applies to ‘elder.’”⁴⁵ The two-fold ministry of elder-bishop and deacon mentioned in various places of the New Testament is *not* a later “branching out from one original ministry that could at first be called interchangeably either deacon or elder.”⁴⁶

These incorrect assumptions therefore invalidate his arguments against the long-standing Seventh-day Adventist position. The New Testament indeed provides God’s people with a model of church organization and leadership that is still valid today and has been confirmed in the writings of Ellen White.

Apostolic Church: A Two-Level Ministry of Servant Leadership. In order to understand the events of Acts 6, it is helpful see how the verb “to serve” (Greek *diakoneo*) is used in the gospels.

This verb describes the work or service of slaves, the work of Jesus’ disciples, and that of Jesus Himself. It is used for a slave serving the master (Luke 17:8), Martha serving Jesus and His disciples (Luke 10:40), and Jesus serving the saints after the second advent (Luke 12:37). Luke used this verb to describe the nature of Jesus’ ministry and that of His disciples (Luke 22:25, 26). This usage shows that service or ministry is the work of Christ’s followers till He returns. Service is the nature of the work of the church and its members in fulfilling the gospel commission. With this in mind, we can return to Acts 6.

The Book of Acts more fully reveals the meaning of service as the New Testament church was being established. The apostles became overwhelmed by the demands of the fast-growing church in Jerusalem. To cope with the challenges, the apostles divided their mission of service or ministry into two major areas. Seven men were chosen to “serve tables” while the apostles confined themselves “to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:2, 4). Both “the seven” and the apostles were involved in serving or ministering, but the manner of their involvement differed

significantly. What each of these two areas of service entailed has been the subject of much speculation. Ellen G. White's commentary on these events, however, is very enlightening. It harmonizes with Scripture, and attention to it might prevent one from unwarranted speculations about the apostolic church's organization.

Mrs. White saw the appointment of "the seven" as an important step in the organization of the Christian church. Addressing the situation in Acts 6, she noted that as a result of the rapid growth of the church the Hellenists complained that their widows were neglected in the daily distribution of assistance. To remove all occasion for discontent, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the apostles began "to outline a plan for the better organization of all the working forces of the church."⁴⁷

What was this plan of church organization? It was to establish a division of labor between those serving as the spiritual leaders and those taking care of the specialized lines of work and the finances of the church. Now the apostles decided that it was necessary to focus on the proclamation of the gospel and to delegate to others their involvement in areas of church life not directly related to this ministry. The apostles felt the time had come "when the spiritual leaders having the oversight of the church should be relieved from the task of distributing to the poor and from similar burdens, so that they might be free to carry forward the work of preaching the gospel."⁴⁸ They said, "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business [of serving tables]. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:3-4, KJV). The church accepted this advice and ordained the seven as deacons. Mrs. White wrote that "by prayer and the laying on of hands, seven chosen men were solemnly set apart for their duties as *deacons*."⁴⁹ This action was an "important step in the perfecting of gospel order in the church."⁵⁰

The designation "deacons" for these men perfectly fits the description of their work, to "serve tables." To them, Ellen White wrote, was delegated "the oversight of special lines of work" which included looking after the "individual needs" and the "general financial needs of the church."⁵¹ They were "ordained for the special work of looking after the needs of the poor."⁵² Their work, however, did not exclude them from "teaching the faith." They "were fully qualified to instruct others in the truth, and they engaged in the work with great earnestness and success."⁵³

Far from seeing the appointment of the seven in Acts 6 as only the first phase—a one-level ministry—of an evolving church organization, Mrs. White considered the Jerusalem church's leadership structure a model whose impact extended throughout the history of the Christian church. She testified that "the organization of the church at Jerusalem was to serve as a model for the organization of churches in every other place where messengers of truth should win converts to the gospel."⁵⁴

After the stoning of deacon Stephen, the first great persecution of the Christian church began, and believers were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). From this time onward the gospel was carried beyond the

confines of Jerusalem. Wherever the apostles took this gospel, the new communities were organized according to the model of the Jerusalem church.

In harmony with this plan, the apostles appointed elders as spiritual leaders in every church (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). This practice makes it obvious that when the apostles left Jerusalem to preach the gospel throughout the world, they appointed elders in Jerusalem to continue the leadership instead of leaving a vacuum in the major center of the church. This explains the presence of elders in the Jerusalem church several years later (Acts 11:30). It was to those elders that Barnabas and Saul handed their relief for the believers in Judea.

In a letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul confirmed the effectiveness of this early division of labor in the Jerusalem church. He carefully spelled out the qualifications for those serving as spiritual leaders (elders) as well as those attending to the other church affairs (deacons) (1 Tim 3:1-13). In a similar manner Paul instructed Titus to establish order in the churches by appointing to the office of elder or bishop men who had met the qualifications (Titus 1:5-9).

