



WOMEN in the CHURCH

**A Biblical Study on the Role
of Women in the Church**

by
Samuele Bacchiocchi

Forewords
by
Prof. Wayne Grudem
and
Prof. James B. Hurley

Essay
by
William Fagal

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FOREWORD

by

Prof. Wayne Grudem

This is an extremely valuable book for anyone interested in the current debate over women's roles in the church. I think it will clear up much of the confusion people feel over this issue today.

The entire book is a model of clarity and fairness. In each section Dr. Bacchiocchi first sets out the various positions taken on some passage of Scripture (with footnotes to a wealth of recent literature from all perspectives). Then he takes the reader back to the Biblical text to show reasons *from Scripture* to support his position.

Time and again I found myself saying, "Yes, yes!" as I read this book. Dr. Bacchiocchi has a balanced discussion of the relationship between equality and subordination in human relationships. He has a very positive discussion of the important roles women played in the Old Testament, in the ministry of Jesus, and in the New Testament church. His discussion of Genesis 1-3 is sober and persuasive, as is his discussion of Galatians 3:28. He rightly points out that the idea of "mutual submission" which so many people see in Ephesians 5:21 cannot be supported from the text.

Dr. Bacchiocchi also has a very sensitive treatment of the nuances of headship and submission in marriage as taught in Paul's epistles. His discussion of the "head covering" passage in 1 Corinthians 11 should clarify the teaching of this passage for everyone who has puzzled over it before. His discussion of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is very helpful and deals fairly with all opposing views. While some may think the passage prohibits more than Dr. Bacchiocchi says, few should see it as prohibiting anything less. Moreover, he consistently shows a sensitivity to God's overall design for men and women throughout the flow of Biblical history, and a maturity of judgment

in coming to correct conclusions on the meaning of Scripture. Finally, he sounds a needed warning about the serious harm to the family and the church which inevitably follows when the Biblical teachings on male headship in the family and the church are abandoned.

This is a critical issue for Christians today, and many people simply don't know what they should believe. Over the past fifteen years, dozens of feminist books and articles have challenged the plain meaning of Scripture. We have been told that "submit" does not mean submit, that "have authority over men" does not mean have authority over men, that "not permit" does not mean not permit, that "head" does not mean leader or authority, that "teach" does not mean teach, and so forth. Yet all these arguments, as Dr. Bacchiocchi so plainly shows, have failed to be persuasive.

But this book never gets lost in academic technicalities. While the views of other scholars are extensively cited for examples and illustrations, their opinions are not used as proof for Dr. Bacchiocchi's own position, nor does he appeal to obscure data accessible only to specialized scholars. His approach rather does something far better and far more persuasive—it takes the ordinary reader back to look more closely at the actual words of Scripture, so that readers might check for themselves whether the Scripture supports what Dr. Bacchiocchi is saying.

The value of this approach is that it encourages readers to be like the Bereans, who "examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11). In a day when scholarly "experts" can be found on all sides of this question, the only solution is for every Christian to return once again to Scripture itself, to read it carefully, to ask God's help in understanding it, and to believe that God has caused Scripture to be written in such a way that it *can* be understood by ordinary believers, so that they can come to a right decision. This is what God's people had to do long ago, when the Pharisees—the Biblical "experts" of the 1st century—publicly disagreed with Jesus, and later with Paul. The advantage of Dr. Bacchiocchi's book is that it provides a very careful discussion of the issues but ultimately encourages Christians to look again at the Scriptures and decide for themselves.

I am confident that many Christians who read this book will decide that it is time to say to those holding a feminist viewpoint, "We have heard your evidence, we have understood your arguments, and we have searched Scripture for ourselves to see if these things were true. While we see many areas where we want to encourage greater participation by women in the life of the church, nevertheless, we, like Dr. Bacchiocchi, must conclude that

when you say women can be elders and pastors, what you are saying is simply not faithful to Scripture; it is not what Scripture teaches.”

