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<b>AN OPEN APPEAL FROM FACULTY, ALUMNI, STUDENTS, AND FRIENDS OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY</b>	3 4 5
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<i>Preamble</i>	11
On August 21, 2014 the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary voted to approve a statement that affirmed and explained in detail “that Christ is the only Head of the Church (Eph 1:22; 5:23; Col 1:18).” The next day the online edition of the <i>Adventist Review</i> published an article about the Seminary statement and concluded that the faculty hoped the Andrews statement would help end some divisions among church members and would “prove to be a unifying influence in the church.”	12 13 14 15 16 17 18
The article had a link to the actual document which resulted in this statement becoming widely known. The reactions to the document have been mixed, with some approving, others disapproving, and still others expressing doubts. Instead of unifying church members it seems that the document has brought confusion in regard to the Biblical view of Christ’s headship and its implications for leadership under Christ in the church.	19 20 21 22 23 24
This appeal offers the views and concern of some current and retired seminary faculty, seminary alumni, students, and friends who disapprove of various aspects of the statement on the unique headship of Christ. It urges the faculty to reconsider their statement and adjust it so that it considers the full biblical counsel on this subject and be in harmony with the vital Protestant and Adventist principle of “the Bible and the Bible only.”	25 26 27 28 29 30 31
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<i>Problematic Arguments</i>	
The recent Seminary statement points out that God’s moral government is based on love. In the great controversy between Christ and Satan, this government of love is most clearly contrasted with the oppressive control that has manifested itself especially in the development of the historic antichrist, the vast structure of church government seen in the Roman Catholic Church. We fully agree about the danger of this unbiblical headship model of the papacy—in which the headship of Christ is replaced with that of the pope as the vicar of Christ, the Son of God—and its apostolic succession.	33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40
However, we need to be careful not to project this distorted Catholic model onto the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Although in some regions of the world the Adventist leadership may demonstrate a certain authoritarianism, this is not the servant leadership model that has been taught in and by the church and is practiced in many areas. We fully agree that Christ’s headship is absolute. However, the arguments in the Seminary document to support His headship role are at times problematic, giving rise to serious misunderstandings and confusion.	41 42 43 44 45 46 47

48 While we concur that Christ's headship is absolute, for every knee  
49 shall bow to Him as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rom 14:10–11;  
50 Phil 2:10–11), we see the need to recognize that Scripture is clear that Christ  
51 has delegated leadership responsibility for His church to ministers and elders  
52 as undershepherds in His stead with His authority. We question the [**Original**  
53 **page 2**] following arguments the Seminary statement uses to support the idea  
54 that the headship of Christ is non-transferable.

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56 1. The Seminary statement argues that the interpersonal relationship within  
57 the Trinity is not a model for a governmental structure for human leadership  
58 within the Church (p. 4).

59 Reply: On the contrary, the Bible points to this relationship in salvation  
60 history within the Trinity as a guide for the church, even in its leadership.  
61 Jesus declared that the relationship between His followers should resemble the  
62 relationship existing between the Himself and the Father (John 17:21–23).  
63 In a similar way, in 1 Corinthians 11:3 Paul parallels the relationship male  
64 believers have to Christ with the relationship that Christ has to the Father,  
65 employing the concept of headship within the Godhead and between men and  
66 women in the church: "But I want you to know that the head of every man is  
67 Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God" (NKJV).

68 Here the Bible teaches that headship and submission are principles of  
69 heaven belonging to the Godhead, and that on earth human beings have been  
70 created to reflect these principles because they bear the image of God. This  
71 issue of headship has important implications for the church. In this passage  
72 Paul refers to the principle of headship to address a problem regarding the  
73 way that men and women worship in the church (1 Cor 11:4, 5, 16). He  
74 is not addressing relations between husbands and wives in the home as we  
75 find in Eph 5. In both contexts, Paul bases his instructions on the pre-fall  
76 circumstances of Gen 2 (see 1 Cor 11:8–9; Eph 5:31), not the cultural norms  
77 of Corinth or of the Greco-Roman world. In 1 Corinthians 11, the headship  
78 of Christ and that of God the Father form the pattern for the headship of the  
79 man-woman relationship in the church, just as Christ's headship in relation  
80 to the church forms the pattern for the headship of husband to wife in the  
81 home in Ephesians 5:23–24. Since the context of 1 Corinthians 11 is clearly  
82 the church and not the home, this passage is significant for our understanding  
83 of gender relationships in the church.

