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Should Women Be Ordained?

P. Gerard Damsteegt, Dr. Theol.
Andrews University, February 13, 2013

Introduction

The topic of women's ordination has been hotly debated in nearly every Christian denomination. Churches have split over this issue. Around 1844 when the Seventh-day Adventist Church arose there was great unanimity on this subject and no denomination thought of ordaining women as elders or ministers, except the groups on the fringes of Christianity, such as the Shakers, Quakers, and later the Spiritualist Church. Within these groups the impressions of the Spirit dominated the community, and the Spirit's movements were placed above the written Word of God. But gradually over the years, more and more churches have adopted the practice of ordaining women to the office of an elder or minister.

This paper will bring out the position on women's ordination held by the Adventist pioneers and the Seventh-day Adventist church through most of its history, and to which the majority of church members throughout the world still support.

Today there are honest persons, well-educated, who claim that the Bible is silent or even supports women's ordination to the office of spiritual leadership of an elder or minister. I do not wish to criticize them as persons, or impugn their Christian standing, even if I disagree with their views. Many lovely, dedicated women earnestly long to serve the Lord with their whole hearts. I wish to thank them for their service for the Lord, while I may disagree with their views on ordination.

How to find the solution to our controversy: What does the Bible say?

Here are two views that are contradictory, yet both sides claim that their views are in full harmony with the Bible. How are we to solve this problem? It is by the light that Jesus has revealed to us, light that has come from the pen of inspiration, which is found in the writings of the Holy Scriptures, and the Spirit of Prophecy to the Remnant Church.

The Holy Scriptures are the key to evaluate teachings and correct them, when necessary. It states: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17, KJV).

The Spirit of Prophecy affirms that the Bible is the standard by which we test every teaching and practice, which certainly should include the practice of ordaining women. "The Word of God is the great detector of error; to it we believe everything must be brought. The Bible must be our standard for every doctrine and practice. We must study it reverentially. We are to receive no one's opinion without comparing it with the

Scriptures. Here is divine authority which is supreme in matters of faith. It is the word of the living God that is to decide all controversies" (1888 *Materials*, 44, 45).

What is the purpose and audience of the Bible?

In studying the question of ordination it is important to know the purpose and audience of the Bible. Here we find that the message of Scripture is aimed at all people. In the interpretation of Scripture, therefore, the common people as well as the scholar can participate in obtaining truth. However, one should never lose sight of the fact that "The Bible was given for practical purposes" (1SM 20). "The Bible," she remarks, "was written for the common people as well as for scholars, and is written within the comprehension of all" (RH, Jan. 27, 1885). She cautions that "the Bible was not written for the scholar alone; on the contrary, it was designed for the common people" (CE 57). "It was written," she says, "in a plain, simple style to meet the understanding of the common people; and, with proper explanations, a large portion of it can be made intensely interesting and profitable to very small children" (CG 513, 514). And because "it was designed for the common people," she says, "the interpretation given by the common people, when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus" (5T 331). This means that no matter the educational level one has reached, the truth on the subject of women's ordination can be discovered by anyone who studies the Scriptures prayerfully with an open mind.

How shall we interpret the Bible? or What does the Bible mean?

The next step in studying women's ordination is to find the correct hermeneutics, or method of interpreting the Bible. Jesus pointed out that "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority" (John 7:17). It is total obedience to the Scriptures that is the key to understanding the teachings we are confronted with all the time. Again He said, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness" (John 8:12). If we love the light we will not walk in darkness but will have a desire to deeply study the Scriptures, so that we may hear the voice of the true Shepherd.

Next comes the question, "How shall we read the Bible to discover truth?" Here the Spirit of Prophecy added the following important principle.

Take the Bible as it reads. "The Bible is an expression of God to man, in language simple and easy to be understood" (RH, May 25, 1876). "The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed. . . . If men would but take the Bible as it reads, if there were no false teachers to mislead and confuse their minds, a work would be accomplished that would make angels glad and that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error" (GC 598, 599). "A great work can be done by presenting to the people the Bible just as it reads. . . . Admonish them to take the Bible as it is, to implore divine enlightenment, and then, when the light shines, to gladly accept each precious ray, and fearlessly abide the consequences" (5T 388).