If this book brings many people to the point where they are willing to reach such a conclusion—as I expect the book will do—then it will have performed a very valuable function for the building up of the church in faithfulness to Scripture, all to the glory of God.

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FOREWORD

by

Prof. James B. Hurley

The last few decades have witnessed a growing debate over the roles and relationship of men and women in society and also in the church. The topic is important for a variety of reasons. At a broad level, it deals with the meaning and dignity of half of the world’s population. Individually, it touches our emotional life deeply and in ways which we barely understand. From the point of view of the church, it raises some profound questions about the relation of the Bible and culture which have impact far beyond our questions about the role of women in the church.

The Christian church has historically taken the position that the Bible is inspired revelation from God and is the rule for faith and practice. This commitment has consequences. Human culture changes, attitudes and life contexts are constantly being modified. Each generation must reevaluate traditional applications of Scripture’s teaching to see if they are inadequate in new social structures. The struggle of each generation is to remain faithful to that which the Scripture teaches without treating interpretations and applications which the church has made as though they were biblical teaching.

The question of the role of women in the church is a difficult area. The church must be prepared to give answer to a hostile world for its views. Christians must question in detail how much of our practice is what the Scripture requires and how much is an application made in a previous historical context. If we are reactionary and refuse to change, we may bind the church's conscience with the commandments of men. If we move too far the other way we are in danger of setting aside the commandments of God. The task is an important one.

Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi has earned an international reputation for competent biblical scholarship. The high esteem which many outside his own tradition have for his work is an eloquent testimony to the quality of that work. In this book on the role of women in the church Dr. Bacchiocchi offers his readers the fruit of his own biblical expertise and the benefit of his thorough examination of recent works on the subject. Readers without a theological training will benefit from the clarity of his presentation. Readers with professional training will enjoy his insights into various passages and will no doubt make use of the leads offered in the many footnotes included in the text.

I am personally delighted to see this contribution to the current debate. Its consistent effort to be fair and to be faithful to the biblical text should earn it wide readership and an influential position even among those who do not share its author's views.

James B. Hurley, Ph. D.
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PREFACE

At the beginning of 1986 I would never have imagined that I would have spent much of that year researching and writing a book on the role of women in the church. Besides teaching, I was already deeply involved in a major research project which I was hoping to publish later that year. What then caused me to rearrange my priorities and devote much of 1986 to researching and writing this book? Six major reasons precipitated this decision.

Deeply Felt Issue. A first reason was my discovery of how deeply felt was the issue of women's ordination not only outside but also inside the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I was made forcefully aware of this fact through the publication of my article "Ministry or Ordination of Women?" which appeared first in the March 12 issue of the *Student Movement* of Andrews University and subsequently on the October issue of *Ministry*.

The flare of responses generated by this article revealed to me how deeply felt and divisive this was issue even within the ranks of my own Seventh-day Adventist Church. This realization convinced me that there was an urgent need for a comprehensive Biblical study that could help the members of my church as well as the Christians of other faiths better to understand the unique role God intends women to fulfill in the church.

Prevailing Misconceptions. A second reason that precipitated my decision to write this book was a felt need to rectify what I perceive to be some of the prevailing misconceptions in much of the literature I have read. A common misconception, for example, is that the ordination of women as elders/pastors is more of a cultural than a theological issue. In other words, it has to do more with the cultural perception of the role of women in any given age than with Scriptural teachings.

Many argue that whatever the Bible teaches on this subject is irrelevant for today because its teachings are hopelessly conditioned by the patriarchal mentality of the time. Consequently, any decision on this matter must be derived not from Biblical teachings and examples, but from the enlightened cultural values of our times. This perception is reflected in the *Symposium on the Role of Women in the Church*, prepared and published (1984) by the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Of the 196 pages of this symposium only 15 pages are devoted to a most succinct analysis of the three crucial Pauline passages (1 Tim 2:11-15; 1 Cor 11:3-16; 14:33-36).¹

Another misconception which I felt needed to be rectified has to do with the nature of the church and the role of the pastor. Some view the church more as a functional, service organization than as a community of believers, the family of God. Consequently, they see the role of the pastor as being more of a functional administrator than of a “shepherd” of the congregation. Since women can manage business and institutions as effectively as men can, their appointment to the pastoral office is seen as a matter of justice in order to bring the administration of the church in line with the equal employment opportunities of secular institutions.