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85 2. The Seminary statement argues that neither the Scriptures nor the writings  
86 of Ellen G. White endorse any transfer of the role of head in the home to roles  
87 within the Church body (p. 4).

88 Reply: The Bible uses the pattern of leadership in the home as a model  
89 and qualifier for church leadership. When we use the Protestant and  
90 Adventist principles of Biblical interpretation for formulating doctrine by  
91 comparing Scripture with Scripture, we discover that there is an intimate  
92 connection between leadership in the home and leadership in the church (see  
93 esp. 1 Tim 3:5, 15). Toward the end of his life, Paul mandates the necessary

qualifications for male elders, who are to be the leaders of the church, to oversee its operations. In two separate instances he points out that one of the crucial qualifications for this role is that the church needs successful, proven leadership in the home first (1 Tim 3: 4, 5; Titus 1:6). Only those who demonstrate successful leadership of their homes would qualify for the office of overseer/minister to serve the church in loving leadership. The home is the smallest unit of the church, and a godly, loving father in the family indicates eligibility for being a godly leader in the church. According to Paul, being the spiritual head of the home (Eph 5:23) is indeed the key that determines if one is suitable for spiritual leadership in the church because the church is a collection of families who come together for worship on a weekly basis.

**[Original page 3]** Ellen G. White also makes this point that shepherds who fail at home will fail as shepherds/ministers of the church: “He who is engaged in the work of the gospel ministry must be faithful in his family life. It is as essential that as a father he should improve the talents God has given him for the purpose of making the home a symbol of the heavenly family, as that in the work of the ministry, he should make use of his God-given powers to win souls for the church.” She continued, “As the priest in the home, and as the ambassador of Christ in the church, he should exemplify in his life the character of Christ. He must be faithful in watching for souls as one that must give an account. . . . He who fails to be a faithful, discerning shepherd in the home, will surely fail of being a faithful shepherd of the flock of God in the church.—6MR 49” (PaM 88, 89).

3. The Seminary statement argues that headship in the Church is unique to Christ and is non-transferable (p. 4).

Reply: As we have seen above, though the headship of Christ is indeed unique (i.e., special), unique here does not mean singular, or only. Jesus clearly calls some people to leadership in the church. What, then, does the statement mean by “non-transferable” headship? Certainly we all agree that the role of Christ as the only mediator between God and humans is non-transferable. The question that really needs to be answered though is this, “In what way does Christ rule or lead the church?” The Bible shows that in the operation of the church, Christ as the Great Shepherd, delegates some authority to His undershepherds who meet specific biblical qualifications. Some examples of such leaders under Christ are Moses, Joshua, David, the Twelve Apostles, Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, Titus, and the elders appointed by these leaders in every newly established church. These elders were undershepherds. The apostle Peter cautioned these them, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the *Chief* Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Pet 5:2–4, emphasis supplied; AA 525, 526).

The relationship between Christ and the elders/overseers is that of the Chief Shepherd to the undershepherds. These leaders receive their authority from Christ under whose authority they function in accordance with His word.

140 Christ delegates leadership authority in the church to these officers. Ellen  
141 White shows the relationship between Christ and His ordained leadership  
142 as follows, “The great Head of the church superintends His work through  
143 the instrumentality of men ordained to act as His representatives” (AA 360).  
144 Elsewhere she states, “Christ remains the true minister of His church, but He  
145 delegates His power to His under-shepherds, to His chosen ministers, who  
146 have the treasure of His grace in earthen vessels. God superintends the affairs  
147 of His servants, and they are placed in His work by divine appointment”  
148 (ST, April 7, 1890). This does not usurp the unique role of Christ as the only  
149 mediator between God and humans (1 Tim 2:5), which Paul makes clear  
150 before setting forth instructions on church worship and church leadership  
151 (1 Tim 2:8–3:15).