Besides the commitment to total obedience to Bible truth, the participants in the Great Second Advent of the 1800s used the Reformation principles of Bible interpretation. Adventist doctrine is based on these principles as they were formulated by William Miller to interpret Scripture. The Spirit of Prophecy fully endorsed Miller's hermeneutical rules. She wrote: "Those who are engaged in proclaiming the third angel's message are searching the Scriptures upon the same plan that Father Miller adopted." White described the following rules as "simple but intelligent and important rules for Bible study and interpretation" (RH, November 25, 1884).

"1. **Every word** must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible;" This means that one must see that every word of a subject makes its proper contribution to that subject studied throughout the Bible. However, White mentioned elsewhere, that one needs to keep in mind that the Bible writers were inspired, not the words themselves (1SM 21).

"2. **All Scripture is necessary**, and may be understood by diligent application and study;" This means that it is necessary to consult the whole Bible in the study of a subject.

"3. **Nothing revealed in Scripture can or will be hid** from those who ask in faith, not wavering;

"4. **To understand doctrine, bring all the scriptures together on the subject you wish to know**, then let every word have its proper influence; and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error;" This means that one cannot come to a conclusion on a particular doctrine or teaching without looking at all texts related to the topic studied. One can only come to the correct understanding of the meaning of the doctrine of ordination when all passages dealing with ordination have been studied. Failure to follow this approach has led to a misunderstanding of ordination.

"5. **Scripture must be its own expositor**, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound to me, and he should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom is my rule, and not the Bible" (RH, November 25, 1884). This means that our conclusions must be derived from the Bible only, not from extra biblical sources, or using extra Biblical culture and guessing how it may have impacted the church and therefore creating a scenario by which we interpret Scripture.

Commenting on these rules, Ellen White said, "The above is a portion of these rules; and in our study of the Bible we shall all do well to heed the principles set forth" (RH, November 25, 1884).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has followed these rules for most of our history. Immediately after listing these rules, the Spirit of Prophecy warns against basing our faith on emotions which is one of the delusions of the time of the end: "Genuine faith is founded on the Scriptures; but Satan uses so many devices to wrest the Scriptures and bring in error, that great care is needed if one would know what they really do teach. It

is one of the great delusions of this time to dwell much upon feeling, and to claim honesty while ignoring the plain utterances of the word of God because that word does not coincide with feeling. Many have no foundation for their faith but emotion" (RH, November 25, 1884). Thus, a person's sense of God's calling must line up with what the Bible teaches along every line.

Application of the Reformation hermeneutics to the subject of ordination of women to the leadership office of an elder or minister

The study of the ordination of women to the position of an elder or minister involves more than the study of one or two Bible texts. It involves the application of these principles of interpretation to a study of the nature of the relations between male and female throughout the whole Bible. This focuses on all relationships in God's moral kingdom that brings out God's leadership, involving the areas of:

1. The nature of relationships within the Godhead
2. The nature of relationships among the angels
3. The nature of male and female relations at creation
4. Male and female relations after the fall.
5. Male and female relations in the Old Testament
6. Male and female relations in the New Testament
7. Male and female relations in the Remnant Church

The nature of relationships within the Godhead

The persons of the Godhead are equal in nature

The persons of the Godhead are equal, for all are **divine**. They have the same purpose, power and authority. There is no inferiority between the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30, KJV).

The persons of the Godhead have different roles

The Bible says, "the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3, KJV). Furthermore, "Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8, KJV). At the end of time, the Bible states, "when all things shall be subdued unto him [God], then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28, KJV).

There is no inferiority within the Godhead

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit all have different functions or roles, yet there is no inferiority. They are all equal in nature, being, purpose and authority for they are divine.

The functional role distinctions compliment each other. The Father leads, the Son came to earth and was the active Member in the role of salvation all the time submitting to the Father's will, and the Holy Spirit submits to the Father and to the Son while manifesting God in the life of the church since Jesus' ascension. The dynamics within the Godhead are a perfect example of the operations of God's moral kingdom.

Each person of the Godhead is equal, yet different. The nature of this equal-but-different relationship is seen throughout God's creation. It is seen among the angels, human beings as well as animals.

The nature of relationships among the angels

The angels are equal in nature

Angels have an nature which is slightly more elevated than that of human beings. The Bible states: "For thou [Lord] hast made him [human being] a little lower than the angels" (Psalms 8:5, KJV).