This view, I felt, needed to be corrected because, as this study will show, the New Testament views elders and pastors, not merely as administrators, but as shepherds of the flock, appointed to represent Christ to the people and the people to Christ. This dual representative role requires, as we shall see in chapter 7, that the person appointed to serve as elder or pastor be a man with specific moral and spiritual qualities.

Danger of Role Interchangeability. A third reason which crystallized my decision to undertake this research was the felt need to expose the dangers implicit in the role interchangeability model upon which the ordination of women largely rests. According to this model there is no creational role distinctions between men and women and thus women can legitimately fulfill such male roles as that of fathers in the home and of spiritual fathers, shepherds in the church. The dangers of this model are both theological and practical.

Theologically, the role interchangeability model, which is strongly advocated by liberal and evangelical feminists, encourages the blurring or elimination of the creational role distinctions God assigned to men and women. This trend should be of special concern to Seventh-day Adventists who are deeply committed to uphold the integrity of the doctrine and order of creation.

Contrary to some churches which interpret the creation story as a mythological or allegorical expression of an evolutionary process which extended over millions of years, the Seventy-day Adventist Church accepts as factual the account of the six days of creation. The observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is viewed as a perpetual memorial to the perfection of God's original creation.

If Seventh-day Adventists were to adopt the role interchangeability model, which violates the creational role distinctions between men and women, I believe this would gradually erode confidence in the validity of the doctrine of creation and of the Sabbath commandment itself.

Practically, the blurring or elimination of the creational role distinctions between men and women accelerates the rate of divorce, the breakdown of the family, and the acceptance of lesbianism or homosexuality as a legitimate optional life-style. It is noteworthy that some of the denominations which decided years ago to ordain women have now set up study-groups to explore the feasibility of ordaining homosexuals.² Ellen White warns against the danger of seeking a "sphere" different from that assigned by God at creation. Referring to Eve she writes: "She was perfectly happy in her Eden home by her husband's side; but like restless modern Eves, she was flattered that there was a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. But in attempting to climb higher than her original position, she fell far below it. This will most assuredly be the result with the Eves of the present generation if they neglect to cheerfully take up their daily duties in accordance with God's plan. . . .

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."³

The Larger Question. A fourth reason that gave a sense of urgency to this research was the awareness that the question of women's ordination is symptomatic of a much larger question: it reflects not only upon the different and yet complementary roles men and women are called to fulfill in the home and in the church, but also upon the authority of Scripture as a whole for defining beliefs and practices.

If the Biblical texts and teachings on the role of women in the church are, as some claim, time-bound, culturally conditioned, androcentric (male-centered) in nature, and rabbinic in origin, the same could be true of those Biblical texts and teachings regarding creation, the incarnation, the Second Advent, the Lord's Supper, Sabbathkeeping, etc. Ultimately what is at stake is the authority of Scripture. If any part presents false teachings, then its normative authority is discredited.

Larger Role for Women. A fifth reason that motivated me to give priority to this research was the recognition of the urgent need for a larger participation of women in the supportive ministries of the church. While Scripture, as this study will show, precludes the ordination of women to serve as priests in the Old Testament and pastors or elders in the New Testament, it provides ample support for their participation in the prophetic, liturgical and social ministries of the church. The question is not, *Should women be appointed to minister in the church?* but, *To which ministry should women be appointed?*

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been greatly blessed through the years by the outstanding contribution of many dedicated women who have served the church in many capacities. In recent years, however, the number of women serving, for example, as Bible Instructors has decreased considerably. Currently women represent less than 10% of the ministerial personnel of most conferences in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. In fact, some conferences do not have a single woman among their ministerial personnel.⁴ This decrease should be of concern because the need for the ministry of women in the Adventist Church is increasingly urgent today, for two main reasons.

