

WOMEN'S ORDINATION, GENDER IDENTITY, AND THE SABBATH

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Introduction

Scripture lacks a clear theology of ordination. This fact has led scholars of nearly all Christian denominations to use the ecclesial background in the OT and NT for the study of ordination and women's ordination. Opponents to women's ordination usually favor the male headship and female subordination concept that they relate to the church. They understand this concept as established in creation and applied in the male-exclusive priesthood of the OT, in Jesus' appointment of the twelve male disciples, and adopted by the NT church. Proponents to women's ordination argue from texts on the ideal "kingdom of priests" of all believers. They trace this ideal from male-female equality in creation and see it fulfilled in the Holy Spirit's gifting of church members without regard to gender as well as in female top leaders of the OT and NT church.

Both positions provide biblical evidence with regard to questions on gender such as on the ontological being and role or function of men and women. However, when the gender function issue is connected to the church and its ministries, there is no conclusive and satisfying answer to the question of women's ordination. The outcome is that the studies have reached an impasse without a unifying conclusion.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, while in the process of studying the topic of ordination on a large scale, has adopted a similar approach. Numerous Adventist studies on ordination use the model of the church, the OT *qahal* and the NT *ekklesia*, as a foundation upon which an argument is built, either in favor of or against women's ordination.¹ To be ordained as a leader of God's church—a deacon, elder, or pastor—means to receive ordination on the ground rules of the church and then minister for the church within the assigned role.

In this paper, I propose a different, more comprehensive and in-depth approach to the study of ordination, and women's ordination in particular, with the use of the creation Sabbath as an overarching, dominant biblical concept that directly relates to gender questions and at the same time exceeds the dimensions and dynamics of the church. This new approach to the study of women and ordination clarifies with regard to human identity, gender distinction, and the purpose and function of men and women in their relation

¹At least I am not aware of a biblical study that relates women's ordination to a concept other than the church or the community of believers.

to God. Second, this new approach takes into account the biblical evidence about the human being and gender distinction in the pre-Fall world, in the fallen world, and in the world after sin and death and thus provides a fresh understanding of women and ordination in a mission-oriented church in the fallen world.

The creation Sabbath's human-focused rationale, gender-related implications, and enduring significance, seems best qualified to shed light on the gender-related questions of woman's ordination. Among the studies that have been done on the topic of ordination, an investigation of the correlation between the Sabbath and ordination with specific regard to matters of gender is lacking. Thus, this study attempts a Sabbath-informed contribution and will provide, first, reasons for the Sabbath as a hermeneutical key to the discussion on ordination and then analyze Sabbath texts and Sabbath language related to gender identity and the function of human beings in order to shed light on the topic of women's ordination.

Sabbath as a Hermeneutical Key to Gender Issues

Sabbath is the great inclusionist. Scripture shows that unlike any other concept and day, the Sabbath implicates all human beings by core gender categories of male and female and regards them as equals before God. The creation Sabbath places the human being, male and female—the image of God, into God's immediate presence (Gen 1:26–2:3). Subsequent Sabbath texts continue the principle of gender equality and inclusion and show that, even in a world where society is stratified by power, religious authority, economic status, and honor, the Sabbath takes its stand with strong enduring opposition. Furthermore, the Sabbath goes beyond identifying people groups in general terms of kinship and societal class to differentiate them by gender categories. Thus, for example, Sabbath texts do not generally address children according to their relationship to their parent or slaves in relationship to their master, but differentiates them according to gender—son, daughter, male slave, female slave (Exod 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15), the female slave's son (Exod 23:12), and the eunuch (Isa 56:4-5). All are identified by the all-inclusive language and message of the Sabbath in their gender-related being.

Based on scriptural evidence, I will list five reasons why the Sabbath, and not the concept of the church, should be chosen as a hermeneutical key for understanding the gender-related issue of ordination:

1. *Scripture shows that God created the pre-Fall world with the intent of a divine-human relationship.* Sabbath is the culminating event of that perfect world, promoting God's presence in creation and his sanctifying relationship with humans, male and female—the image of God (Gen 1:1–2:3).

2. *Scripture establishes the pre-Fall world as the divine model to be followed in the corrupt world of sin and death.* The pre-Fall world is not intended to be an

abstract theoretical concept for the fallen world nor a rough sketch drawn for a world to come; neither is there a different or modified standard for the fallen world. The model of the pre-Fall world is to be followed by the believer in the here and now, based upon the initiative and redemptive power of God. The Sabbath builds the bridge between the pre-Fall perfect world and the corrupt world and translates the message of God's presence and his desire for a relationship with human beings, male and female, into the language of the fallen world (Exod 20:8-12; cf. 16:1-36).

3. *The Sabbath's message of God's presence in the fallen world places the human being, male and female, into the center of God's attention.* Unlike any other biblical concept, the Sabbath offers insights on (a) the ontological question of what it means to be a created human being, male and female, before God (Gen 1:26-2:3); (b) the aspect of relationship between God and the human being (Exod 20:8-11; 31:12-17; Deut 5:12-15); and (c) the function of the human being as male and female before God and others including the church (Exod 20:8-11; 23:12; Deut 5:12-15; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18). Jesus summarizes the human-focused rationale and scope of the Sabbath with the words, "Because of the human being the Sabbath was made and not the human being because of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27, my translation). Jesus' words show that the pre-Fall Sabbath has not lost or altered its significance and meaning in the fallen world.

4. *Adventists understand that the Sabbath's description as a covenantal sign between God and the Sabbath observer (Exod 31:12-17; Ezek 20:20) and as the seal of God (Exod 20:8-11; Ezek 9:4, 6; Rev 7:3; 14:1) has a distinct eschatological character.* This character is to promote God's mission to the fallen world by including male and female of all people groups as both the carriers and the target body of the good news of salvation (Rev 14:6-7; cf. Exod 20:8-11; Acts 2:17-18).

5. *Scripture shows that the Sabbath will continue to have a prominent position in the post-Fall world.* Its all-embracing nature and message calls all humans—sons, daughters, eunuchs, and foreigners—to enjoy the benefits of the Sabbath in the world to come (Isa 56:3-8; 66:23).²

With regard to the church, Scripture shows that its existence, purpose, and mission are to proclaim the message of salvation to the fallen world with the Sabbath as an everlasting sign of God's love to human beings (Exod 31:12-17; Rev 14:6-7). The organizational structures and ministries of the

²Gerhard Hasel notes: "In the realm of the new creation beyond history there will be total restoration of the break brought about by sin. 'All flesh' in the sense of all mankind, the redeemed remnant of all times will worship before the Lord Sabbath after Sabbath. . . . The Sabbath will thus be the only institution designed by the Creator that will link the first heaven and earth with the new heaven and earth" ("The Sabbath in the Prophetic and Historical Literature of the Old Testament," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982], 49).

church exist precisely for the sake of the mission. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, in acting on the missional purpose of the church, does not assign “roles to play” to church members; neither does the Holy Spirit impart gifts on the basis of gender. Rather, the Holy Spirit calls members into ministries of the church on the basis of his divine will and gifts them accordingly.³ In addition, the gifting of church members, male and female, does not function according to a hierarchical ranking system: the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and faith are not superior or inferior to the gift of prophecy or healing. Likewise, the appointment to the ministry of an apostle or prophet is not superior to the ministry of a teacher, evangelist, or pastor (1 Cor 12:1-31; Eph 4:7-16). All ministries are given so that “you, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of His own, may proclaim the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

Sabbath and Gender in Creation Times

This section analyzes the creation text in Genesis 1 and 2 in view of the connection between the creation Sabbath and the creation of the human being as male and female. The intent is to set the ground for the understanding of the essence and function of the human being as male and female in their relationship to God, who is present and involved in the created world by means of the Sabbath.

Genesis 1:26–2:3

The account of the sixth day of creation reports God’s most exceptional speech of the week, “Let us make *adam* as our image, according to our likeness” (Gen 1:26).⁴ The entire theology of *imago Dei*⁵ rests upon this divine

³Raoul Dederen, “A Theology of Ordination” in *Symposium on the Role of Women in the Church* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1984), 146-155.