As both apostles and elders or bishops form the spiritual leadership of the church, what was the significant distinction between them? One of the major differences was that the apostles were itinerant spiritual leaders while the elders or bishops were the local spiritual leaders. The apostles traveled from church to church, planted new churches, and oversaw the operation of a number of churches. Elders or bishops were connected to their local church and had no authority over other churches. Yet both apostles and elders worked closely together in giving leadership to the church.

This close cooperation can be seen in a major controversy over whether Gentiles had to be circumcised or not. A council was called together in Jerusalem to settle the conflict. The participants who were to decide the issue were the spiritual leaders of the churches—the apostles and elders (Acts 15:2, 6).

The close relationship between the leadership roles of the apostles and elders is seen in the word used to describe the office of an apostle and that of an elder. After the death of Judas the apostles were looking for a suitable replacement. The nature of the type of work he was to fulfill becomes clear from Peter's appeal, "Let another take his office" (Acts 1:20). The Greek word translated in some versions as "office" is *episkope*, referring to the role of "overseer." This is the reason why the King James Version rendered the word as "bishoprick." It is clear that from the very beginning the apostles served as overseers of the church. After the organizational model of the Jerusalem church was used to organize newly established churches, Paul described the elder as "a bishop" (Greek *episkopos*) (Titus 1:5, 7). In counsel to Timothy, Paul described the same position as the "office of a bishop" (*episkope*), which in this context refers to the role of having the oversight of the church (1 Tim 3:1, KJV). When Paul addressed the elders of the church in Ephesus, he again called them "overseers" whose task it was "to shepherd the church of God," because in the near future all kind of heresies would come into the church to destroy it (Acts 20:28, 29). This indicates that an important part of the role of

the elders is to fortify the faith of the church members through the ministry of the Word. Paul gave Titus similar counsel, that an elder must hold fast “the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict” (Titus 1:9). Again we see the close parallel between the apostles and elders in their ministry and leadership roles.

Peter alluded to the close relationship between apostles and elders when, in addressing elders, he called himself “also an elder” (1 Peter 5:1). This confirms that an apostle was also an elder, one whose responsibility was not confined to a local church but who supervised and counseled various churches. Paul demonstrated this kind of leadership when he revisited the churches he had established.

In giving instruction to Timothy and Titus regarding the organization of the newly established churches, the apostle Paul called on them to implement the Jerusalem model of ministry by appointing spiritual leaders (elders) and deacons (1 Tim 3 and Titus 1). He carefully spelled out the qualifications for service in these offices. Those who met these requirements were to be ordained to serve in their respective offices.

The early Adventist pioneers adopted this New Testament model of church leadership, and it functioned successfully throughout the history of the Advent movement. In the early years of the movement, Mrs. White called upon believers to accept the leadership of the elders. Said she, “Elders, local and traveling, are appointed by the church and by the Lord to oversee the church, to reprove, exhort, and rebuke the unruly and to comfort the feebleminded. There is no higher tribunal upon earth than the church of God. And if the members of the church will not submit to the decision of the church, and will not be counseled and advised by it, they cannot be helped. If one and then another think they know best and choose their own judgment instead of the judgment of the church, what kind of a church would we have? What would be the use of a church if each one is permitted to choose his own course of action? Everything would be in the greatest confusion; there would be no harmony, no union.”⁵⁵ Today we might associate “traveling elders” with ministers appointed as conference officials, union and division leaders, and the General Conference officers.

Ellen G. White’s Description of the New Testament Ministry. In her narration of the history of the New Testament church, we notice that Ellen White designated the apostles and elders as the spiritual leaders involved in the oversight of the church. These she also called “ministers.”

At first there were the twelve apostles. Later she referred to Paul as an apostle, as she also did with his travel companions, Barnabas and Silas. When Paul and Barnabas were ordained, the laying on of hands was performed by “*the ministers*” of the church in Antioch.⁵⁶

Ellen White indicated that in the days of the apostles it was “*the ministers*” who performed the laying on of hands ceremony. After citing Paul’s warning not to lay hands on a person too quickly, she said that the “*ministers of God* did not dare to rely

upon their own judgment in selecting or accepting men to take the solemn and sacred position of mouthpiece for God. They selected the men whom their judgment would accept, and then they placed them before the Lord to see if He would accept them to go forth as His representatives.”⁵⁷ The word “ministers” here refers to all leaders who qualify to ordain others and includes apostles and elders/ministers.