Angels function in different roles

"The very highest angels in the heavenly courts are appointed to work out the prayers which ascend to God for the advancement of the cause of God. Each angel has his particular post of duty, which he is not permitted to leave for any other place. If he should leave, the powers of darkness would gain an advantage" (4BC 1173;LHU 370).

"Each angel has his own mission, and is at his post, ready to cooperate with you, and by combining divine power with human effort, make of no effect the opposition of foes" (SW, October 24, 1899).

There exists a hierarchy among angels.

Note the leadership roles of the commanding angels at the trial of Jesus. "The angels cast their crowns and harps from them and with the deepest interest silently watched Jesus. They wished to surround the Son of God, but the commanding angels suffered them not" (EW 167). "Many companies of holy angels, each with a tall commanding angel at their head, were sent to witness the scene" (EW 168). "It was difficult for the angels to endure the sight. They would have delivered Jesus, but the commanding angels forbade them" (EW170). "There was commotion among the angels. They would have rescued Him instantly; but their commanding angels restrained them" (EW 170). From these statements we conclude that the commanding angels are tall in size, and leaders of companies of angels, instructing them what to do. The angels obey the commanding angels, even against their own wishes.

Sin began when Lucifer left his God-appointed position

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:12-14, KJV).

The nature of male and female relations at creation

Humans are created equal in nature

Male and female are created in the image of God: “And God said, Let us make man in **our image**, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26, KJV). “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:21-23, KJV).

The Spirit of Prophecy commented on the relationship between human beings revealed in this creation account. It reveals that the woman is to stand by the man’s side as an equal:

God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided ‘an help meet for him’—a helper corresponding to him—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation. ‘For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it.’ Ephesians 5:29. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one” (PP 46). Furthermore this account indicates that the woman is not be inferior nor superior, but in all things equal to the man. “When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that in all things she should be his equal. The holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other; and yet each had an individuality in thinking and acting (3T 484).

Does human equality mean sameness?

The creation account shows that with equality God also created differences in roles, functions or responsibilities. The Creator created male and female with their God-appointed roles and characteristics.

Adam was created first. Adam was the first human being God created. The first thing God did after Adam’s creation was to instruct him on the cultivation of a garden and

warned him about the tree of good and evil. "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die'" (Genesis 2:15-17, KJV). The relationship between Adam and his wife became a model of the relationship God intended between a man and his wife. The fact that God created Adam first indicated that his role was to be the leader of his family. The New Testament Scriptures explains this and clearly forbids a woman "to usurp authority over the man . . . For Adam was first formed, then Eve" (1 Tim. 2:12, 13, KJV). This New Testament admonition reveals that Adam is a type and illustrates God's intention that men are to be the leaders rather than women, and should teach in the authoritative positions in the home and in the church.

Adam named the animals. The second thing God did was to assign Adam to give names to all the living creatures of His new creation. "And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him (Genesis 2:19-20, KJV). Adam named not only the living creatures but also his companion. "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2:23, KJV).

Adam as protector. Commenting on couple's relationship, the Spirit of Prophecy pointed out that Adam's role was to be the protector of his wife. Eve was "to be loved and protected" by Adam (PP 46).

Adam as king, monarch, and representative of humanity. In addition to his leadership in his family, Adam is to represent humanity: Adam is "the father and representative of the whole human family" (PP 48). Not only is he the representative, but "Adam was crowned king in Eden. To him was given dominion over every living thing that God had created" (1BC 1082). He was "the monarch of the world," until Satan dethroned him (RH, Feb 24, 1874).

Adam as teacher. From this information it is clear that Adam's function as first-born was to teach Eve what God has revealed him. Thus Adam instructed her about the need to obey God's warning on the dangers of the tree of good and evil and to teach her the names of all living creatures. This teaching role indicates Adam's role as protector and leader. The Bible points to the significance of Adam's leadership role as a model for the relationship between a man and a woman. When in the New Testament a woman tried to usurp authority over a man, the inspired apostle Paul, referring to the order of creation, states, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man. . . . For Adam was first formed, then Eve" (1 Timothy 2:12, 13, KJV).

Eve's role as help meet. The Bible states that Eve had an important role to fulfill: "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him"(Genesis 2:18, KJV). The woman was created to function as a helper

suitable or fit for Adam. The Bible reveals that because the woman was created after man, out of man, and as his helper, God intends that the man is to fulfill the leadership role and the woman is to support the man in fulfilling this role.