⁴On the two Hebrew terms צֶלֶם (“image”) and דְמוּת (“likeness”) see the ninth-century B.C. Assyrian-Aramaic bilingual inscription from Tell Fakhariyah that describes the statue of King Haddayit³ as an image and likeness of the god Hadad, using Aramaic equivalents of these two words interchangeably in lines 1 and 15. See Edward Lipinski, *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics*, OLA (Leuven: Peeters, 1994), 48-49). Some note that the two nouns seem to possess overlapping meanings, emphasizing respectively the concrete and abstract aspects of the human being in relation to God (see, e.g., David M. Carr, *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2003], 17-26; Richard Davidson, *Flame of Yabweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007], 36); Ilona Rashkow, *Taboo or Not Taboo* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000], 61).

⁵On the subject of the *imago Dei*, see David J. A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *TynBul* 19 (1968): 53-103; Charles L. Feinberg, “The Image of God,” *BSac* 129 (1972): 235-245; Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids:

speech dealing with matters of resemblance and similarity between God and the human being as well as differences.⁶ In Christian theology, *imago Dei* has been defined as substantive, relational, and functional: (1) substantive, in that God makes himself manifest in humans, male and female, and actualizes his purposes while respecting the free will of the human being; (2) relational, in that God establishes and maintains a relationship with humans, and in that humans are able to have complex and intricate relationships with each other (e.g., the marriage relationship between male and female culminates in a loving physical and spiritual union); (3) functional, in that humans, both male and female, are to have dominion and rule over the earth, reflecting God's benevolent rule over the entire universe.

The differences between God and the human being are best seen in the Genesis text, "God created man as His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them" (Gen 1:27, my translation).⁷ The first part of the verse emphasizes the creation of the human being as God's image that is distinct from God: *adam* is not God, but God's mirror image.⁸ Claus Westermann captures this distinct aspect of *adam* with the words that the human being was created as "Gottes Gegenüber," God's counterpart, one who faces God. The second part of the text identifies the human being as differentiated in gender: male and female. In simple words, female is not the same as male; yet, male as well as female is God's image.¹⁰

Eerdman, 1986); Gunnlaugur A. Jónsson, *The Image of God: Genesis 1:26-28 in a Century of Old Testament Research* (Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988); and Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974), 203-214.

⁶With regard to the preposition ב in בצלמו and בצלמי grammarians hold that this is a *beth essentialiae*, and so the two phrases in Gen 1:26-27 should be translated "as our image" and "as his image" instead of "in our image" and "in his image." See Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2005), 487. Cf. Eugene H. Merrill, "Image of God," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, IVP International Dictionary, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 443.

⁷Robert Oberforcher holds that the clause ברא אלהים בצלם אלו, "in his image, as God's image he created him," in Gen 1:27 and its immediate context give the impression of a distancing or distinctiveness ("Biblische Lesarten zur Anthropologie des Ebenbildmotivs," in *Horizonte Biblischer Texte: Festschrift für Josef M. Oesch zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Andreas Vonach and Georg Fischer [Fribourg: Academic Press, 2003], 139).

⁸Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1984), 82; Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 37, 53.

⁹Claus Westermann, *Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 56.

¹⁰An interesting aspect in Genesis 1 is that only *adam* is differentiated into male and female, but other living beings are not. Plants, trees, fish, birds, and land animals are created "after their kind" (vv. 11, 12, 21, 24, 25). Fish and birds are blessed to be

Genesis 1 provides further insights into aspects of similarity and distinction between God and the human being in creation times:

1. *Initial distinction between two contrasting elements generates completeness and unity.* Genesis 1 highlights four divine acts in which contrasting elements produce a unit of complete wholeness: (a) separation between light and darkness starts the weekly rhythm of time (Gen 1:5); (b) separation between earth and sea sets up the environment for life on planet Earth (Gen 1:10); (c) the distinction between God and the human being initiates the divine-human relationship (Gen 1:27); and (d) the distinction between male and female ascertains the bond of unity between husband and wife (Gen 1:27; cf. Gen 2:22-24).¹¹ Each of the four units shows how God established wholeness as a fundamental cosmic principle, which then has its climax in the event of the seventh day (Gen 2:2-3): On Sabbath, (a) time is blessed and sanctified, (b) earth is filled with life lived in the presence of God, (c) the human being shares in God's rest, and (d) the marriage bond experiences the blessing of what is called "one flesh" (Gen 2:24).¹²

2. *Gender distinction is the basis for essential and functional equality between men and women.* Note how God envisioned *adam*, the human being, and not Adam the man, as a plural unit with leadership function over the created world: "Let us make *adam* (singular noun) in our image, according to our likeness, and let them rule (plural verb)" (Gen 1:26). Note how *adam* is then distinguished by gender in the following verse: "God created *adam* as His own image, in the image of God He created *him* (singular), male and female He created *them* (plural)" (Gen 1:27). The reading shows that essential equality of male and female (v. 27) is directly tied to the equal task of rulership in God's world (v. 26, 28).

The creation text shows that by reason of their essential equality male and female are equally appointed to their task of ruling and having dominion over the earth. There is no hint of any leadership roles assigned to the male over the female, neither in their essential being nor in their functions in the world. God's identification of male and female as his image establishes

fruitful, multiply, and fill the water and the air, similar to the human being (v. 22).

¹¹Genesis 1 contains four perfect verbs, two perfects of קרא ("he called") (vv. 5, 10), and two perfects of ברא ("he created") (v. 27), that highlight distinctiveness as well as completeness (light/darkness, earth/sea, God/*adam*, male/female).

¹²Jacques B. Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1978), 35-80. Doukhan has demonstrated that the first creation account is built in precise literary parallelism with the second creation account by seven structural units. The account of the seventh day parallels the first marriage in Eden and suggests unity and sacredness of marriage similar to the sacredness of the seventh day. Cf. Davidson, 53: "The first man and woman, created on the sixth day, united in holy wedlock as the first Sabbath draws near, are clearly intended to unite Sabbath holiness with the holy intimacy of married love."

fundamental cosmic equality between men and women and stands as God's plan for all future task-related structures in the world.

3. *Gender distinction is the basis for nonhierarchical relationships among men and women.* A nonhierarchical creation order among men and women is promoted in God's personal relationship with both male and female. In his speech on the gift of food, God is highly personal as well as inclusive, stating: "I have given to you" (plural, Gen 1:29).¹³ With the intimate *I-thou* (to adapt KJV language), God sets the principle for a nondiscriminating order within the divine-human relationship, in which male and female are equally related to God; they are equally blessed (Gen 1:28), and they equally receive the gift of food out of their Creator's hand (Gen 1:29).

4. *The Sabbath carries God's cosmic principle of wholeness and equality into the future.* The nonhierarchical creation order of the sixth day anticipates the sanctification of the seventh day. God completed his work, ceased from it, and blessed and sanctified the seventh day. The work from which God ceased included the human being, male and female, the crowning of his creation. In establishing the Sabbath as the final day of creation, Scripture shows that God's relationship with the human being and the relationship between male and female is not considered complete on the sixth day. There is the divine desire and commitment for a sealing conclusion, a cessation, a *Shabbat*. Moreover, God's ceasing from work is not an end in itself, but has a greater purpose. God's ceasing causes the sanctification of the seventh day,¹⁴ which is relational in essence and includes men and women equally in their core beings and functions in the world.¹⁵

¹³Ellen van Wolde points out that in speaking the words "I have given to you" God defines the human being in relation to himself (*Stories of the Beginning* [London: SCM Press, 1996], 25).

¹⁴For details, see my analysis of the causal relationship between the verbs "he ceased" and "he sanctified" and the causal particle ׀, "because, for" in Mathilde Frey, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch: An Exegetical and Theological Study" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2011), 36-38, 46-52, 66-69.

¹⁵Jacob Milgrom's insight on the relational aspect of holiness applies in a special way to the sanctification of the Sabbath in relation to the human being: "Holiness means not only 'separation from' but 'separation to.' It is a positive concept, an inspiration and a goal associated with God's nature and his desire for man" (*Leviticus 1-16*, AB [New York: Doubleday, 1991], 731). Claus Westermann notes: "The meaning is that mankind is created so that something can happen between God and man: mankind is created to stand face to face with God" (*Creation*, 56). The German text in *Schöpfung* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1971), 82, reads: "Von der Menschheit wird gesagt, dass sie geschaffen ist, damit etwas geschehe zwischen Gott und Mensch: die Menschheit ist zu Gottes Gegenüber geschaffen." Fernando Canale understands Sabbath sanctification in terms of the relational character of God who makes room for the "other" (*Basic Elements of Christian Theology* [Berrien Springs: Andrews University Lithotech, 2005], 201-202).