After returning from their first missionary trip, Paul and Barnabas united with “the ministers and lay members” in Antioch for evangelistic work.⁵⁸

Soon after this, a crisis occurred which gives insight into the way the church settled conflicts. The orderly organization of the church played a key role in handling crises, as Ellen White pointed out. Said she, “The order that was maintained in the early Christian church made it possible for them to move forward solidly as a well-disciplined army clad with the armor of God. The companies of believers, though scattered over a large territory, were all members of one body; all moved in concert and in harmony with one another.”⁵⁹ When conflicts erupted in a local church, these problems “were not permitted to create a division in the church.”⁶⁰ The church implemented an effective conflict resolution strategy that delegated the problems to the spiritual leadership for a solution. Divisive issues “were referred to a general council of the entire body of believers, made up of appointed delegates from the various local churches, with the *apostles and elders* in positions of leading responsibility.”⁶¹ In this way, Mrs. White said, “the efforts of Satan to attack the church in isolated places were met by concerted action on the part of all, and the plans of the enemy to disrupt and destroy were thwarted.”⁶²

The crisis that arose in Antioch involved some Jewish Christians belonging to the party of the Pharisees who taught that it was still necessary to keep all the Mosaic laws in order to be saved. Paul and others, however, preached that Christ’s death had abolished the law of ceremonies. This issue soon led to a widespread controversy in the church. In response, church leadership called a general council to settle the controversy. We notice that the spiritual leadership plays a crucial role in resolving this conflict. Mrs. White remarked, “The entire body of Christians was not called to vote upon the question. The ‘apostles and elders,’ men of influence and judgment, framed and issued the decree, which was thereupon generally accepted by the Christian churches.”⁶³

Ellen White noted that “the apostles and elders” were *men* of influence. This seems to indicate that there were no women apostles and elders or ministers at this time.

When Paul traveled with Silas on his second missionary journey, both were called “apostles.” Wherever they led people to Christ they organized a new church. Describing their work in Thessalonica, Ellen White wrote that they appointed officers “to act as ministers and deacons.”⁶⁴ This leadership was responsible to keep order in the church. This particular church urgently needed order because some persons came in with fanatical ideas and doctrines, causing disturbance. Although the Thessalonian church was properly organized, “there were some, self-willed and impetuous, who refused to be subordinate to those who held positions of

authority in the church. They claimed not only the right of private judgment, but that of publicly urging their views upon the church.” To establish order in the church, Paul emphasized the need of accepting the appointed leadership by showing “the respect and deference due to those who had been chosen to occupy positions of authority in the church.”⁶⁵

Although he was an apostle, Paul frequently called himself a minister, even as he referred to those with whom he worked as ministers. When believers in Corinth began to favor one worker over another, Paul tried to impress on them that a discussion “regarding the relative merits of different ministers was not in the order of God, but was the result of cherishing the attributes of the natural heart.”⁶⁶ Paul told them that both he and Apollos were “but ministers.”⁶⁷

When Paul returned to the churches he had established, he chose from them men to train for the gospel ministry. Said Ellen White, “This feature of Paul’s work contains an important lesson for ministers today. The apostle made it a part of his work to educate young men for the office of the ministry. He took them with him on his missionary journeys, and thus they gained an experience that later enabled them to fill positions of responsibility.”⁶⁸

Mrs. White’s description of the New Testament church reveals that the two-fold division of labor in the Jerusalem church between the spiritual leaders and deacons in Acts 6 continued throughout the apostolic era. At first the spiritual leaders were the apostles. When the apostles appointed other spiritual leaders these persons were called “elders” or “ministers,” equating the office of an elder with that of a minister. In Ellen White’s writings there is no evidence that at any time she used the office of a “deacon” as a synonym for the office of an “elder” or “minister.”

4. A Three-level Model of Ministry?

I have said little about the author’s three-level model of ministry because it falls outside of the time frame of Scripture. Still, it may be helpful to examine briefly the known history of this organizational structure.

In the New Testament, the terms “elder” and “bishop” were used interchangeably (Titus 1:5, 7; 1 Tim 3:1, 2), *elder* indicating the title and dignity of the office, and *bishop* revealing the officer’s function as “overseer” (Acts 20:17, 28). Churches at that time were ruled by a council of elders. All this changed, however, at the beginning of the second century with an early Christian writer, Ignatius, later claimed by the papacy as a forefather of their own system.

Ignatius is the first representative of a new form of church government called “the episcopate.” His writings reveal that at this time the presiding elder had taken on the title of bishop. In the new church structure, the bishop stood at the center of church life, with the other elders, the deacons, and the laity subject to his authority.

Ignatius described the relationship of the believers to the bishop in the following terms. “We should look upon the bishop even as we would look upon the Lord Himself, standing as he does, before the Lord.”⁶⁹ “See that ye all follow the bishop, even as Christ Jesus does the Father. . . . Let no man do anything connected with

the Church without the bishop.”⁷⁰ “And say I, Honour thou God indeed, as the Author and Lord of all things, but the bishop as the high-priest, who bears the image of God. . . . Nor is there anyone in the Church greater than the bishop, who ministers as a priest to God for the salvation of the whole world. . . . He who honours the bishop shall be honoured of God, even as he that dishonours him shall be punished by God.”⁷¹

This three-level ministry is a departure from the biblical model because it makes the bishop the head and center of the local congregation. This model of ministry has been described as the first phase of the episcopacy—a rulership of the church by the bishops. In time, this type of church organization came to its full fruition in the papacy. It was not until the rise of Protestantism that believers tried to recover the New Testament model of church leadership, a model also adopted by the Adventist pioneers.