152 In the Seminary statement, the headship of Christ in relation to the  
153 headship/leadership of the New Testament offices is not carefully presented.  
154 Christ’s headship is presented in such a way as to downplay any authority  
155 ministers may have as His chosen representatives. But, as Ellen White  
156 points out, Paul identifies these (along with himself) as Christ’s ambassadors  
157 [**Original page 4**] (see 2 Cor 5:20): “Since His ascension, Christ the great  
158 Head of the church, has carried forward His work in the world by chosen  
159 ambassadors, through whom He speaks to the children of men, and  
160 ministers to their needs. The position of those who have been called of God  
161 to labor in word and doctrine for the upbuilding of His church, is one of  
162 grave responsibility. In Christ’s stead they are to beseech men and women  
163 to be reconciled to God” (GW 13). Ambassadors carry the same authority  
164 as the person they represent. To overlook the New Testament evidence for  
165 this authority (e.g., 1 Cor 9:18; 2 Cor 10:8, 13–14; 13:10; 1 Tim 5:17;  
166 Titus 2:15; Heb 13:17; see also AA 360) leads to incorrect conclusions.

167 In the New Testament Christ’s delegated authority was not centered  
168 in any one person. The apostles did not appoint a single leader for the  
169 church, but a plurality of leaders as they “appointed elders in every church”  
170 (Acts 14:23). Already in the 1850s, Adventists realized the need for credentialed  
171 ministers (see EW 97–104). By 1863 in the face of divergent personalities  
172 and fanatics, they sensed the need for even more “gospel order,” and gave  
173 authority to an elected leader. In no way was this “president” to resemble  
174 the antichrist power, yet they realized that the church, for organizational and  
175 functional reasons needed solid leadership.

176 In time Adventists have accepted the concept that the highest authority  
177 on earth is not vested in individuals or small committees but in the voice  
178 of the General Conference session when all the delegates throughout the  
179 world are assembled. Yet this does not do away with leadership authority  
180 in the local churches at various levels of church organization. Elders have  
181 spiritual teaching authority as overseers, according to the New Testament  
182 (1 Tim 2:12; 3:2; 4:11; Titus 2:15; Heb 13:7, 17, 24).

4. The Seminary statement argues that no inspired writer teaches the headship of man over woman at Creation. It contends that before the fall, God established an egalitarian ideal of full equality without hierarchy between male and female, and that the Bible consistently calls us back to this ideal (p. 5).

Reply: The Seminary statement neglects very important aspects in this discussion of gender relationships. There are clear indications in both the Bible and the writings of Ellen White that Adam had a leadership role before the entrance of sin, one that continued after the fall, because both are created in the image of God. This view is in harmony with the plain teaching of the apostle Paul with regard to the equal value of men and women as heirs of salvation (Gal 3:26–29). However, the expression “in the image of God” invites us to recall that at Creation Christ, as the Son of God, had already taken a position that included functional differences from God the Father. He was committed to the function of the Lamb of God that was to take away the sins of the world in the future by His death on the Cross (1 Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8). Functional differences were also reflected in God’s original design of the relationships between male and female as the rest of the Creation story reveals.

In Genesis 2 the Bible shows the different functions of Adam in relation to Eve. Again there is equality of nature and essence because Eve was created from Adam’s rib, indicating that she was to stand by her husband’s side as an equal—not to be inferior or superior (PP 46). Yet the chapter describes the functional differences of the couple by showing the priority of man being formed from the dust (Gen 2:7); how God put the man in the garden and gave instructions to him “to tend and keep it” (2:15); how God gave the command concerning what he could eat (2:16) and the warning about the forbidden tree (2:17). Then God [Original page 5] brought the animals and birds to Adam and gave him the responsibility of naming them (2:19). Finally, God created a woman from Adam’s rib and “brought her to the man” (2:21, 22), giving to Adam the privilege of also naming his companion (2:23). Further, God indicates that, in the marriage relationship, the man is to take the initiative by leaving his family and being joined to his wife (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:4–6). At this time Eve considers Adam “her husband” (Gen 3:6). Ellen White interprets the term “husband” to mean that “he is the house-band of the family, binding the members together, even as Christ is the head of the church and the Saviour of the mystical body [Eph 5:23]” (AH 215). Thus the internal evidence in Genesis prior to Adam’s fall reveals his leadership role and his responsibility toward the woman.

In the following statements Ellen White confirms Adam’s leadership role in the Garden of Eden: “Under God, Adam was to stand at the head of the earthly family, to maintain the principles of the heavenly family” (CT 33; 6T 236); “Adam was appointed by God to be monarch of the world, under the supervision of the Creator” (BE, Aug 28, 1899; cf. ST Apr 29, 1875; see also RH, Feb 24, 1874); “The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the father and representative of the whole human family” (PP 48); “Adam was lord in his beautiful domain” (FE 38). Although both were given dominion over the earth (Gen 1:26, 27), the leadership in this relationship was given to Adam.