In summary, the cosmic principles that God set up during the six days of the creation week are reinforced by the sanctification of the seventh day. Their binding quality in the world of human beings is guaranteed by the weekly recurrence of the Sabbath. By the sanctification of this day, God becomes part of the world and assures life on earth in terms of his principles and relationships with the human being, male and female—the image of God.

The wholeness principle of the creation Sabbath conveys the following:

1. *Sabbath involves the human being as a whole.* The essence of the human being is not separated from its maleness or femaleness, neither in the relational aspect to God or to the other, nor in the functional calling into a ministry in the world. In other words, the message of the sixth and seventh days of the creation week affirms the wholistic understanding of the human being as the image of God: Equality in essence implies equality in function.

2. *The Sabbath resolves the question of human identity.* The male who perceives himself in the presence of God and in the presence of the female as being different from God and different from the female comes to realize, “I know who I am.” The female, respectively, recognizes herself in the presence of God and in the presence of the male.¹⁶ Or, in Davidson’s terms, “The sexual distinction between male and female is fundamental to what it means to be human.”¹⁷

3. *The Sabbath promotes the bond of a male-female union and equal relationship with all its beauty and genuine intimacy.* Yet, even within this divinely blessed bond each is an individual with equal value in being and function before God.¹⁸

Genesis 2:4-25

The wholeness principle of the Sabbath continues in the Garden of Eden story with its details on the creation of man and woman and their marriage relationship. This section will analyze Gen 2:4-25 in light of the creation Sabbath and present six implications to the understanding of man and woman in the Garden of Eden.¹⁹ In so doing, I will work intertextually and

¹⁶In this regard, the meaning of the creation Sabbath has strong implications against the legitimacy of same-sex relationships.

¹⁷Davidson, 19.

¹⁸Ellen White states: “When God created Eve, He designed her that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that in all things she should be his equal. The holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other; and yet each had an individuality in thinking and acting” (*Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948], 3:484).

¹⁹The pivotal position of the Sabbath links the account of the creation week with the Eden narrative. See Doukhan’s, 35-80, paralleling structure of Gen 1:1–2:4a and 2:4a-25. Other studies that analyze the links between Genesis 1 and 2 are William H. Shea, “The Unity of the Creation Account,” *Origins* 5 (1978): 9-38; idem, “Literary

point out specific language and concepts that show the unity of Genesis 1–3, specifically the links with the Fall in Genesis 3, in which a world of coercive relationships has its beginning, yet it is also the place in which God upholds his principles for men and women on earth.²⁰

1. *The miracle of the man and the woman.* The life of the man and the life of the woman are equally gracious acts of God. Genesis 2 makes a point in telling that God formed man “from the dust of the ground” (Gen 2:7) and not, as the animals and birds, from the ground only (Gen 2:19). The significance of the dust lies in an enormous paradox that Scripture foretells: on one hand, Gen 3:19 and several other references relate dust to mortality (cf. Ps 103:14; Eccl 3:20). The dust of the ground is specifically identified as the place where the dead sleep (Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2).²¹ On the other hand, God will work miraculously in the lives of Abraham and his descendants so that they will be as abundant “as the dust of the earth” (Gen 13:16; 28:14; Num 23:10; 2 Chron 1:9). The patriarchal stories testify to God’s miraculous deeds when children were born to infertile fathers and barren mothers and became numerous in spite of cruel oppression and infant killings (Exodus 1–5).

With regard to the creation of the woman, the narrative makes an even stronger point in telling that she came to life while the man was put into an unconscious condition: “God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept” (Gen 2:21). Adam was immobilized and powerless; he was put into a lifeless state, corresponding to the dust of the ground from which he was taken. Elsewhere, Scripture relates sleep with death (Ps 13:3; Jer 51:39; Dan

Structural Parallels Between Genesis 1 and 2,” *Origins* 16 (1989): 49-68; H. P. Santmire, “The Genesis Creation Narratives Revisited: Themes for a Global Age,” *Int* 45 (1991): 366-379. While critical scholars divide the texts into two separate narratives, Gen 1:1–2:4b and Gen 2:4b–25, they have noted that Gen 2:4 contains an elaborate chiasm, which creates literary unity between the two texts. See Yehuda Kiel, *Sefer Biresit*, Genesis, Da’at Miqra (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1997), 43; C. John Collins, “The *mayyiqtol* as ‘pluperfect’: When and Why,” *TynBul* 46/1 (1995): 117-140; Terje Stordalen, “Genesis 2, 4: Rereading a *locus classicus*,” *ZAW* 104/2 (1992): 169-175; Alviero Nicacci, ed., *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies, 86 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 200, n. 26; Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1987), 46, 53; Umberto Cassuto, *Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 98-99; Jack Collins, “Discourse Analysis and the Interpretation of Gen 2:4-7,” *WTJ* 61 (1999): 271.

²⁰See the studies on the literary unity and internal coherence between Genesis 2 and 3. Zdravko Stefanovic, “The Great Reversal: Thematic Links Between Genesis 2 and 3,” *AUSS* 32 (1994): 47-56; Roberto Ouro, “The Garden of Eden Account: The Chiasmic Structure of Genesis 2–3,” *AUSS* 40/2 (2002): 219-243. Ouro also points out the parallels between Genesis 1 and 3 in “Linguistic and Thematic Parallels Between Genesis 1 and 3,” *JATS* 13/1 (2002): 44-54.

²¹Cf. Gen 3:19; Ps 22:15 [16]; 30:9 [10]; 104:29; Job 17:16; Eccl 3:20; 12:7.

12:2; John 11:11-13; 1 Cor 15:51). However, there is also the very opposite association to the deep sleep caused by God—a rather miraculous and amazing event: when God brought the woman to the man, Adam exploded into a poetic blast of admiration for the one that he recognized as his same self:

She, at last, is bone of my bones,
and flesh of my flesh;

She shall be called Woman (*ishsha*),
for from Man (*ish*) she is taken.

Scripture tells of several occasions when God caused a deep sleep to fall on men and then they had visions or dreams from God (Gen 15:12; Isa 29:10; Job 4:13; Dan 2:1; 8:18; Matt 1:20). Genesis 2:23 may allude to such an extraordinary, vision-like experience of Adam at the sight of his woman.

The man made from the dust of the ground and the woman from the sleeping man does not make a statement about a hierarchical arrangement in the Garden of Eden; rather, the narrative shows an intricate parallelism on the meaning of dust and sleep. Both are associated with death (1 Kgs 2:10; 11:43; Ps 13:3 [4]; John 11:13; 1 Cor 15:51). Man and woman alike relate in all their aspects (physical, mental, spiritual, relational) to sleep and death; they are equally destined to sleep the sleep of death in the event of the Fall (Gen 2:17; 3:3, 19). On the other hand, dust and sleep convey the wonder of an abundance of life in spite of death. Adam recognized the magnitude of the miracle of life in the very moment when he heard his death sentence, “dust you are and to dust you shall return;” he looked at his wife and called her “Eve, because she was the mother of all living” (Gen 3:19-20).

To read Adam’s naming of his wife as an act of male authority over the woman would mean to deny the messianic overtones that this act included in the decisive event about the continuation of life on planet Earth. Adam foretells an abundance of living beings coming from his wife even though Eve’s pregnancies are still in the future (Gen 4:1-2), and God has just affirmed his death sentence. Adam identifies his wife as “mother of all living” solely on the grounds of the promise of her “Seed,” even with the prospect that the “Seed” himself will be in danger of his life (Gen 3:15).