Mrs. White strongly cautioned against minister-centered churches. In a warning to church leadership, she said, “Do not, my ministering brethren, allow yourselves to be kept at home to serve tables; and do not hover around the churches, preaching to those who are already fully established in the faith.”⁷² Instead, she urged, focus the church’s attention on the real source of power. “Teach the people to have light in themselves, and not to depend upon the ministers. They should have Christ as their helper, and should educate themselves to help one another,” so that the minister can be free to enter new fields.⁷³

The vitality of the believers’ life must not depend on ministers. In no uncertain terms Mrs. White stressed that “we must not encourage the people to depend upon ministerial labor in order to preserve spiritual life. Everyone who has received the truth must go to God for his individual self, and decide to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Those who have embraced the third angel’s message must not make man their trust, and depend upon the ministers to make their experience for them.”⁷⁴

Having shown that both the one-level and the three-level models of ministry have no support in Scriptures, we find only one model remaining that portrays the New Testament church. This is the two-level ministry which I have discussed and which has been so clearly explained by Mrs. White. This is the model of church organization that the Lord has recommended for His church.

5. Was Phoebe a Female Minister?

Our New Testament scholar asserts that Paul highly recommended to the church of Rome a “female minister” of the church of Cenchrea, called Phoebe (Rom 16:1). He surmises that by the beginning of the second century there could have been “many” female ministers.⁷⁵ In time, however, “women came to be squeezed out of the ministry.”⁷⁶ He sees Phoebe today as an example of holding open “the door for women to ministry.”⁷⁷

The basis on which the author justifies seeing Phoebe as a minister is his theory regarding the development of the earliest forms of organization in the Christian

church. As we have already discussed, this theory assumes that during the earliest period of the church there was no distinction between an elder and a deacon. “What can be said of ‘deacon’ also applies to ‘elder.’ Both were ministries which, in the beginning, were one, and they remained one in many places for several decades.”⁷⁸ When dealing with this early period, the author refers to both deacons and elders as *ministers*. Thus he calls Phoebe, a *diakonos*, a “female minister.”⁷⁹

When commenting on the work of the seven and discussing the verb “serve” (Greek *diakonein* [Acts 6:2]), the noun “servant” or “deacon” (Greek *diakonos*) and its usage in Acts 1:25 as “service” or “ministry” (from the Greek *diakonia*), he explains that these words mean “respectively, to serve, a servant, and service. Equally satisfactory synonyms are to minister, a minister, and ministry.”⁸⁰ Similarly, in discussing the role of elders (1 Pet 5:1-4), he equates the position of elder with that of a minister.⁸¹

Phoebe a Minister? In Romans 16:1-3, Paul made the following recommendation to the believers in Rome: “I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea” (Romans 16:1-3, KJV). Here he described Phoebe’s position as *diakonos*, a Greek word which may be translated “servant,” “deacon-deaconess,” or “minister.” The translation “servant” appears in the KJV, NASB and NIV. The RSV has “deaconess.” The plural of this Greek word appears in 1 Timothy 3:8 where it is translated as “deacons.” This usage explains why Phoebe is often referred to as a deaconess. Our author, however, calls her a minister.

The practice of calling Phoebe a “minister” has no scriptural support. The theory that at the beginning the designations elder and deacon referred to the same office is flawed, as we have shown earlier. This should be especially clear when we understand Paul’s position on the role of women in the church. It seems, therefore, in full harmony with all his writings to consider that Paul associates Phoebe, at most, with the office of deacon and not that of an elder.

Furthermore, the author’s assumption that the word “minister” is an “equally satisfactory” synonym for servant or deacon is just not so. Scripture teaches that all believers are “servants” (John 12:26). All are to be involved in serving or ministering, yet not all are “ministers,” occupying the office of elders or ministers as described in the Bible. Only those with the proper qualifications can be selected to this office and may properly be addressed with the title of “minister.” To call Phoebe a minister, as if she occupied an office that is similar to that of a modern minister, is reading into the Bible text a concept that is not there. Today’s ministerial office is an extension of the office of an elder, not that of a deacon.