The nature of male and female relations after the introduction of sin

Eve was tempted by Satan and became the first human to transgress the command not to eat of the tree of good and evil. After she had eaten she shared the fruit with Adam and he ate. It should be noted that only after Adam had sinned that the effects of sin were clearly visible: Eve gave the fruit to Adam “and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked” (Genesis 3:6, 7, KJV).

God holds Adam responsible for the entrance of sin among humans. After the couple sinned God approached them and began to question them. However, He did not question Eve who sinned first, but He first questioned Adam “And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? (Genesis 3:9, KJV). This indicates that God held Adam as the head of his family responsible. The Bible clearly holds Adam responsible for the entrance of sin. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men” (Romans 5:12, KJV).

Through Adam’s sin Satan conquered the world. The Spirit of Prophecy revealed that it was through Adam that Satan conquered the human race. “Having conquered Adam, the monarch of the world, he [Satan] had gained the race as his subjects” (RH, Feb 24, 1874). Adam failed in his spiritual leadership role. Instead of leading Eve to obey God’s command, he followed her into the path of disobedience (Genesis 3:17). His failure to fulfill his God-given role as protector made him especially responsible for transgressing God’s law.

Through the reversal of God-appointed roles sin entered the world. The question remains: What was it that led to the entrance of sin into the world? The Spirit of Prophecy shows that it was the reversal of the God-appointed roles for the couple. It was Eve who took on an independent leadership role. She left her husband’s side by not following the warning “to beware of separating herself from her husband” (PP 53, 54). “She had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction” (PP 58). Having followed Satan’s advice “She became the agent of Satan in working the ruin of her husband” (PP 56). “It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned” (PP 58). Satan “had tempted the woman to distrust God’s love, to doubt His wisdom, and to transgress His law, and through her he had caused the overthrow of Adam” (PP 57). Eve was not content with her God-given role. “She was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it” (PP 59).

Divine sentence upon humanity

The punishment of the woman. The punishment of Eve’s transgression had three dimensions. First, there came sorrow and pain: “Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children”

(Genesis 3:16, KJV). Second, there came yearning for her husband: “thy desire shall be to thy husband” (Genesis 3:16, KJV). And thirdly the husband would rule over her: “he shall rule over thee” (Genesis 3:16, KJV).

The Spirit of Prophecy provides some profound insights into this punishment: “After Eve's sin, as she was first in the transgression, the Lord told her that Adam should rule over her. She was to be in subjection to her husband, and this was a part of the curse” (3T 484). As Eve sought to lead her husband into sin, now she would no longer be led by Adam but be ruled by him. This sentence is the divine remedy to preserve the order of relationships between male and female. It is a call to the woman to return to her God-given function to be a support for the man. Before sin Adam's leadership could be noticed but it was not emphasized. After the fall God clearly spelled it out so that no one would have any doubt about what the relationship between male and female should be. However, this does not give any license for dictatorial leadership, instead it should be a caring, loving, self-sacrificing leadership. A leadership in the spirit of Christ a blessing to relations, not a curse (see Eph. 5:22-29).

Now harmony among the human race could only be achieved by respecting role differences and one submitting to the other. “Sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other. Eve had been the first in transgression; and she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was now placed in subjection to her husband” (PP 58). This sentence was also intended as a blessing: “Had the principles joined in the law of God been cherished by the fallen race, this sentence, though growing out of the results of sin, would have proved a blessing to them; but man's abuse of the supremacy thus given him has too often rendered the lot of woman very bitter and made her life a burden” (PP 58, 59). Today this sentence can still be a blessing if the man executes his God-given-role in the spirit of Christ and the woman respects the execution of this role.

Punishment of the man. After his sin Adam deplored his failure to lead and he “mourned that he had permitted Eve to wander from his side” (PP 56). He truly failed as leader to protect his wife..

The result of Adam's failure to exercise his leadership role resulted in sin which required punishment. Consequently the earth was cursed, causing hardship to the human race and death. “And unto Adam he said, ‘Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, ‘Thou shalt not eat of it’: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; . . . In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return (Genesis 3:17, 19, KJV). God announced the death sentence on Adam because he was responsible for the entrance of sin that affected the whole human race. The death sentence on him included Eve and all of his descendants.