First, the recent trend in church growth through a small-group, seminar-type of evangelism, requires more than ever before professionally trained women who can lead out in discussion groups and train lay persons on how to share Bible truths with others. Second, the growing number of broken homes, single parents, drug-addicted young people, and abused children calls for the special healing ministry that can best be given by trained and dedicated women.

An important purpose of this study is not only to ascertain the Biblical teachings on the role of women in the church, but also to urge the implementation of such teachings by opening up to women new forms of meaningful church ministry.

Prevent Divisions. A sixth reason that precipitated my decision to write this book is the sincere desire to help prevent in the Seventh-day Adventist Church the kind of polarization, division and turmoil being experienced at present by most of the churches which have adopted the policy of ordaining women. In view of the impending decision on women's ordination to be taken at the 1990 General Conference, I felt compelled to proceed immediately with a Biblical investigation of this sensitive subject.

I have reasons to hope that the Seventh-day Adventist Church will resist the pressure to ordain women as pastors, while at the same time encourage

their larger participation in the supportive ministries of the church. My hope rests especially on an awareness that the Adventist Church is deeply committed to the normative authority of Scripture for defining her beliefs and practices.

When given the opportunity to understand the vital Biblical teachings on the distinctive and yet complementary roles God assigned to men and women to fulfill in the home and in the church, the vast majority of Adventists will vote in favor of the ministry of women in the church but against their ordination as elders or pastors.

This conviction is based on the responses have I received during this past year when invited to share the highlights of this research at campmeetings, workers' meetings (pastors' meetings) and churches. Everywhere there has been an overwhelming support for the Biblical principles presented in this study.

A New Chapter Added to this Edition. The publication of this book in 1987 and its subsequent wide circulation, did not weaken the efforts of those Seventh-day Adventists committed to the ordination of women to the headship roles of elder and pastor. On the contrary, they intensified their efforts and sought permission to ordain women at the General Conference sessions of 1990 (Indianapolis) and 1995 (Utrecht).

After the ordination proposal was defeated at Utrecht, the presidents of several North American Unions approached the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, asking the professors to find a biblical justification for women's ordination. In response, the Seminary set up an Ad Hoc Committee which selected twenty men and women to write chapters for the symposium *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*.

All the contributors were chosen on the basis of their pro-ordination stance. No attempt was made to include contributors who oppose women's ordination on biblical grounds. The aim of this strategy was to create the impression that all the Seminary professors support on biblical grounds the ordination of women. It is not surprising that the book is exercising considerable worldwide influence upon those Adventists who look to the Seminary for sound biblical teaching and guidance.

Women in Ministry would be a far more credible study if it included a response by those holding opposing views. The book would also have escaped the justifiable criticism of those who feel that it is unethical to use the Seminary's prestige and resources to promote a one-sided view.

A response was to be expected to the unilateral and uncritical defense of women's ordination presented in *Women in Ministry*. Fifteen scholars,

church leaders, and lay people worked together over a period of two years to prepare such a response. The symposium was published in the Spring of the year 2000 under the title *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry*. This study compellingly shows that Scripture supports the participation of women in the ministry, but excludes their appointments to the representative roles of priests, elders or pastors. The reason for this biblical exclusion derives not from the cultural conventions of the times, but from the distinct and yet complementary roles for men and women established by God at creation.

In preparing this new edition of *Women in the Church*, I decided to include the chapter I have contributed to *Prove All Things*. The title of my chapter is “Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture.” It happens to be the longest chapter, most likely because it addresses the fundamental assumption of *Women in Ministry* that the role distinctions of male-headship and female-submission were not divinely ordained at creation, but were introduced after the Fall, and are limited to the governance of the home, not to the community of faith. Consequently, in the church women can serve even in headship positions over men without violating a Biblical principle.