2. *The purpose of the man and the woman.* The life of the man and the life of the woman have equally divinely intended purposes. The different materials that God used for the creation of man and woman convey the purpose for their lives. When God created the man he formed him from the dust of the ground as a potter forms the clay into a perfect vessel (Gen 2:7).²² When God created the woman from man’s side, he designed her like an architect who

²²The text uses the verb צַר (“shape, form, make pottery”). The participial form of “potter” is used of God in Isa 64:7, in which mankind is the work of his hand. See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1:428-429; and the article by B. Otzen in *TDOT*, 6:257-265.

creates an aesthetically intricate structure (Gen 2:21-22).²³ Woman's creation out of man's side has nothing at all to do with the idea of female subordination to man. On the contrary, the side (Hebrew *tsela*), mostly translated as rib (KJV, NASB, NIV, RSV), is an architectural term that denotes a side part of a building. However, in the biblical text *tsela* does not refer to just any building, but to God's dwelling place—the wilderness sanctuary, Solomon's temple, and the temple in Ezekiel's vision.²⁴

The sanctuary connotation of *tsela* has deep implications for the divinely ordained purpose of men and women who are to represent God by their "image and likeness" in a world that rejects his presence. Jesus Christ, the quintessential human, conveyed his "image and likeness" with the Father all throughout his earthly life. When Philip, still confused, requested, "show us the Father," Jesus made it plain, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:8-9, NASB). A few hours later, Jesus was sentenced to death because he had pointed to his "image and likeness" authority over the house of the Father, the venerated edifice in Jerusalem: "Destroy this temple" (John 2:19; cf. Matt 26:61; 27:40) and "in three days I will rebuild another made without hands" (Mark 14:58). Because of Christ, the Crucified and Resurrected, his followers, men and women, are "a temple of God" through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, equally displaying the Father's love in an oppressive world (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16; John 17).

3. *The need of the man and the woman.* The life of the man and the life of the woman are equally dependent upon the Creator God. If Genesis 2 would promote material origin in terms of hierarchy, the rank of the man who is derived from the dust of the ground, a euphemism for death, would carry a truly depressing notion. Instead, the dust-origin of the man creates a deep awareness of his complete dependence upon the Creator, who forms and breathes his life-breath into a dust-body (Gen 2:7) and then will bring back to life "those who sleep in the dust of the ground" (Dan 12:3). Likewise, the side/rib-origin of the woman shows her vital need for the God of life who builds not just the woman, but also her "house," her family (cf. Ruth 4:11). Moreover, God guarantees the future of the human family by the woman's "Seed"; he will overcome the dust-eating serpent (Gen 3:14-15).

4. *The partnership of the man and the woman.* The loneliness of the man results in equal partnership with the woman and not in male headship over the female. Genesis 2:18 describes man's loneliness with an expression that

²³The text uses the verb בנה ("build, develop a building") in the sense of a royal architect who designs and builds a building. See *HALOT*, 1:139 and the article by Siegfried Wagner in *TDOT*, 2:166-181.

²⁴The word *tsela* refers to the sides of the wilderness sanctuary or items related to the sanctuary (Exod 25:12, 14; 26:20, 26, 27, 35; 27:7; 30:4; 36:25, 31, 32; 37:3, 5, 27; 38:7), the temple build by Solomon (1 Kgs 6:5, 8, 15-16, 34; 7:3), and the temple in Ezekiel's vision (Ezek 41:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 26).

perceives him as being apart from another or as missing a part (*labad*). Man is not whole. Interestingly, it is after God removes a part of man's body that he will no longer be incomplete. Man's loneliness in the Garden of Eden underscores the concept of Genesis 1 in which God saw the need for two contrasting parts in order to form a whole; specifically, when male and female were distinguished from each other by gender-identity in order to build a union (Gen 1:26).

In God's words, for the human being to exist as one part is "not good." Therefore, he will make a counterpart, a part that is perfectly able to face the existing one without being the same, inferior, or superior; in God's own terms, "a helper alongside him" (*'ezer kenegdo*).²⁵ Scripture never uses the word "helper" (*'ezer*) for one with an auxiliary function or one in subordination, as the English implies. To the contrary, the word "helper" is most often used for God as the ultimate sustainer and savior of humans.²⁶ God's name is Eben-Ezer ("stone of help," 1 Sam 7:12). In addition, the eighty-two references on the verb "help" (*'azar*) are overwhelmingly about a rescue operation in military situations.²⁷ Never is "help" used in a subservient sense or for a wife aiding or assisting her husband. All biblical occurrences of the noun "helper" and the verb "help" connote the meaning of "active intervention on behalf of someone"²⁸—a helper is a "lifesaver"²⁹ in life-threatening situations.

In the unique expression of Gen 2:18, the word *kenegdo* ("alongside him, opposite him, a counterpart to him") attached to "helper" places the woman as a beneficial counterpart to the man. The reciprocity included in the word *kenegdo* speaks of the woman as the "helper" to the man, and the man as the "helper" to the woman.³⁰ The least one can say about the expression *'ezer kenegdo* in the context of Genesis 2 is that it denotes reciprocal support

²⁵See the explanation of Hebrew scholar Robert Alter on the expression *'ezer kenegdo* in *Genesis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 9.

²⁶Gen 49:25; Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7, 26; 1 Sam 7:12; Pss 30:11 [10]; 33:20; 37:40; 46:5; 54:6 [4]; 70:4; 72:12; 79:9; 86:17; 109:26; 118:7, 13; 119: 86, 173, 175; 146:5; Isa 41:10, 13-14; 44:2; 49:8; 50:7; Hos 13:9; 1 Chron 15:26; 2 Chron 14:10 [11]; 18:31; 25:8; 26:7; 32:8.

²⁷Cf. Josh 1:14; 10:4, 6, 33; 2 Sam 8:5; 18:3; 21:17; 1 Kgs 1:7; 20:16; 2 Kgs 14:26; Isa 30:7; 31:3; Jer 47:4; Ezek 30:8; 32:21; Dan 10:13; 11:45; Ezra 8:22; 10:15; 1 Chron 5:20; 12:1, 18 [17], 19 [18], 20 [19], 22 [23], 23 [22]; 18:5; 22:17; 2 Chron 19:2; 20:23; 26:13, 15; 28:16, 23.

²⁸Alter, 9.

²⁹John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 51.

³⁰See Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 46; cf. idem, *Testimonies*, 3:484.

between Adam and his wife, which according to v. 20 was not possible with an animal; “for the man was not found a helper as his counterpart.”

In view of Genesis 3 and the rest of the Hebrew Bible, *‘ezer kenegdo* is particularly telling: the unique quality of the woman as a *‘ezer* (“helper”) to the man points to the divine promise of Gen 3:15-16 about the woman whose *zera* (“Seed”)³¹ will come to the rescue of humanity and guarantee continuation of life in the face of death. The interpretation of *‘ezer kenegdo* in support of male headship fails to recognize the biblical concept of the woman who, by giving birth to children, is directly tied to the birth of the Messiah, the ultimate “helper” of mankind.

5. *The sequence of the man and the woman.* The idea of status, with the man created first and then the woman implying male headship over the woman, is ignorant of God’s creation principle of combining two different but equal parts in order to bring about completeness and wholeness. The creation arrangement of male-female in Genesis 2 follows the arrangement in Genesis 1 in an exact manner. According to Gen 1:1–2:3, God instituted the six days of the seven-day week without assigning to them leading roles over the seventh day. On the contrary, the six days are not complete without the seventh day, even though God’s deeds of creation came to an end on the sixth day and were considered “very good.”³² The seventh day stands as the climactic closure to the week, and is not an appendix to creation.³³ In the same vein, the Garden of Eden narrative in Genesis 2 shows that the creation of the woman is not a needed accessory to the man, but the epitome of the creation of *adam*, the human being, the image of God (Gen 1:26-28).³⁴

6. *The nakedness of the man and the woman.* The final note on the relationship between the man and the woman in the Garden of Eden is unambiguously reciprocal: both are “naked” (*arum*) and both are “not ashamed” (*lo yitboshashu*;

³¹John H. Sailhamer points out that the Hebrew text creates a connection between the words *‘ezer* (“helper”) and *zera* (“seed”) in Gen 2:18, 20 and 3:15 (*Genesis*, Expositor’s Bible Commentary, ed. Fank E. Gaebelien [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990], 2:46).

³²See my detailed analysis in my Ph.D. dissertation “The Sabbath in the Pentateuch,” 33-38.

³³Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1961), 1:270-271; Philip P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOTSup 106 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 192-197; Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 104-106; Werner H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1961), 154-159; Baruch J. Schwartz, “Israel’s Holiness: The Torah Traditions,” in *Purity and Holiness*, ed. M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 47-59; Odil H. Steck, *Der Schöpfungsbericht der Priesterschrift* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 178-199.