God's original design of role distinctions has not changed. In referring to the order of transgression the inspired record states that a woman is not "to usurp authority over the man" because "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Timothy 2:14, KJV). This shows that many years after the death of Christ, the Scriptures still affirm that the effects of the Fall are still with the human race and have not been done away with by the cross. During the Christian Era the man still remains the spiritual leader in the home and in the church.

Lessons from Eve's experience

The Spirit of Prophecy depicts a sad parallelism between Eve and many modern women.

Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband's side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it. A similar result will be reached by all who are unwilling to take up cheerfully their life duties in accordance with God's plan. In their efforts to reach positions for which He has not fitted them, many are leaving vacant the place where they might be a blessing. In their desire for a higher sphere, many have sacrificed true womanly dignity and nobility of character, and have left undone the very work that Heaven appointed them (PP 59).

In order to live happily in unity and harmony, the Spirit of Prophecy indicates that women ought to follow God's plan in her creation (note that she doesn't say her position after the Fall).

A neglect on the part of woman to follow God's plan in her creation, an effort to reach for important positions which He has not qualified her to fill, leaves vacant the position that she could fill to acceptance. In getting out of her sphere, she loses true womanly dignity and nobility. When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that in all things she should be his equal. The holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other; and yet each had an individuality in thinking and acting. But after Eve's sin, as she was first in the transgression, the Lord told her that Adam should rule over her. She was to be in subjection to her husband, and this was a part of the curse. In many cases the curse has made the lot of woman very grievous and her life a burden. The superiority which God has given man he has abused in many respects by exercising arbitrary power. Infinite wisdom devised the plan of redemption, which places the race on a second probation by giving them another trial (3T 484).

One can conclude that God created male and female equal, but with different roles, giving the man the spiritual leadership role before as well as after the Fall.

Some have suggested that just as slavery was a part of the OT experience that was later abolished during the Christian era, so the man's leadership role should be

eliminated in the government of the church, giving both male and female an equal leadership role in the operation of the church. This reasoning is not correct because God already established Adam's leadership before the Fall. Therefore the development of the abolition of slavery, a practice established after the Fall, cannot be used as an example for the abolition of the leadership role of a man that was already established before the Fall.

Organization of the Old Testament Church and its relevance today

During the era of the patriarchs the head of each family was considered ruler and priest of his own household (SR 50). Later in the days of the theocracy when Moses was the leader, leadership responsibilities were distributed among the Levites, elders, and other leaders of each tribe.

The Spirit of Prophecy urges today's believers to learn from the organization of God's church of that time. The ancient Israelites constituted God's church. Today we should take notice of how God organized this church.

Has God changed from a God of order? No; He is the same in the present dispensation as in the former. Paul says, 'God is not the author of confusion, but of peace' [1 Cor 14:33]. He is as particular now as then. And He designs that we should learn lessons of order and organization from the perfect order instituted in the days of Moses, for the benefit of the children of Israel (GC Daily Bulletin, Jan. 29, 1893, 23; 1T 653).

In Israel's theocracy, God, as the head of the nation, delegated His authority to human leaders, and all of them were men. Regarding that organization the Spirit of Prophecy observes,

The government of Israel was characterized by the most thorough organization, wonderful alike for its completeness and its simplicity. The order so strikingly displayed in the perfection and arrangement of all God's created works was manifest in the Hebrew economy. God was the center of authority and government, the sovereign of Israel. Moses stood as their visible leader, by God's appointment, to administer the laws in His name. From the elders of the tribes a council of seventy was afterward chosen to assist Moses in the general affairs of the nation. Next came the priests, who consulted the Lord in the sanctuary. Chiefs, or princes, ruled over the tribes. Under these were 'captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens,' and, lastly, officers who might be employed for special duties. Deut. 1:15 (PP 374. See also "Order and Organization," RH, October 12, 1905, p. 8).

Regarding the services of the house of the Lord, the stipulations were to be carried out faithfully and carefully. "The Lord did not leave His holy tabernacle to be borne [carried] indiscriminately by any tribe that might choose. He was so particular as to specify the order He would have observed in bearing the sacred ark and to designate a

special family of the tribe of the Levites to bear it" (1T 650). When Uzzah disregarded this order, he died instantly.

Under the reign of Solomon additional organizational improvements took place that are important for the church today to understand and follow.