The author suggests that there could very well have been many women ministers. Said he, “if there could be one female minister [Phoebe] there could as well be many.”⁸² This estimation he bases on some correspondence from the pagan Pliny the Younger, Roman governor of Bithynia, to emperor Trajan. In a letter written in about A.D. 108 Pliny provided one of the first accounts of the persecu-

tion of Christians, in which he described the torture of ‘two maidservants who were called *ministrae*.’⁸³ Our author explains that the word *ministrae* is “the plural of the Latin word *ministra*, feminine form of minister. It is the exact equivalent of the Greek *diakonos* and the origin of the English word ‘minister.’”⁸⁴

Is this letter evidence that there were many female ministers at the beginning of the second century A.D.? What is the precise meaning of the word *ministrae*? Unfortunately, the author does not tell us what this word meant in the Roman world at that time. Standard translations of this letter translate the Latin word as “deaconesses.” The Loeb Classical Library rendered the phrase in this letter containing the word *ministrae* as follows: “two female slaves, who were styled deaconesses.”⁸⁵ From this we may conclude that these persecuted Christian slaves were deaconesses. To compare their position to elders or ministers as we know them lacks any evidence. Again, the author has based his reasoning on incorrect assumptions, not facts.

Ellen G. White’s Reference to Phoebe. Mrs. White referred to Phoebe in an article that was written as an encouragement to workers. She encouraged women as well as ministers to dedicate themselves to gospel work. Phoebe and other women who worked with Paul are mentioned as examples of what women can do for the Lord. In this context Mrs. White wrote, “The Lord has a work for women as well as men to do. They can accomplish a good work for God, if they will learn first in the school of Christ the precious, all-important lesson of meekness. They must not only bear the name of Christ, but possess His spirit. They must walk even as He walked, purifying their souls from everything that defiles. Then they will be able to benefit others by presenting the all-sufficiency of Jesus.”⁸⁶ Nothing in the article gives any indication that Phoebe was a minister or that she served as a minister.

6. May Women be Ordained as Ministers, Despite the Qualifications in 1 Timothy 3?

From his view of a constantly-evolving pattern of church organization and structure which included the presence of female leadership at the highest levels of the New Testament—Junia an apostle and Phoebe a minister—the author asserts that there is nothing to prevent a woman from being ordained as an elder or minister. “If ‘ordination’ simply means credentialing,” he says, “Junia and Phoebe clearly had it, for Paul’s commendations of them are explicable on no other grounds.”⁸⁷

The author seriously questions using the list of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 to oppose ordination of women to the office of elder or minister. Like the non-Seventh-day Adventist scholars he quotes, he finds this list “problematic.”⁸⁸ He bases his arguments on the following assertions.

First, he says that “the same qualification is mentioned for both *episkopos* [elder] and *diakonos* [deacon], but Rom 16:1 proves incontrovertibly that the early church had female *diakonoi* [deacons].”⁸⁹ With the presence of female “deacons,” the qualification that “the deacons be the husbands of one wife” (1 Tim 3:12,

KJV) should not be taken as a prohibition against female deacons. Similarly, he feels, believers should not use the requirement that a bishop or elder must be the “husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6) to prevent the appointment of female elders or ministers.

Second, he argues, one should consider the characteristics of the New Testament language in interpreting the phrase “husband of one wife.” He says, “Greek is an Indo-European language that possesses grammatical gender, as do also the Semitic languages. In such languages, when one has a group of mixed gender in view, or a person who could be of either gender, one must perforce use the masculine.”⁹⁰ If one does not read the Bible in this manner, he continues, one will encounter major problems. Note, for example, that the language of the last commandment of the Decalogue does not seem to forbid a woman to covet her neighbor’s husband, and Jesus’ warning not to look at a woman lustfully seems to leave a woman free to lust after a man. These passages, however, apply to both male and female. The phrase “husband of one wife,” the author suggests, should be read in the same way because it “is in the same class,”⁹¹ applying to both male and female.

Can a Woman Qualify for the Office of an Elder in Timothy and Titus?

The argument that the New Testament Greek language allows the qualification that an elder or minister be “the husband of one wife” to apply also to women is incorrect. This reasoning conflicts with the context of the phrase in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6.

First, the word used here to refer to the man (Greek *aner*) signifies a male, not a generic “person,” for which Greek had a different term (*anthropos*). When *aner* is used in close connection with “woman” (*gyne* in Greek), particularly when the word “woman” is qualified by a pronoun or an adjective (such as in this case, the word “one”), it specifically signifies a male who is a “husband.” It does not mean a generic “spouse.” Hence translators always render this phrase “husband of one wife.”

The immediate context confirms this interpretation. Following the stipulation that an elder or minister must be “the husband of one wife,” the text mentions that he must be “one who rules his own house well” (1 Tim 3:4), “having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination” (Titus 1:6). It is the husband who, as head of the home, is responsible for keeping his family in good order. These two requirements reveal that it is God’s design for men to be the spiritual leaders of the church. It also makes it clear that women do not fulfill the requirements for the office of an elder or minister.