³⁴Davidson, 53.

hitpolel of *bosh*) before one another (Gen 2:25). The Hebrew word *arum* has no sexual connotations to it; rather, nakedness in its ancient Near Eastern context and in the Hebrew Bible signifies complete absence of status, authority, power, control, and possession.³⁵ Neither Adam nor his wife had any kind of status, reputation, or power to exercise or to lose before the other; therefore, each was free of shame before the other.³⁶ The implication of equal nakedness for the idea of male headship is that the Garden of Eden marriage was devoid of any headship status of the husband over his wife. It is only when the serpent, the most power-driven or “crafty” (*arum*) of the field animals (Gen 3:1), succeeded with its power scheme—“you will be like God” (v. 5)—that the divinely ordained nakedness turned into offensive bareness. Adam’s self-imposed position of superiority stands in the face of God when he placed the blame upon his wife (Gen 3:12). Yet, God, after revealing the consequences for humanity’s future in a dying world, acted as High Priest in covering the man and the woman by equally “clothing” (*labash*, *hif’il*) them “with garments (*kuttonet*) of skin” (Gen 3:21).³⁷ The Pentateuch uses the combination of these exact two words only when priests were initiated

³⁵Ps 35:26 places shame on those who assume power over others. On the other hand, the OT depicts the powerless condition of a person as the nakedness of a newborn baby or a dead individual (Job 1:21; Eccl 5:15 [14]). Note that in ancient Israel, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Canaan prisoners of war were stripped of their clothes and presented naked to the public to show that their status and power had been removed (cf. Jer 46:24; 48:1, 13, 20, 39; 50:2; 51:51; Ezek 32:30; Hos 10:6). See H. Niehr, “עָרוֹם,” in *TDOT*, 11:349-354. See also J. Magonet, “The Themes of Genesis 2–3,” in *A Walk in the Garden*, ed. P. Morris and D. Sawyer, JSOTSup 136 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 43; Richard M. Davidson, “The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 3,” *AUSS* 26 (1998): 122-123; J. A. Bailey, “Initiation and the Primal Woman in Gilgamesh and Genesis 2–3,” *JBL* 89 (1970): 144-150; Ouro, 235.

³⁶The degree of shame in an honor-shame culture is dependent upon rank. One without any rank and honor will not be ashamed. See M. A. Klopfenstein, *Scham und Schande nach dem Alten Testament* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972); Lyn M. Bechtel, “The Perception of Shame within the Divine-Human Relationship in Biblical Israel,” in *Uncovering Ancient Stones: Essays in Memory of H. Niel Richardson*, ed. Lewis M. Hopfe (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 79-92; Johanna Stiebert, *The Construction of Shame in the Hebrew Bible: The Prophetic Contribution* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

³⁷Jacques B. Doukhan, “Women Priests in Israel: A Case for their Absence,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998), 36-37; Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 58. Note also Davidson’s study about the work in Eden assigned to man that was to “till” (*abad*, literally “serve”) and “keep” (*shamar*) the garden. He points out that “it seems more than coincidence that these are the very terms used to describe the work of the Levites in the Sanctuary (Num 3:7-8, etc.)” (“Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium,” *JATS* 11/1-2 [2000]: 110).

into their sanctuary ministry.³⁸ The reason for their clothing is “to cover their nakedness (*’erna*) . . . so that they do not carry guilt and die” (Exod 28:42-43).³⁹ The crucial importance of God’s high priestly act lies, first, in the fact that he equally initiated Adam and Eve as priests and, second, in the circumstance of their initiation, namely, at the conclusion of the divine judgment with the gospel at its heart (Gen 3:15). God’s intent for the human family, male and female, destined to live in a corrupt world, was and still is “You shall be to Me, a kingdom of priests” (Exod 19:5; 1 Pet 2:9).

EXCURSUS: The institution of the Aaronite male priests from the tribe of Levi as opposed to God’s ideal of all Israel, male and female, as a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod 19:5) is rooted in the people’s fear and refusal to directly communicate with God (Exod 20:18-21).⁴⁰ The result was that Moses and the priests became mediators between God and the people and a type for Christ in their sanctuary ministries. Under the priesthood of Christ, the ideal becomes reality when all “draw near with fearless confidence to the throne of grace” (Heb 4:14-16) and become a “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

Israel’s sin with the golden calf and its impact on the covenantal relationship between God and Israel serves as another insight into the type-oriented and less-than-ideal institution of the levitical priesthood (Exod 32-34). During the difficult time of Israel’s rebellion with the golden calf, Moses and the Levites were instrumental in reestablishing the covenantal relationship with God. Yet, the reestablished covenant was bound up with the hierarchical order of the priesthood within the limits of God’s earthly dwelling place.⁴¹ When Korah and his consorts attempted to be part of the leading priests, the narrative portrays this rebellion as a follow-up of the paradigmatic sin with the golden calf and underscores the weakness of the Aaronite priesthood (Numbers 16–18; Heb 7:11-22).

Even in the time before the priesthood of Jesus Christ, Scripture makes a point about the ineptness of the restricted levitical priesthood: David, a non-Levite, assumed priestly rights when he and his soldiers ate the Bread of the Presence that was reserved for the priests only (1 Sam 26:1-6; cf. Lev

³⁸Exod 29:4, 39, 41; 29:5, 8; 40:14; Lev 8:7, 13; Num 20:28.

³⁹Frank Gaebelien, ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:58.

⁴⁰John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 51-59; Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 251.

⁴¹Felix Ponyatovsky, “Analysis of the Golden Calf Incident (Exodus 32:1-10) and Its Impact on the Sinai Covenant in the Pentateuchal Text” (Ph.D. dissertation, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2012).

24:5-9). Jesus, a non-Levite, acknowledged David's and his soldiers' act as priestly in the context of plucking and eating the grain of the fields on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28). This link between the priestly regulations and the Sabbath is highly interesting, and brings about two paramount statements of Jesus about the Sabbath: (a) the human-focused rationale of the Sabbath (v. 27), and (b) Jesus' lordship over the Sabbath (v. 29). Jesus not only links the OT priesthood to the Sabbath, but in showing the weakness of the restricted priestly ministry in David's time, Jesus placed the levitical priesthood into sharp contrast with the all-embracing message of the Sabbath. It is then by reason of the Sabbath's nature of inclusion that God's original intent for a nonrestricted "kingdom of priests" has become reality under the lordship of Christ, the High Priest.

Scripture provides an additional insight into God's intent for the ideal "kingdom of priests" with the provision of the Nazarite law, which called both men and women to dedicate themselves to God for special ministries (Num 6:1-21).⁴² The law calls for procedures that are priestly in essence, and that even exceed the priestly rituals.⁴³ The significance of such a law within a community ordered under an exclusively male Aaronite priesthood is unsurpassed in the Hebrew Bible. It carries overtones of an eschatological cosmic community of believers in which men and women of all Israel are dedicated as priests with direct access to God.

In conclusion to the creation of man and woman in Genesis 2 and its intertextual links and implications, the study confirms the Sabbath principle of wholeness and equality of God's ideal world in the Garden of Eden. Equality is divinely instituted and pertains to human ontology of both genders and of the functions of men and women. When sin enters the world, male-female equality remains God's ideal even when the husband will rule over his wife (Gen 3:16). More importantly, all references to the creation of man and woman in the Garden of Eden contain messianic overtones and point to the gospel promise of Gen 3:14-19 that speaks of God's lifesaving provisions for humankind.

Gender Identity and Equality in Sabbaths and Feasts

This section of the study will show how instrumental the Sabbath is in destabilizing a world of patriarchal dominance in Israel's society. The Sabbath commandments in Exod 20:8-11; 23:12; and Deut 5:12-15 have much to say about God's relationship to the human being in terms of gender and social equality in the ancient world of patriarchy. God is revealed as a personal and relational being who is involved in the affairs of individuals regardless of their

⁴²Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 255.

⁴³Prohibition of alcohol and all fruit of the vine, no touching of a dead body, and refraining from cutting the hair.

social status and gender; animals, too, are part of God's concern. In addition, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Booths (Deut 16:9-15), and Jubilee (Leviticus 25-27) include Sabbath language of gender and social equality.