The thoroughness and completeness of the organization perfected at the beginning of Solomon's reign; the comprehensiveness of the plans for bringing the largest number possible of all the people into active service; the wide distribution of responsibility, so that the service of God and of the king should not be unduly burdensome to any individual or class—these are lessons which all may study with profit, and which the leaders of the Christian church should understand and follow ("Order and Organization," RH, October 12, 1905, p. 8).

Israel's "perfect organization," their subsequent rebellion, and their punishments have all been recorded for us as a warning. The reason for their severe punishment was simply "because of their unwillingness to submit to God's wise arrangements—this faithful picture is hung up before us as a warning lest we follow their example of disobedience and fall like them" (1T 652). Thus we notice that the matters concerning the operation of God's church and its religious services were performed by persons whose functions God carefully prescribed.

The organization of the New Testament Church and its relevance today

New Testament church began with a divinely ordained structure. This church began with Jesus' ordination of the twelve apostles. The Spirit of Prophecy describes this event in great details. "It was at the ordination of the twelve that the first step was taken in the organization of the church that after Christ's departure was to carry on His work on the earth. Of this ordination the record says, 'He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach.' Mark 3:13, 14" (AA 18).

About the manner in which this ordination was performed, she writes, "When Jesus had ended His instruction to the disciples, He gathered the little band close about Him, and kneeling in the midst of them, and laying His hands upon their heads, He offered a prayer dedicating them to His sacred work. Thus the Lord's disciples were ordained to the gospel ministry" (DA 296).

The next step of further organization took place in the church in Jerusalem, after Christ's ascension. When difficulty developed in the young Jerusalem church, the apostles were led by the Holy Spirit to appoint seven assistants (Acts 6:1-7), who came to be known as the seven deacons. There were now two classes of church leaders or officers: the apostles, who were succeeded by elders, responsible for the general oversight of the church; and the deacons, with their supportive roles. This simple but effective two-level organization the Lord prescribed as a model for future congregations: "The organization of the church at Jerusalem was to serve as a model for

the organization of churches in every other place where messengers of truth should win converts to the gospel" (AA 91).

Sometime later in the New Testament church, after the two-level organizational model with the leadership offices of elder and deacon was established, the community of believers was ready for a further perfection of church organization. The Spirit of Prophecy describes this development as a result of the bestowal of spiritual gifts as follows:

Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers had been formed into churches, the organization of the church was further perfected, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained. Every member was exhorted to act well his part. Each was to make a wise use of the talents entrusted to him. Some were endowed by the Holy Spirit with special gifts —'first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.' 1 Corinthians 12:28. But all these classes of workers were to labor in harmony (AA 91, 92).

It is important to see the distinction between the *leadership offices* and *spiritual gifts*. Not until God through the Holy Spirit had established the leadership structure of the local church, did the Holy Spirit pour spiritual gifts in full upon the church. Every believer receives one or more spiritual gifts, but not all of these qualify to occupy a leadership office of an elder or deacon. Being part of the leadership structure, the elders and deacons of the local churches have the responsibility to assign every member where they would use their spiritual gifts in harmony with each other so that the unity of the church is maintained (ChS 62; RH, March 24, 1891; RH, Dec 19, 1912).

Regarding the use of spiritual gifts, not all are qualified for whatever position they "feel called" to occupy. The Bible lists qualifications for leadership positions, like in the Old Testament church. Just because persons think or feel they have the spiritual gift of leadership does not necessarily justify that they should be ordained to the office of an elder or minister. Unless all the moral and lifestyle qualifications for that office as outlined in the Bible are met, even if they have the gift of leadership, they do not qualify for that office.

Qualifications for elected offices of leadership for the New Testament Era

Near the end of his long ministry, under divine inspiration, Paul provides, in two instances, instructions for the qualifications of overseer or elder.

In the first instance Paul instructs Timothy to help solve problems of the church in Ephesus, the city famous for the worship of goddess Diana (Acts 19:23-28). Paul's instruction deals with how one should behave "in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1Tim. 3:15).

One of the problems Paul addresses is the issue of authority in the local church. It seems that the attitudes or actions of some women led to friction with the leadership

role of the men in the local church. In response, Paul writes that he does not allow a woman “to usurp authority over the man” (1 Tim 2:12, KJV). In the first reason for male leadership, he points to the creation order in which God created human beings: “For Adam was first formed, then Eve” (1 Tim 2:13, KJV). For the second argument he uses the order of transgression: “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1Tim. 2:14, KJV). Paul’s explanation of the leadership role of the man is derived from Creation and the Fall, before any cultures had developed.