Second, the author neglects the larger context of the list of requirements within 1 Timothy. This list follows immediately after Paul’s reminder to the church that men and women have different roles. A woman is not “to usurp authority over the man” (1 Timothy 2:12, KJV) because of specific biblical reasons. First, because of God’s order of creation: “For Adam was first formed, then Eve” (1 Tim 2:13).

Second, because of the order of transgression: “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Timothy 2:14, KJV). Thus, immediately after having emphasized that the man is to be the spiritual leader, Paul specified what kind of man is to be appointed in the office of elder-minister to oversee the operation of the church (1 Tim 3:1-7).

Women in Ministry states that “understanding is enhanced by a study of the context of the passage.”⁹² If our author had followed this counsel, his conclusions might have been different. His focus on the phrase “husband of one wife” without adequately considering its context has led him to misinterpret the meaning of the list of biblical requirements for church leadership. Neglecting to take the immediate as well as the larger context of the passage into consideration has resulted in erroneous conclusions.

The Author’s Interpretation Conflicts with Ellen G. White’s. In determining the fitness of a person to lead a church, Mrs. White used the New Testament list of requirements for elders to evaluate their suitability to that office. She wrote to one leader that he did not qualify to lead the church because of his failure in the leadership of his family. She mentioned that the Lord drew her attention to the importance of following the specific Bible requirement in 1 Timothy 3:4, 5 that spiritual leaders must be successful in their family government.

“Bro. S., your family is proud. They know not the first principles of the third angel’s message. They are in the downward road, and should be brought under a more saving influence. These influences affect you and make you weak. You have not ruled well your own house, and while you lack so much at home, you cannot be entrusted to dictate important and responsible matters in the church. *This scripture was presented before me; ‘One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?’*”⁹³

This testimony affirms the continual validity of the Bible counsel that successful leadership in the home is an indispensable requirement for any candidate for the office of elder or minister. If, as Ellen White believed, these Bible requirements in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are still valid 1900 years after the death of Christ, what argument can make us conclude that these qualifications are no longer gender related? The author’s contention that these New Testament qualifications cannot be used to oppose the ordination of women to the office of a minister is in direct conflict with Paul’s instructions to Timothy and Titus as well as the counsel of Mrs. White.

Does ordination mean simply “credentialing,” as the author seems to suggest?

Here the illumination the Lord provided through Ellen G. White is crucial in keeping the church from becoming confused by the abundance of human theories. Commenting on the ordination of Paul and Barnabas by the ministers of the church in Antioch, Mrs. White wrote that “their ordination was a public recognition of their divine appointment to bear to the Gentiles the glad tidings of the

gospel.”⁹⁴ They were now “invested with full ecclesiastical authority” which authorized them “not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism and to organize churches.”⁹⁵ To call ordination simply “credentialing” is far removed from the significance the Lord gives to it.

If in the 19th century Mrs. White continued to affirm the validity of the New Testament list of requirements, the author should have explained why these are no longer applicable for 21st-century believers. Instead, he tries to demonstrate that the Apostle Paul never intended these leadership requirements in 1 Timothy and Titus to designate only males.

In the final days of earth’s history, Seventh-day Adventists ought to pay even more attention to the scriptural requirements for leadership. Commenting on the care with which the early believers chose to fill the vacancy among the twelve apostles due to the death of Judas (Acts 1:21-26), Mrs. White said toward the end of her life:

“From these scriptures we learn that the Lord has certain men to fill certain positions. God will teach His people to move carefully and to make wise choice of men who will not betray sacred trusts. If in Christ’s day the believers needed to be guarded in their choice of men for positions of responsibility, we who are living in this time certainly need to move with great discretion. We are to present every case before God and in earnest prayer ask Him to choose for us.

“The Lord God of heaven has chosen experienced men to bear responsibilities in His cause. These men are to have special influence. . . . *The Lord has not given men or women liberty to advance ideas that will bring commonness into His work, removing the sacredness that should ever surround it.* God’s work is to become increasingly sacred to His people. In every way we are to magnify the exalted character of the truth. Those who have been set as guardians of the work of God in our institutions are ever to make the will and way of God prominent. The health of the general work depends upon the faithfulness of the men appointed to carry out the will of God in the churches.”⁹⁶

The issue facing Seventh-day Adventists is obvious. To what authority should we listen? What interpretation is correct? It is for the believers and their leadership to decide which voice they will follow.

Today’s Minister is an Extension of the Office of an Elder. Because the author freely uses the word “minister,” it would be helpful to understand what the present position of a minister in the Seventh-day Adventist church is. The word “minister” has always been associated with the role of an elder.