My study shows that these conclusions cannot be drawn legitimately from the Bible. Both male-female equality and role distinctions, properly defined, are part of God’s creational design for the harmonious functioning of humanity. God created the man and the woman perfectly equal in their moral worth and spiritual status, but clearly distinct in their biological and functional roles. Simply stated, in the partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, God created man to function in the servant headship role of husband/father, and women in the submissive role of wife/mother. These distinctive roles apply equally to the home and to the church, because from a biblical perspective the church is an extended spiritual family, often referred to as “the household of God” (Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 4:17; Gal 6:10).

The inclusion of this new chapter is designed to update the readers of this book on the latest attempts made by some well-meaning Adventists to find a biblical justification for ordaining women to serve in the headship roles of elder and pastor. My intent is not to question the sincerity and integrity of these fellow believers, but to examine the validity of their methodology and conclusions. After all, they are our friends who worship with us in the same Adventist churches. They are to be commended for their painstaking efforts to find biblical support for ordaining women as pastors and elders. Their work represents the best research produced by knowledgeable pro-ordination Adventists. This makes our analysis of their position all the more significant, because it is the fruit of competent scholars.

Even a scholarly study of committed fellow believers deserves careful evaluation, because any interpretation of biblical teachings can be tainted by subjective presuppositions. This is why Scripture summons us to “test everything; hold fast what is good” (1 Thess 5:21). It is only as we “test everything” that we can determine whether the determined efforts to justify women’s ordination, are inspired by biblical teachings or political considerations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is a most difficult task for me to enumerate my indebtedness to the many persons who have directly or indirectly contributed to the realization of this book. Indirectly, I feel indebted to the many evangelical authors who have written on this subject, even though in some instances I could not agree with their views. The reading of their books and articles has stimulated my thinking and broadened my understanding of the subject.

Directly, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Daniel Augsburger, Dr. Richard Davidson, Dr. Raymond Holmes, Mrs. Hedwig Jemison, and Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell, each of whom went beyond the call of duty by reading, correcting and reacting constructively to my manuscript.

Very special thanks go to Dr. Bert Beverly Beach, my former teacher in Italy who through the years has been a kind of a spiritual father to our family. His willingness to take time in his most busy schedule to improve the text and to make valuable suggestions, will long be remembered.

I also want to express my deep gratitude to Elder William Fagal, director of the White Estate Branch Office at Andrews University, my neighbor and esteemed friend. Besides his helpful reading of my manuscript, Elder Fagal has greatly enhanced the value of this book by contributing the tenth chapter, “Ellen White and the Role of Women in the Church.” His objective and critical analysis of those E. G. White statements often cited regarding the ordination of women should put to rest many misconceptions.

Special acknowledgment is also due to my family—my wife Anna, and our three children, Loretta, Daniel and Gianluca. Often they have expressed the hope that this might be my last book to write. Without their love, patience and encouragement, this book would never have seen the light of day.

Authors of Forewords. It may surprise the reader to see two forewords to this book. A word of explanation may be helpful. Among the hundreds of authors I have read in the preparation of this book, two stand out as the ones who have made the greatest contribution to the development of my thoughts, namely, Prof. Wayne Grudem of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and

Prof. James B. Hurley of Reformed Theological Seminary. Both of them are outstanding New Testament scholars who have earned their Ph. D. degrees in New Testament at Cambridge University in England and both of them have written their doctoral dissertations and several articles on subjects related to the role of women in the church.

Prof. Grudem's dissertation has been published in an expanded form by the University Press of America as *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (1982). In this work he also examines at great length the two crucial passages, 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and 14:33-36, providing a most perceptive exegesis. Another outstanding piece of research is Prof. Grudem's article "Does *Kephale* Mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples," published both in *Trinity Journal* (Spring 1985) and as an appendix in George W. Knight III's, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women*.