229 “Adam was crowned king in Eden. To him was given dominion over every  
230 living thing that God had created. The Lord blessed Adam and Eve with  
231 intelligence such as He had not given to any other creature. He made Adam  
232 the rightful sovereign over all the works of His hands” (SDABC 1:1078). Co-  
233 leadership and representative roles and titles for Eve are completely missing  
234 from the inspired writings. Adam alone is designated as representative and the  
235 leader of the earthly family.

236 What type of relationship existed between the man and the woman at  
237 this time? Here we need to follow an important rule of comparing Scripture  
238 with Scripture by consulting the whole Bible to see if there are any other  
239 references that describe the relationship between the man and the woman  
240 in Genesis 2 before sin. We should definitely consult the New Testament  
241 because “the New Testament explains the Old” (Ev 578).

242 As we have seen, Paul explains the headship/leadership principle of man  
243 as “the head of the woman” (1 Cor 11:3) by referring to Genesis 2:18, 21–22,  
244 stating that the man “is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the  
245 glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man;  
246 neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (vv. 7–9). It is  
247 therefore incorrect to say that no inspired author teaches the headship of man  
248 over woman at creation, for Paul clearly teaches it in this passage. Elsewhere  
249 the New Testament gives further evidence regarding these relationships. In  
250 1 Timothy 2:12, 13, Paul again refers to the pre-fall situation of Genesis 2, on  
251 which he bases the leadership principle that is to operate within the church.  
252 God gave a leading role to the man before He created woman, which Paul  
253 cites as the rationale for not permitting women “to teach or to have authority  
254 [KJV: “to usurp authority”] over a man” in the church (1 Tim 2:12), because  
255 it is “the house of God, . . . the church of the living God, the pillar and  
256 ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). The apostle had already established the  
257 link between home and church in connection with the qualifications for  
258 elders: “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take  
259 care of the church of God?” (1 Tim 3:5).

260 **[Original page 6]** After the fall recorded in Genesis 3, Adam’s headship  
261 role became even more pronounced. It was only after Adam, as leader, followed  
262 his wife in the path of disobedience and sinned that the eyes of both were opened  
263 and they realized their sinful condition and resulting nakedness (Gen 3:7).  
264 Next God came down to question Adam first (not Eve) as the responsible leader  
265 (3:9–12). Only after this did He address the woman (3:13). Adam received the  
266 death penalty, which consequently affected every human being (Rom 5:12;  
267 1 Cor 15:22). Then he was expelled from the Garden, his wife also (Gen 3:24).

268 The fall of Adam and Eve brought a change to their relationship. Before the  
269 fall, there was harmony. Eve gladly and willingly accepted Adam’s transparent  
270 godly leadership, submitting without resentment or duress. However, once  
271 their relationship was damaged and distorted by sin, it was necessary for God  
272 to encourage Adam’s role by way of command. The principle itself had not  
273 changed, but the woman must now accept his preeminent “rule” over her

(Gen 3:16), although her new sin-borne desire was to rule over him (note the similar meaning of the terms in the close parallel a few verses later, in Gen 4:7).<sup>2</sup>

This change was not in terms of two pre-fall heads being reduced to one, but in moving from the harmonious, willing cooperation with Adam's loving, beautiful leadership to a different relationship that would include tension and rivalry within the human family between the two genders. As a result, harmony could only be preserved by the (now unnatural) submission of the woman to the man, since there can be only one head/leader in any relationship. Otherwise, there would be constant and open conflict over authority. This authority within the home (and also within the church family) is given by God, but it must never be demanded or used autocratically or abusively. Rather, it should be expressed in loving care for the wife, "just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Eph 5:25). That is the nature of the headship authority modeled by God and Christ (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:22–33).

To Adam God said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife" and eaten from the forbidden tree, the earth will be cursed and you will die (Gen 3:17, 19). Using again the interpretive principle of comparing Scripture with Scripture, we notice that the New Testament also teaches that Adam, as the leader, was held responsible for the entrance of sin into the human race—not Eve, despite her being the first to transgress God's command: "Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life" (Rom 5:18). Clearly, Paul's contrasting of Adam's role with that of Christ is rooted in the fact that Adam was the responsible leader. Even though Adam followed the leadership of his wife in disobedience, the Bible continues to recognize Adam's role as head of the human race.