During the early years of our church the believers “preferred to call their ordained ministers ‘brother.’”⁹⁷ However, in the early 1850s, when the Adventist pioneers began to implement the Bible plan of church organization, the title “elder” was used by Seventh-day Adventists in North America to refer to an ordained minister. “In recent years the title of ‘pastor’ has been gradually replacing the title of ‘elder.’”⁹⁸

This development shows that today the title of minister as well as pastor is associated with the biblical role of the elder. However, while the local church elder is appointed by the local church and is accountable to that church, confining his authority to that church, ministers or pastors are accountable to the conference who employs them and assigns them to one or more churches. The minister's authority goes beyond the local church and extends over all the churches he is responsible for.

Throughout the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church, the biblical criteria for the office of an elder as listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 have been the guidelines in the appointment of ministers or pastors. These requirements have included the stipulation that only men could occupy this position. Ever since the 1990 General Conference allowed women to function as ministers or pastors, church leaders have been trying in vain to find biblical support that would justify this practice and confirm it through ordination.

Now the author of the chapter in *Women in Ministry* has provided believers with an interpretation that seems to allow this practice to be in harmony with the Bible. Unfortunately, this interpretation came about as a result of neglecting the context of the biblical requirements for the office of an elder or minister. In spite of the author's scholarly efforts, there is no biblical support for women to function in the role of overseer of the church or to be ordained to such a role. Those who have gone ahead with ordaining women have gone against the explicit Bible requirements for the function of elders and ministers. The original Seventh-day Adventist practice of not ordaining women as elders and ministers continues to be fully supported by the Scriptures and the counsels of Mrs. White. It is time that our administrators take a hard look at the current practices in the light of inspiration.

Conclusion

We have pointed out that the distinction between charismatic ministry and appointive ministry is artificial in several respects and does not account for the true nature of the New Testament ministry. Furthermore, having shown that the one-level and the three-level models of ministry are not supported by Scripture, we find only one model remaining that explains ministry in the New Testament—the two-level ministry. This pattern of church organization harmonizes all the biblical components of ministry, and it accords with the writings of Ellen G. White.

We maintain that the author's theory does not properly explain the development of ministry in the New Testament. It imposes a model of church organization on the New Testament that leads readers to believe that the Lord has not revealed in Scripture any specific pattern of church organization that is still relevant for the remnant church.

Upon this theory the author bases his charge of "structural fundamentalism" against those who believe that the Bible reveals "one pattern of church organization and ministry" for God's church that is still valid for today.⁹⁹ It also seems that the author's theory forms the basis of *Women in Ministry's* view that "church

organization is not spelled out in the Bible.”¹⁰⁰ However, as the above evaluation has shown, the assumptions underlying the theory are incorrect, and therefore so are its conclusions about women ministers and “structural fundamentalism.”

In contrast, both the Bible and the writings of Mrs. White reveal a consistent basic model of church organization that was first introduced in the Jerusalem church in Acts 6, revealing a two-fold structure of servant-leadership. This New Testament model consists of spiritual leaders who have the responsibility to preach and teach the gospel and oversee the spiritual well-being of the church, and deacons who are in charge of the temporal affairs of the church. The model has been recommended for implementation wherever the church expanded in the world. In this model the Bible delegates the spiritual leadership role of elders and ministers to men who meet the criteria spelled out in the New Testament.

Seventh-day Adventists followed this successful biblical model until the question of women’s ordination came up. This issue has created great tension, confusion, and conflict in the local churches between those who are convicted that the biblical model should be maintained and those who feel that male leadership in the churches is not relevant today in the increasingly-egalitarian cultures in Western Europe, North America and Australia. This conflict that has divided many churches will never end until the General Conference, unions, and conferences take a firm stand affirming the biblical model for the remnant church and thus terminate the recent practice of ordaining women elders. This return to the biblical model will require a strong education process that focuses on Christ’s model of leadership as the basis for the remnant church.

Failure to return to the biblical model will have grave consequences, for it brings into the leadership of the church elders who are not convinced that the New Testament leadership model mentioned in this chapter is still applicable today. If decision makers can so easily dispense with these clear biblical teachings, there is no assurance that they would not do away with other New Testament teachings, lifestyle practices, and standards. Indeed, we may already observe such change in the growing laxness regarding jewelry, music in worship, movie theater attendance, and health reform practices.

The success of the Seventh-day Adventist church in finishing the work assigned to her depends on her faithfulness to the Scriptures. This chapter has shown the continual importance of the Reformation platform and the foundation of the Advent movement—the principle that for “every doctrine and practice” there is no safety but to stand on the solid foundation of the Bible.¹⁰¹

Endnotes

[Except as noted, Scripture quotations in this chapter are from the New King James Version.]