Exodus 20:8-11

At the foot of Mount Sinai, the Israelites are a nation rescued from slavery with individuals who are standing in the presence of God, and who are in the process of gaining a new identity (Exod 19:3-25). At the center of God's Ten Words is the Sabbath commandment with its ever-present pre-Fall message. The life principle of wholeness and equality resounds with divine passion and finds its echo in the minds and hearts of a people that know of hierarchical structures, coercive oppression, and a world ruled by power and dominance. Note specifically the gender differentiation at the heart of the Sabbath commandment: "the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male servant or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you" (Exod 20:9-10). The purpose of detailing family members by gender and class in the Sabbath commandment is to change every notion of a self-centered, power-controlled, hierarchically dominated thinking and to level out the Israelite household.

Karl Barth has captured the essence of the Sabbath commandment: "This commandment is total. It discovers and claims man in his depths and from his utmost bounds."⁴⁴ The Sabbath identifies human beings, male and female, in their God-intended essence, with gender as their foundational identification.

In differentiating the household members by gender and social class, God draws a straight line through the Israelite household, placing each member on the same level. This gender and class leveling is highly significant because it is given to a people who exist in a millennia-old world of hierarchical male dominance.⁴⁵ Seven members are mentioned in the commandment to make the household complete, with five categorized by their gender. With regard to the first, the "you," a second masculine singular, some have wondered why the wife is not part of the list. A contextual reading of Exodus 20, however, shows that the Ten Commandments address each individual of the Israelite nation, including women and children, with a masculine singular "you." Otherwise, it would mean that only men would have to obey the commandments. Klingbeil argues for the inclusion of the wife with the principle of embeddedness in Israelite society that is based on the creation order of husband and wife

⁴⁴Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 3:4, 57.

⁴⁵See the excellent discussion on hierarchical male dominance in the ancient Near East and the OT by Jean Sheldon, "Images of Power, the Image of God, and a Kingdom of Priests" (paper presentation, ASRS, Chicago, 16 November 2012).

as “one flesh” (Gen 2:24).⁴⁶ Note also that, “in biblical Hebrew, masculine grammatical form does not specify social gender unless it is used to refer to a definite, particular person.”⁴⁷

The second and third gender-defined members in the Sabbath commandment are the son and the daughter. It is truly revolutionary that the commandment identifies the children by gender, “your son and your daughter,” and then goes on to identify even the slaves as “your male servant and your female servant.” In speaking to a community that was shaped by a paradigm of hierarchical and patriarchal power, the Sabbath opens the mind of the Israelite man and woman, son and daughter, male and female servant to a diametrically opposed model—the Creator’s prototype. For the Sabbath is the Lord’s, and when male and female keep this day they equally impersonate the “image and likeness” model established during the creation week (Exod 20:11).

The Sabbath tells the Israelite man and woman that each is set free from the bonds of any kind of slavery. He and she exists as a human being in direct relation to God, and each individual is placed into relational bonds with others with the same privileges, rights, status, and opportunities. More importantly, each individual, male and female, receives with the words of the Sabbath commandment his and her new ID: “you are God’s image,” or, in the words of the apostle, “There is neither . . . male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

Exodus 23:12

The Sabbath of Exod 23:12 is unique in that it omits the male servant and female servant, but introduces a new member of the house, “the son of your female slave,” who will be reinvigorated by Sabbath rest.⁴⁸ With this

⁴⁶For the reason why the wife is not included in that list, see considerations on family creation order and the expression, “and they will be one flesh” (Gen 2:24), as well as the principle of embeddedness in Israelite society by Gerald A. Klingbeil, “Not so Happily Ever After’ . . . : Cross-Cultural Marriages in the Time of Ezra-Nehemiah,” *Maarav* 14 (2007): 74; cf. K. C. Hanson, “Sin, Purification, and Group Process,” in *Problems in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim*, ed. Henry T. C. Sun et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 171.

⁴⁷Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, ed., *The Torah: A Women’s Commentary* (New York: Women of Reform Judaism, 2008), 416.

⁴⁸The Samaritan Pentateuch replaced the anomalous reading “son of your female servant” with “your male servant and your female servant.” Calum Carmichael attempts to identify the meaning of *בְּנֵי אִשְׁתּוֹ*, in light of comparative ancient Near Eastern studies. He assumes that the female servant’s son must be “the perpetual slave issuing from the union of a slave and the wife given him by his master,” even though the children born in slavery are defined by the biblical text as sons and daughters of the male servant and not of the female servant (Exod 21:4). According to Carmichael’s

expression, the Sabbath connects to the story of the patriarch Abraham in which the female slave Hagar, “the stranger” (*hager*), and her child were sent out of the house, and Ishmael is called “son of your female slave” (Gen 21:10, 13).⁴⁹ The link between the Sabbath and the old patriarchal story becomes highly relevant to Israelite Sabbath keepers because it reminds them of their time of slavery in Egypt when they were strangers and suffered afflictions similar to Hagar and Ishmael. They cried to God and he heard their cry (Exod 22:21-23, 27), just as he heard “the voice of the lad” in the wilderness of Beersheba (Gen 21:17).

In a household where the stranger slave girl with a child was faced with utter disgust, the Sabbath disrupted the patriarchal mindset of Abraham's world and called for equality among the members. The Sabbath urges the redeemed Israelite to distance himself from the power structure of the patriarchal society and receive the stranger and the outcast as his own kin. In so doing, the Sabbath keeper identifies with the slave woman Hagar, the archetypal “stranger” (*hager*), and will do far more than include the marginalized of society. The Sabbath keeper will bring good news to the afflicted mother, bind up her broken heart, and provide time and space for regeneration to her and the dying child (Isa 61:1; Luke 4:18).

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

The Sabbath's significance on gender and class distinction for the sake of equality is even more emphasized by the Sabbath commandment reiterated by Moses after the establishment of the levitical all-male priesthood shortly before the Israelite nation entered the Promised Land. The Sabbath commandment in Deut 5:12-15 contains a more detailed list than Exod 20:8-11 in that it distinguishes nine individuals (“you, your son, your daughter, your male servant, your female servant, your ox, your donkey, all your cattle, and your stranger”) and emphasizes by repeating the clause “your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.” The importance of this list lies in the act of remembering that Israel is a nation saved from slavery. The bonds of a world of dominance and hierarchical power are broken, and Israel is called to witness to this event by its weekly Sabbath celebrations with the message of equality and inclusion of all human beings and animals living in the surroundings of the Sabbath keeper.

approach, the expected reading in Exod 23:12 would be “the son of the male servant” (*The Laws of Deuteronomy* [London: Cornell University Press, 1974], 87).

⁴⁹See my articles, “I Have Heard Their Cry,” *Shabbat Shalom* 51/3 (2006): 24-26; “The Sabbath Commandment in the Book of the Covenant: Ethics on Behalf of the Outcast,” *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 9/1 (2006): 3-11; and my dissertation, “The Sabbath in the Pentateuch,” 170-183.

The institution of the levitical all-male priesthood with its time-restricted and male-exclusive *typos* character did not alter the Sabbath's enduring message of male-female and social equality. Over the course of millennia of slavery, hierarchical authority, and discrimination, the Sabbath has always carried its message forward and has remained God's standard for all cultures in all circumstances. The priesthood of Aaron, on the other hand, has been taken over by Christ's Melchizedek-like priesthood (Heb 5:11; 6:20; 7:1-3) and not by male apostles or elders of the church. Male headship in the church has no justification under Christ's priesthood, not least by reason of the enduring Sabbath message of male-female equality.

Deuteronomy 12:8-19 and 14:28-29

Sabbath inclusion and equality of gender and social classes is to radically transform the lives of the Israelites when they live in the Promised Land. Moses implores the congregation at the borders of Canaan to "not do at all what we are doing here today" (Deut 12:8), but to implement a regular all-embracing worship practice at the sanctuary, where tithe is to be used to provide food for "you and your son and daughter, and your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God in all your undertakings" (Deut 12:12, 18).

A highly significant insight about inclusion and equality is with regard to tithe for the Levites and the powerless in Israel. Deuteronomy 14:28-29 and 26:12-13 provide regulations about a triennial tithe from the produce of the land and assigns it to the Levites because they have no inheritance in the land, as well as to the widows, orphans, and foreigners. The OT often lists the triad of widow, orphan, and foreigner as the ones who represent the poor, oppressed, and disempowered of the patriarchal society.⁵⁰ They are most easily marginalized and have no safety net but God who cares for their needs. Tithe provided equally to the Levites, who represented the highest human authority in Israel's society, and to the "disempowered triad"⁵¹ is extremely telling about God's equality principle and his understanding of justice.