This leadership model is in full harmony with Paul’s earlier counsel to the Corinthian believers revealing the fundamental principles of headship in the plan of salvation: “I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3, KJV). Here Scripture presents the three levels of submission that explain God’s leadership order for the human race. The Word of God declares that the man has to acknowledge Christ as his head and Lord. Next, under Christ as supreme Lord, the woman is to respect and accept the leadership and protection of the man. Finally, Christ, although equal with the Father, submits Himself to God as head in harmony with His role in the plan of salvation.

After restricting the leadership of the local church according to gender in 1 Timothy 1:12-14, Paul addresses the question about the qualifications a man needs to have to be the overseer or elder of the local church in 1 Tim. 3:1-7. A study of these qualifications makes it plain that the Lord, as Head of His church (Eph 5:30), is interested in having His church under husbands and fathers who have a proven record of successful leadership in their homes. They must be prosperous leaders of their own families. The elder or minister must be “one who rules his own house well . . . for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim 3: 4, 5. NKJV).

In the second instance, Paul writes to Titus, whom he has left behind at Crete to put things in order in the churches of the island. Paul provides a list of qualifications that local elders must have to be leaders or overseers of the church. Although this letter does not mention that there is a leadership authority problem between males and females as mentioned in his letter to Timothy in Ephesus, again Paul here incorporates that the office of an elder is gender specific. He states that an elder should be “blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation of insubordination” (Titus 1:6, NKJV).

In reviewing both these instances, the qualification requirements for elders make it clear that Jesus’ model of leadership—in Creation, in the Old Testament Church, and the New Testament Church—is gender specific, revealing that men who have been successful in leading their own families are the ones who qualify for the position of overseer or elder/minister in the church. According to these Biblical requirements, women do not qualify for the position of elder/minister.

Church organization in the Remnant Church

Is the model of church organization that God gave to the first Christians still the model for Seventh-day Adventists to follow until the Second Advent? The Spirit of Prophecy fully endorses the New Testament lists of qualifications for the office of elder. Seventh-day Adventists are a theocracy. This is clear from what the Spirit of Prophecy has expressed: “We are sacredly denominated by God and are under His theocracy” (7T 109). “The place assigned you by the Lord was under Him in the divine theocracy” (8T 180). “We are to work for the spiritual recovery of mankind to God, to bring them under His theocracy” (BTS, September 1, 1908).

From the very beginning Seventh-day Adventists were plagued by persons who felt that God had called them to the ministry. Mrs. White was shown that these were false teachers planted by Satan to bring confusion into the church. When she asked the angel in the vision what could be done to stop this, he answered that they were to follow the Bible on church organization. He said, “The church must flee to God’s Word and become established upon gospel order, which has been overlooked and neglected” (EW 100). These are the biblical qualifications for the office of overseer or elder that protect the church against false teachers. Failure to follow these qualifications will lead to an incorporation of false teachers into the structure of the church.

To counteract the dangers of false teachers, the New Testament church, by divine guidance, was given a list of qualifications so church leaders could safely select and appoint those truly called by God, distinguishing the true from the false teachers. Thus “the brethren chose men who had given good evidence that they were capable of ruling well their own house and preserving order in their own families, and who could enlighten those who were in darkness” (EW 100, 101). These persons who gave evidence of successful leadership in the home were chosen to be ordained “by the laying on of hands” (EW 101). She strongly warns to be on guard against false teachers. “I saw that we are no more secure from false teachers now than they were in the apostles’ days; and, if we do no more, we should take as special measures as they did to secure the peace, harmony, and union of the flock. We have their example, and should follow it” (EW 101).

How should we determine a person’s calling? By following the Bible. The Spirit of Prophecy stated in preparation for ordination, “Brethren of experience and of sound minds should assemble, and following the Word of God and the sanction of the Holy Spirit, should, with fervent prayer, lay hands upon those who have given full proof that they have received their commission of God, and set them apart to devote themselves entirely to His work. This act would show the sanction of the church to their going forth as messengers to carry the most solemn message ever given to men” (EW 101).