1. Robert M. Johnston, “Shapes of Ministry in the New Testament and Early Church,” *Women in Ministry*, pp. 45-58.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

3. In my dialogue with the author he suggested I could use the terms one-, two-, and three-level ministry to describe his developmental pattern of church organization.
4. Johnston, *Women in Ministry*, p. 51.
5. Ibid., pp. 48-53.
6. Ibid., p. 52.
7. Ibid., p. 51.
8. Ibid., p. 53.
9. Ibid., p. 45.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 53.
12. Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 18.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. 120.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p. 121.
17. Ibid., p. 165.
18. Ibid., p. 162.
19. Ibid., p. 163.
20. Ibid., p. 89.
21. Ibid., p. 92.
22. Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Commentary Reference Series (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), 6:650.
23. Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, Commentary Reference Series, revised ed. (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1979), article "Junias."
24. Ibid.
25. Johnston, *Women in Ministry*, p. 47
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., p. 55, note 12; John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1991), pp. 79, 80.
28. Johnston, *Women in Ministry*, p. 55, note 12.
29. The dating of the early church literature has been a subject of disagreement among scholars for centuries. The same can be said of the determination whether a source is genuine or spurious. There were even sharp disagreements in the early church. One writing could be considered on the same level as the New Testament Scriptures in certain localities while in other regions it was perceived as spurious. The Epistle of Barnabas is a good example of this.
30. Ibid., p. 56, note 13; *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, p. 80.
31. Johnston, *Women in Ministry*, p. 56, note 13.
32. Ibid., p. 47.
33. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 6:650.
34. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 196, emphasis mine. The Jerusalem Council took place about A.D. 49, approximately 16 years after the deacons were first appointed.
35. Chrysostom, *Homily 31 on Romans*, Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, 1st series, 11:555. His reference is cited by Johnston, *Women in Ministry*, p. 56, note 13.
36. Chrysostom, *Homily 43 on 1 Corinthians*, Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, 1st series, 12:258, 259.
37. Johnston, *Women in Ministry*, pp. 54, 55, note 11.
38. Except as otherwise noted, see Johnson, *Women in Ministry*, p. 49, for the assumptions and their conclusion.
39. The chapter in Mrs. White's book *The Acts of the Apostles* dealing with the appointment of the seven is called "The Seven Deacons." Chapter titles, the author mentioned, are

“mostly the work of the editors. The word ‘deacon’ does not occur in the text itself. Mrs. White simply calls them ‘officers’” (Johnston, *Women in Ministry*, p. 57, footnote 19). Contrary to this statement, we find that Mrs. White used the word “deacons” several times in her chapter.

40. Johnston, *Women in Ministry*, p. 49.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
42. It is true that in Acts 1:25 the word *diakonia* is applied to the work of the apostles, but in Acts 6 the word is used to indicate the distinct nature of the work of the seven in contrast to the work of the apostles. We must also keep in mind that the work of the apostles as well as the seven involves service, which explains the use of the word in Acts 1:25. Yet the work of the apostles is of a different nature from the work of the seven. This difference in work justifies calling the seven “deacons.”
43. *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 89-91, 97.
44. Johnston, *Women in Ministry*, p. 49.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 89
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*, emphasis mine.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 89.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
55. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 5:296.
56. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 162.
57. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:406, emphasis mine. She added, “No less than this should be done now.”
58. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 188.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 96.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
61. *Ibid.*, emphasis mine.
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 261.
65. *Ibid.*, pp. 261, 262.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
67. *Ibid.*, quoting 1 Corinthians 3:5, KJV.
68. *Ibid.*, pp. 367, 368.
69. Ignatius, *Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians*, Ante-Nicene Fathers, 1:51.
70. Ignatius, *Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, Ante-Nicene Fathers, 1:89.
71. Ignatius, *Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, Ante-Nicene Fathers, 1:90.
72. Ellen G. White, *Historical Sketches*, p. 139.
73. *Ibid.*
74. Ellen G. White, *The Home Missionary*, December 1, 1894.
75. Johnston, *Women in Ministry*, p. 51.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
77. *Ibid.*
78. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

81. Ibid., p. 52.
82. Ibid., p. 51.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., p. 58, note 36.
85. Pliny, the Younger, *Letters*, Book X, chapter xcvi, trans. by William Melmoth, rev. by W. M. L. Hutchinson, vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library (New York: Macmillan Co., 1931-35), p. 405. See also Pliny, the Younger, *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*, trans. with an introd. by Betty Radice. (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 294.
86. Ellen G. White, "Words of Encouragement to Workers," *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, 2/3 (December 4, 1907).
87. Johnston, *Women in Ministry*, p. 53.
88. Ibid., p. 50.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid., p. 51.
92. Nancy J. Vyhmeister, "Prologue," *Women in Ministry*, p. 3.
93. Ellen G. White, Letter to E. W. Shortridge, *Review and Herald*, Supplement, August 19, 1862, emphasis mine.
94. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 161.
95. Ibid.
96. *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:264, emphasis mine.
97. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, rev. ed., Commentary Reference Series (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976), article "Elder."
98. Ibid.
99. Johnston, *Women in Ministry*, p. 52.
100. Vyhmeister, *Women in Ministry*, p. 3.
101. *The Ellen White 1888 Materials*, p. 44.