In subsequent generations, following this divine design of headship, husbands occupied similar leadership roles. Ellen White writes, "In early times the father was the ruler and priest of his own family, and he exercised authority over his children. . . . His descendants were taught to look up to him as their head, in both religious and secular matters" (PP 141; see also Gen 18:19). The importance of this statement should not be underestimated. Here she designates the father of the family as the "head in both religious and secular matters," which forms the basis for the New Testament model of the male spiritual leader in the [Original page 7] church, the spiritual family. Abraham, representative of God's truth and father of true believers, followed this divine pattern. Ellen White adds, "This patriarchal system of government Abraham endeavored to perpetuate, as it tended to preserve the knowledge of God" (PP 141). Stressing the divine origin of this system, she continues, "It was a wise arrangement, which God Himself had made, to cut off His people, so far as possible, from connection with the heathen" (PP 141). From this quotation, one can conclude that the system of patriarchy as implemented by Abraham, the father of believers, was not a curse as many today want us to believe, but was intended to be a blessing that would protect God's people against idolatry and apostasy so that "the true faith might be preserved in its purity by his descendants from generation to generation" (PP 142).

320 On the historical development of headship/leadership Ellen White  
 321 comments, “In the beginning the head of each family was considered ruler  
 322 and priest of his own household. Afterward, as the race multiplied upon the  
 323 earth, men of divine appointment performed this solemn worship of sacrifice  
 324 for the people” (LHU 25). So the leadership role moved beyond the family  
 325 to priests functioning for the corporate people of God—the church in the  
 326 wilderness. With Israel’s Exodus from Egypt, God established the nation  
 327 of Israel as His kingdom on earth and appointed men to lead His people.  
 328 From that time onward, the Bible reveals the installation of qualified men  
 329 for service in leadership offices so that they might guide God’s people under  
 330 His direction. The same Old Testament leadership pattern was repeated in  
 331 the New Testament where the qualifications for leadership by elders and  
 332 ministers is spelled out by the apostle Paul and was continued throughout  
 333 the Christian church. Although distorted by apostasy in the church and the  
 334 rise of the man of sin (2 Thess 2) distorted this arrangement, the Protestant  
 335 Reformation restored the biblical leadership principle of an elder-led  
 336 church. Later developments in Protestantism resulted in a distortion of this  
 337 leadership model until the rise of the Great Second Advent Movement and  
 338 its reestablishment in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This headship/  
 339 leadership model is fully biblical and will be successful when church leaders  
 340 follow it with the humility and “mind of Christ” (Phil 2:5).

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#### *Recommendations*

343 In light of the above evidence from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy,  
 344 we humbly appeal to the Seminary leadership and faculty to reconsider the  
 345 recently-published statement and include our suggestions. We feel strongly  
 346 about the reputation of the Seminary and are concerned that this statement,  
 347 released on August 22, 2014, will not solve the current controversy over  
 348 gender and leadership roles in the church. To the contrary, it may hurt  
 349 the Seminary’s reputation, trust, and credibility among members in North  
 350 America and worldwide, and may undermine our credibility among thinking  
 351 scholars in other denominations.

352

353 *Current and retired faculty, alumni, students, and friends of the Seventh-day*  
 354 *Adventist Theological Seminary, October 6, 2014*

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356 [The list of names, titles, and affiliations of the twenty-four persons who  
 357 endorsed “An Open Appeal” has been omitted.] [**Original page 8**]

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360 <sup>1</sup>Unless indicated otherwise, the biblical text is quoted from the *New King James*  
 361 *Version*.

362 <sup>2</sup>Paul Ratsara and Daniel K. Bediako, “Man and Woman in Genesis 1–3:  
 363 Ontological Equality and Role Differentiation” (paper presented at the Theology  
 364 of Ordination Study Committee, July 22–24, 2013), 39–42, [http://www.](http://www.adventistarchives.org/man-and-woman-in-genesis-one-thru-three.pdf)  
 365 [adventistarchives.org/man-and-woman-in-genesis-one-thru-three.pdf](http://www.adventistarchives.org/man-and-woman-in-genesis-one-thru-three.pdf) (Accessed Sept.  
 366 26, 2014)