The importance of this study is indicated by the fact that it was discussed at great length at a plenary session of the thirty-eighth annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, November 20-22, 1986, Tucker, Georgia. In that session Prof. Grudem cogently and compellingly exposed the fallacies of those who wish to negate the meaning of "authority over" in the "headship" texts of the New Testament.

Prof. James Hurley's dissertation has been published in a revised form by Zondervan as *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (1981). This book represents in my view one of the clearest presentations of the Biblical teachings on the role relationships between men and women. What I greatly admire about both Prof. Grudem and Prof. Hurley is not only their outstanding scholarship, but also their commitment to respect the integrity of the Biblical text and the normative authority of Scripture for defining Christian beliefs and practices.

In view of the great admiration I hold for both Prof. Grudem and Prof. Hurley, I sent a typeset copy of this study to both of them on December 10, 1985 with the "unreasonable" request for them to please read the manuscript and to write a foreword by January 15, 1987. Frankly, I did not hold much hope that on such a short notice and in the midst of the Christmas season, either of the two professors would be able to fulfill this request. Secretly, I was hoping that at least one of them to it.

What a pleasant surprise it was for me to receive by January 15 two most gracious forewords, one from Prof. Grudem and the other from Prof. Hurley. Their willingness to take time away from their families in the midst of their holiday celebrations to offer me this service, gives me reason to be eternally grateful to them.

These pages have been written with the earnest desire to help my Seventh-day Adventist fellow believers and Christians of all faiths to better understand what Scripture teaches about the distinct and yet complementary roles God has called men and women to fulfill in the home and in the church.

At a time when humanistic ideologies are promoting the blurring or elimination of the creational gender role distinctions by advocating “unisex” and role interchangeability instead, it is imperative for Christians to resist these pressures by upholding the Scriptural principles which God has revealed for the well-being of our homes and churches. It is my fervent hope that this book will inspire such a commitment through a fuller understanding and acceptance of the Biblical teachings on the role of women in the church.

ENDNOTES

1. *Symposium on the Role of Women in the Church*, distributed by the Biblical Research Institute Committee, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, D. C., 1984), pp. 97-106 and pp. 129-135.
2. For references see p. 107, note 27.
3. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, California: 1948), vol. 3, pp. 483-484.
4. I learned this fact on January 12, 1987 while speaking to the pastors of the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference.

INTRODUCTION

Few theological subjects have stirred up as much controversy in recent years as that of the ordination of women to the office of elder, pastor or priest. There is hardly a church which has not been affected by this controversy.

Churches which have adopted the policy of ordaining women are experiencing considerable polarization within their ranks. In the Anglican Church, for example, the issue has been so divisive that a new denomination has been born, the Anglican Catholic Church. The same polarization is present in the American branch of the Anglican Church, namely, the Episcopal Church. Rev. James Brice Clark sadly acknowledges that women's ordination "has hurt the Episcopal Church. We have gained no new converts because of it. We have lost conservative members. We have suffered schisms, with at least six new dissident Episcopal Churches being formed."¹

In the Swedish Lutheran Church, notes Rev. Kerstin Berglund, herself a woman priest, "the opposition [to women's ordination] has consolidated its stance. It is one of the facts of life in the Church of Sweden."² Though the church still holds together, she writes, "there is a wound, a pain, felt deeply by some, and hence felt by all of us."³ In the United Presbyterian Church conflicts over the ordination of women "stretch Presbyterian unity to the breaking point."⁴ The opponents have organized themselves under the name of "Concerned United Prebyterians" and are threatening "to withdraw from their denomination unless requested constitutional changes are made."⁵ In the Southern Baptist Church their "SBC Women in Ministry" organization has broken its silence, challenging the alleged discrimination of their church against ordained women.⁶

The extent and intensity of the controversy is revealed especially through the flood of books and articles which have recently been published on this issue. A selected bibliography, compiled by Alan F. Johnson, Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College, lists over 430 entries.⁷ The same author cites three additional and extensive bibliographies on the same subject.⁸

FACTORS INFLUENCING CHANGE

Changing Lives of Women. The impetus to re-examine the role of women in the church has come largely from two major factors: (1) the awareness of the changing life-span and social roles of women, (2) the influence of the feminist movement.