Deuteronomy 16:9-15

Sabbath inclusion receives high emphasis at two yearly festivals: the Feast of Weeks, celebrated seven weeks after Passover (Deut 16:9-12), and the Feast of Booths (Deut 16:13-15). At both feasts, "you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst" (Deut 16:11,

⁵⁰Deut 10:18; 16:11, 14; 24:17, 19-21; 27:19; Jer 7:6; 22:3; Ezek 22:7; Zech 7:10; Mal 3:5; Pss 94:6; 146:9.

⁵¹Randy S. Woodly, *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 16.

14) are to celebrate and rejoice before the Lord. While all Israelite feasts have their links to the weekly Sabbath (Lev 23:1-44), it is the Feast of Weeks that has a special connection to it by its counting of seven times seven days after Passover and Unleavened Bread. In addition, among the seven yearly feasts, only the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Booths show a highly inclusionist universal quality by inviting all people groups to celebrate, while Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Trumpets, and Yom Kippur have a rather collective character in that they do not differentiate, but relate to the Israelite congregation with the plural "you" (Lev 16:29-34; 23:1-44; Num 28:1-29:40).

Leviticus 25:1-55

The Sabbath Year and the Jubilee are directly bound to the weekly Sabbath. This link is embedded in their meaning and concept of release and freedom and in the counting of years based on the number seven. Yet the equality principle is highly expressive when one looks at the detailed list of addressees identified by gender and social class: "All of you shall have the Sabbath products of the land for food; yourself, and your male and female slaves, and your hired man and your foreign resident, those who live as aliens with you. Even your cattle and the animals that are in your land shall have all its crops to eat" (Lev 25:6).

Close observation of the deuteronomic lists of addressees shows that there is a growing tendency from the weekly Sabbath to the yearly Feasts of Weeks and Booths to the Sabbath Year and Jubilee. The lists become more detailed and longer, with the Sabbath Year and the Jubilee conveying full inclusion and equality, likely because of the universal and cosmic significance of these Sabbath years.

Sabbath and Gender in the Eschatological Community

The universal and cosmic quality of the Sabbath is at the center of God's missional ministry in the fallen world. In the prophetic books of Scripture, the Sabbath becomes a catalyst of hope for the new heaven and earth and carries high significance in apocalyptic eschatology.

Isaiah 56:2-8 and 66:23

"The gospel prophet Isaiah has an exceptionally rich Sabbath teaching."⁵² In his prophecy of God's community, Isaiah envisions a Sabbath in which every human being is welcome and equal, the foreigner who usually does not belong, the eunuch who is a genderless slave considered nonhuman, and the multitudes who were expelled and discarded (Isa 56:2-8). All are gathered in God's house, which is called "a house of prayer for all people." Then the

⁵²Hasel, 46.

vision overwhelms the human mind, for its horizon is far too limited to grasp the cosmic magnitude of the prophetic revelation: There will be an abundance of Sabbath after Sabbath—Jubilees of Sabbaths—when “all flesh (*kol basar*) will come to worship before Me,” says the Lord (Isa 66:23).

Joel 2:28-29 [3:1-2]

The prophet Joel, in elaborating on the Day of the Lord, reveals that God will pour out his Spirit on “all flesh (*kol basar*)” (Joel 2:29 [3:1]). Joel then uses language borrowed from the Sabbath commandments (Exod 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15) to identify the ones who prophesy as sons and daughters and male servants and female servants. At the center of the prophetic word are the old and the young,⁵³ for they have dreams and visions. They appear in multitudes. There is no boundary to the Spirit: gender, social class, age—the Spirit acts without limits, “distributing to each one individually just as He wills” (1 Cor 12:11).

Acts 2:17-18

It happened seven weeks after Passover at the Feast of Weeks⁵⁴ that the one hundred and twenty men and women gathered in the Upper Room in Jerusalem fulfilled Joel’s prophecy. They all were united in prayer when the Spirit manifested himself without discrimination. They preached the good news, the crowds listened with amazement, and Peter cited Joel’s prophecy to the mockers (Acts 2:17-18, NASB):

And it shall be in the last days, God says, that I will pour forth My Spirit on all flesh,

and your sons and daughters shall prophesy,

and your young shall see visions,

and your old shall dream dreams;

even on my bondslaves, both men and women.

I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy.

From this day on, the eschatological community of believers has arrived. It is a universal community, rooted in the gender-inclusive equality-based message of the Sabbath.⁵⁵ The church in the book of Acts testifies that a

⁵³The inclusive language of Joel suggests reading the Hebrew זָקֵן and בְּרוּרָה as referring to both men and women (cf. Eccl 11:9; 12:1).

⁵⁴See Edward Chumney, *The Seven Festivals of the Messiah* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 1994), 230. He states: “This is called the counting of the omer. On the fiftieth day following the Feast of First Fruits (*Bikkurim*) is the Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*) or Pentecost (Leviticus [*Vayikra*] 23:15-21).”

⁵⁵I am indebted to Dr. James Park, Professor of Missions at AIIAS, for this

Spirit-governed community of believers knows of no boundaries: Peter, though confused about the vision urging him to eat unclean animals, visited Cornelius, the Roman centurion, one who the Jewish Law considered unclean (Acts 10:28). After preaching Jesus to the gentile and baptizing his entire household, Peter acknowledged his first lesson of Sabbath inclusion: "God does not show favoritism in dealing with people" (Acts 10:34). Philip was carried away by the Spirit to preach Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40), one whom the Law explicitly excluded from the Lord's community (Deut 23:1), but who is welcomed with great empathy by the inclusive message of the Sabbath (Isa 56:3-5).⁵⁶ Paul acted against the Law on his Sabbath mission in Philippi when he, a Jewish man and rabbi, conversed with a group of women, then baptized the entire household of Lydia, the gentile businesswoman, and even resided in her house (Acts 16:13-15).⁵⁷

It is truly significant that the birthing of the Christian church occurred at the Festival of Weeks, the Shavuot or Pentecost, the day that according to the Talmud commemorates the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai (Shabbat 86b). It is then not without reason that the Law became the main topic in the discussions and writings of the first Christian church. How does a follower of Jesus respond to the Law in light of Joel's fulfilled prophecy?

The Gospel writers vividly remember Jesus' conflicts with the teachers of the Law about the Sabbath⁵⁸ and about the status of women, sinners, and gentiles before God: note how Jesus bypassed the argument of what is lawful to do on Sabbath, but elaborated on the human-focused inclusive nature of the Sabbath that exists precisely because of his authority over the Sabbath as opposed to a restricted priestly order (Matt 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5). In another argument, note how Jesus explained the Law of circumcision versus the wholeness principle of the Sabbath: while the rabbis accepted circumcision on Sabbath as lawful even though a man was only partially brought into Israel's covenant community (John 7:21-24), they condemned healing on Sabbath, even though the whole being of a man was made well and he was restored into the covenant with God (cf. John 5:1-47).

On numerous occasions, Jesus stepped in to defend women in front of the twelve male disciples and the most respected men of the time, the rabbis and teachers of the Law. Note how he encouraged the bleeding woman who had touched him in the middle of a crowd instead of turning away from

connection.

⁵⁶F. Scott Spencer, "The Ethiopian Eunuch and His Bible: A Social Science Analysis," *BTB* 22 (1993): 155-165.

⁵⁷Richard S. Ascough, *Lydia: Paul's Cosmopolitan Hostess* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009), 7, 32.

⁵⁸Matt 12:1-12; Mark 1:21-28; 2:23-28; 3:1-6; 6:1-6; Luke 4:16-30; 6:1-5, 6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-24; John 5:1-47; 7:14-36; 9:1-41.

her (Matt 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48). He defended the woman sinner who anointed his body and he prophesied that wherever the gospel will be preached her deed will be remembered (Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:36-50). He made a gentile woman an example of faith when his disciples urged him to send her away (Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30). He noticed the little bent-over woman in the Temple and healed her (Luke 13:10-17). He released the woman whom the men had accused of adultery (John 8:1-11). He discussed highly theological matters with the Samaritan woman, a despised one who lived a sinful life, yet who became the first evangelist to the men of her town (John 4:7-42). Born of a woman who had no relations with a man, preached by a woman while his male disciples' only concern was about food, anointed by a woman for his burial while his male disciples argued over money, cared for by women while his male disciples fled the cross, and proclaimed by women on the resurrection morning while his male disciples fearfully hid—Jesus surely does not place women under men's authority, but includes them in his circle of followers.