The Spirit of Prophecy warns that unless a man meets the biblical qualifications for elder, he should not be ordained. She strongly cautions against so-called “self-sent” persons. “Men are hurried into the field who lack wisdom and judgment, perhaps not ruling well their own house, and not having order or government over the few that God

has given them charge of at home; yet they feel capable of having charge of the flock” (EW 97).

Before ordaining persons to the office of an elder the Spirit of Prophecy stressed that ministers should give careful attention to following the Bible qualifications listed in Titus 1:5-7 and 1 Timothy 5:22. Said she,

The apostle Paul writes to Titus: “Set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God.” [Titus 1:5-7] It would be well for all our ministers to give heed to these words and not to hurry men into office without due consideration and much prayer that God would designate by His Holy Spirit whom He will accept. Said the inspired apostle: “Lay hands suddenly on no man.” [1 Tim 5:22] In some of our churches the work of organizing and of ordaining elders has been premature; the Bible rule has been disregarded, and consequently grievous trouble has been brought upon the church. There should not be so great haste in electing leaders as to ordain men who are in no way fitted for the responsible work—men who need to be converted, elevated, ennobled, and refined before they can serve the cause of God in any capacity (5T 617, 618).

From this study has become clear that the Spirit of Prophecy endorsed the biblical leadership requirements for elders and ministers listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, which are gender specific, given nearly 2000 years ago. Men are to be successful leaders in their home “churches” before they should be appointed to take care of the larger church. Throughout her ministry she recommended that Seventh-day Adventists follow these Bible qualifications. (See, for example, 5T 617; 2T 620, 621; MS 104, 1901; and MS 67, 1900 in 5MR 449, 450; Letter 164, 1902 in 21MR 98. See also Ellen G. White’s comments in 2BC 1009). This means that the ordination of a woman to the office of an elder or minister is not biblical. However, her gifts are greatly to be valued in the church and need to be utilized in the gospel work till the end of time.

The significance of ordination

Recently it has been suggested that we should just drop the term “ordination” because the term has pagan roots and with its incorporation into the Christian Church, has been greatly distorted by the Roman Catholic Church, carrying with it the concept of sacramentalism. This might have been a problem for us had it not been for the corrective influence of the Spirit of Prophecy that gave Adventists the proper meaning so they can avoid the distortion connected with the word “ordination” (See AA 18, 94, 161, 162).

In her comments on the “ordination” of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3), Ellen White said that it was God who “instructed the church by revelation to set them apart publicly

to the work of the ministry. Their ordination was a public recognition of their divine appointment to bear to the Gentiles the glad tidings of the gospel" (AA 161).

She further explained that before the ordination service took place, God already commissioned Paul and Barnabas. Therefore, the laying on of hands did not give them any special grace or added qualifications. She wrote, "Both Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God Himself, and the ceremony of the laying on of hands added no new grace or virtual qualification" (AA 161, 162). Commenting on Paul's attitude, she said, "Paul did not depend upon man for his ordination. He had received from the Lord his commission and ordination" (6BC 1088).

If God had already commissioned them, what difference did the act of the laying on of hands during the ordination ceremony then signify to them? This act of ordination signified an official installment to an office and it now gave them the authority of that office. She explained: "It was an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office and a recognition of one's authority in that office." Through this ordination the church officially put their sign of approval on these candidates: "By it the seal of the church was set upon the work of God" (AA 162). Henceforth "they were authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority" (AA 161).

Ellen White indicated that the meaning of ordination was greatly perverted in the history of the Church. She stated, "At a later date the rite of ordination by the laying on of hands was greatly abused; unwarrantable importance was attached to the act, as if a power came at once upon those who received such ordination, which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work" (AA 162). From the above insights of the Spirit of Prophecy Adventists have been prevented from having a Catholic sacramental understanding of ordination. And as long as they keep this in mind, Adventists will not be influenced by a distorted view of ordination.

When a man meeting the Biblical qualifications of an elder is set apart to the office of an elder by the laying on of hands by the church leader/s, the local church recognizes that person's authority in the office of an elder. Now he is authorized by the local church not only to teach the truth but also to function as an overseer of that church with all the leadership responsibilities connected to the office of an elder.

When the elder has successfully functioned as a local church elder, the conference leadership may ordain him to the position as a minister of the world-wide church.. Now the ordained minister has larger responsibilities, extending to overseeing several churches, training members, planting and organizing new churches, and is recognized a a minister of the gospel wherever he may go.