Paul, in his letters to the churches in Asia, follows Jesus' example regarding women in two noticeable ways: he is active in lifting the status of women in the family and the church by insisting that they be educated and use their gift of teaching; and he assigns to men an equal status with women by calling husbands and wives to submit to each other and both, men and women, to submit to Christ. A reading of 1 Tim 2:12-15 in view of male supremacy in the family and church isolates Paul's statements on women in this passage from his reasoning in the first two chapters of First Timothy and from his other writings. A contextual reading shows that in 1 Timothy 1 and 2, Paul's main theme is the good news of the sinners' salvation through Christ the Savior of all, which some church members do not recognize because of their fruitless discussions about the Law. Paul then points out that salvation needs to be transparent in the lives of the faithful, especially among husbands and wives, so that they will live in peaceful harmony. Paul founds his argument about the good news of salvation in the event when transgression of the Law occurred in the first place with Adam and Eve, but God promised the birth of the Savior (Gen 3:15).⁵⁹

⁵⁹Note the fivefold use of the word "first" (*protos*) and its link to the *Leitmotif* in 1 Timothy 1 and 2, which is, Jesus Christ came to save all sinners. Paul, "first" (*protos*) a blasphemer and persecutor (1:13), considers himself as "first" (*protos*) among the saved sinners (1:15-16), so that in him as the "first" (*protos*), Christ might demonstrate his patience as an example for all sinners' salvation. Paul explains to Timothy that some of the believers have lost their faith in the Savior and now teach strange doctrines and myths. They carry fruitless discussions about the Law and do not recognize that the Law is good, and its scope is for the lawless ones (1:3-11, 20). With regard to the faithful, Paul says that their "first" (*protos*) duty is to pray and intercede on behalf of all authorities in the world so that God's faithful children may live a peaceful life (2:1-2). Furthermore, the prayer life of the faithful is to be transparent no matter

Revelation

Hierarchical power and dominance is nowhere else more excessive than in the book of Revelation, a book that is saturated with the concept of the Sabbath⁶⁰ outlining the cosmic war about ultimate sovereignty. Two diametrically opposed systems, the dragon's voracious hunger for power versus the Lamb's self-denial and sacrifice, are juxtaposed in the imagery of two women: the wife, a vulnerably exposed mother, using all her life power to push the Child into the world, then she flees and becomes utterly dependent upon the earth for her survival (Revelation 12); and the shamelessly adorned harlot, sitting on top of a beast full of names, heads, and horns, exercising deadly power and authority over the kings and nations of the earth (Revelation 17). Against all human reason, it is the powerless woman who will overcome, the church without a desire for top-down hierarchy. The prophet stands amazed at the

where they are: in the case of husbands, dedicated prayer should be visible by their sanctified deeds, and in the case of wives, by their dignified appearance. In so doing, there will be no anger and opinionated discussions among husbands and wives (2:8-10). A wife, Paul says, will learn in peacefulness and self-dedication. She is neither to lecture nor domineer the husband; rather, they both will live in peacefulness (2:11-12). Paul affirms that transgression of the Law came into existence with Adam, "first" (*protos*) formed and joined by Eve; he was not deceived, but his wife was the deceived one (2:13-14). Yet, a wife, abiding together with her husband in faith, love, and sanctity with dignity, will be saved because of the birth of the Messiah (2:15; cf. Gen 3:15).

For the most comprehensive study on 1 Tim 2:12-15, see Gordon P. Hugenberger, "Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis? A Survey of Approaches to 1 Timothy 2:8-15," *JETS* 35 (1992): 341-360; cf. Sharon Hodgkin Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus: A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 125, 130-135; Richard M. Davidson, "Headship, Submission and Equality in Scripture," in *Women in Ministry*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998), 260-264; idem, "The Bible and the Ordination of Women Pastors" (paper presentation, Andrews University, February 2013, paper published at <http://ordination.lakeunion.org/assets/95168>); Ed Christian, "Women, Teaching, Authority, Silence: 1 Timothy 2:8-15 Explained by 1 Peter 3:1-6," *JATS* 10 (1999): 285-229.

⁶⁰The Sabbath theme in Revelation surfaces in many ways: in the "day of the Lord" when John received the visions, in the seven scenes of the book that revolve around the seven OT festivals of the year, in the chiasmic structure of the book with the language of the Sabbath commandment at the center (Rev 14:6-12), in the many usages of the number seven, and in the themes of creation, covenant, judgment, and rest (Mathilde Frey, "The Theological Concept of the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation, in *For You Have Strengthened Me: Biblical and Theological Studies in Honor of Gerhard Pfandl in Celebration of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Martin Pröbstle, Gerald A. Klingbeil, and Martin G. Klingbeil [St. Peter am Hart, Austria: Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen, 2007], 223-239; idem, "Sabbath Theology in the Book of Revelation," in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodriguez [Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 2009], 127-137).

innumerable myriads “from every nation and tribes and peoples and tongues . . . clothed in white robes” (Rev 7:9), “a kingdom and priests to our God” (Rev 5:10) surrounding the Lamb, slain but standing (Rev 5:6).

Victory in the apocalyptic church is not by power, but by service and self-giving (Mark 10:45). What else is the silence of the Lamb (Isa 53:7) than to echo the fateful words “It is finished!” from that sealed tomb during Sabbath rest? Powerless, intrinsically human, utter sin (2 Cor 5:21), he lay lifeless over Sabbath, the day first made to guarantee life on earth. In the tomb, it has its ultimate reason. After his death, what else is the justification to keep Sabbath than for men and women to give up the pursuit of power over one another, to lay down their lives for each other, and to accept God’s gift of life?

Revelation’s hierarchical church has no use for a powerless Lamb. And so it abandoned the day that keeps testifying to the One who “emptied Himself and became truly a servant made in the likeness of humans” (Phil 2:7). However, the church that proclaims the message of the angel with the Sabbath’s everlasting gospel of the Creator who became the Redeemer (Rev 14:6-7) will only be credible among the nations of the world when it surrenders all authority and headship to Christ, the bridegroom and only head. All others, male and female together, join the marriage banquet as a bride clothed in fine linen (Rev 19:7-8). Otherwise, the call of the Sabbath’s everlasting gospel will be unimpressive in a power-structured world, and the church will be in danger of joining the seat on that beast with many heads. The Sabbath’s sacred anti-imperial mission, set up in creation and fulfilled in the death of the Lamb,⁶¹ stands as the divine emblem that except for Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, no human being has authority over another human being.

Conclusion

The Sabbath speaks directly to human beings, male and female, and defines the essence and function of both as equals before God. The Sabbath responds to gender questions of woman’s ordination with its inclusive nonhierarchical message. Instituted in creation, the Sabbath comes into our world with its coercive systems, into our churches with their male-dominated hierarchical power structures, and transplants men and women into God’s world. When that happens, men and women alike will reflect God’s image; they will decide against all structures of dominance, lay down their lives, and seek justice for the marginalized. In the Spirit-empowered world of the Sabbath, there is no room for male-exclusive orders; it violates the Sabbath.

Proposals for the church to consider include:

1. The Sabbath principle of wholeness with regard to equality in essence and equality in the function of men and women should be part of the holistic

⁶¹Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2009), 452-457.

understanding that Adventists have about the “physical, mental, emotional, sexual, social and spiritual dimensions” of the human being.⁶²

2. Adventists should include the Sabbath concept in the study of women's ordination as the biblical context and basis for ontological and functional equality of men and women in the home and church. The benefit of such a study will challenge Adventist theology to understand the connections and the meaning between the Sabbath and other theological concepts such as creation, anthropology, soteriology, and ecclesiology in a church that places high emphasis upon the enduring validity of the Sabbath by its very name. In this way, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a solid theological basis to resolve the issue of women's ordination in a comprehensive and unifying manner.

⁶²See the “Consensus Statement” of the Third International Bible Conference, Jerusalem, Israel, 20 June 2012 on the topic of biblical anthropology.