The average life expectancy of American women has changed from about 45 years in 1900 to about 80 in 1986. This increased life span gives to a traditional wife and mother another 30 to 40 years of life expectancy beyond child rearing years. What is a woman to do with her time, her energy and her gifts? Some women are rightfully seeking to serve within the church.

Moreover, in most Western countries more and more women are now working alongside of men as company executives, doctors, lawyers, judges, and even professors of theology. It is therefore understandable that the question has been raised: Why shouldn't women function also as elders, pastors or priests within the church?

Influence of Feminist Movement. The encouragement for women to seek ordination has come especially from the Christian feminist movement, which arose after the women's liberation movement had come to the fore in the late 1960s. The connection between the two is recognized by Christian feminists themselves. Sara Maitland, for example, writes: "The women's liberation movement has authorized this personal voice in a particular and liberating way."⁹ Similarly, Susannah Herzel notes: "Much of the rhetoric used in the debate on women's ordination to the priesthood has been influenced by feminism and the psychological pressures which that movement exerted."¹⁰

In seeking for a Biblical answer to the question of women's ordination, many church leaders and writers, whether they are aware of it or not, have been influenced by secular feminist pressure. There has been a clear tendency to reinterpret the Bible in a way consistent with the prevailing feminist views

of the role of women in our society.¹¹ A fitting example is the change in the position of Swedish New Testament scholars. In 1951, all but one of the New Testament teachers holding academic positions in Swedish universities signed the following statement, in response to the efforts of the Swedish government to introduce the ordination of women into the Church of Sweden: “We, the undersigned professors and lecturers in the field of New Testament exegesis at our two universities, hereby declare as our definite opinion, based on careful investigation, that ordination of women would be incompatible with New Testament thought and would constitute disobedience to the Holy Scriptures. Both Jesus’ choice of apostles and Paul’s words concerning the position of women in the congregation have significance of principle, and are independent of circumstances and opinions conditioned by any particular time in history. The current proposal that women should be admitted to priesthood in the Church of Sweden must therefore be said to meet with grave exegetical obstacles.”¹²

Thirty-five years later, it would be difficult to find one New Testament professor in Sweden who would endorse this statement. The explanation for this change is not the discovery of new Biblical evidence, but rather, as Stephen B. Clark points out, “the climate of opinion [which] has changed, influencing exegetes to come up with opinions that are acceptable nowadays.”¹³

This is not by any means the only historical example of accommodations of Biblical teachings to contemporary trends. There are plenty of examples in the past as well as in the present. In early Christianity, for example, Hellenistic philosophy influenced many Christians to adopt a dualistic view of the nature of man which, among other things, led them to reject the incarnation of Christ (1 John 4:1-3). In recent years socio-political ideologies have influenced such Christian accommodations as the theologies of revolution, the justification for draft dodging, the christianization of Nazism, the social gospel movement, and the evolutionist criticism of the Bible.

It is regrettable that all too often Christians have come to terms with current trends by claiming them to be Christian, rather than by judging them by the authority of the Word of God. There is a constant danger of slipping into the former course, but for those who take the Bible as normative for their faith and practice there can be only one permissible approach: to be guided by the principles revealed in the Scriptures.

THREE APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM

A survey of the voluminous literature on the role of women in the church reveals three major approaches to the subject, each of which is largely determined by its interpretation of the Biblical material. I shall designate the three approaches as: (1) Liberal Feminist, (2) Evangelical Feminist, (3) Biblical Feminist.¹⁴ A brief description of each of these approaches will offer to the reader an overview of the problem.

“Liberal Feminists.” Perhaps the best word to characterize “Liberal Feminists” is the term *rejection*. The heart of their rejection is the authority or the applicability of the Scriptures or both. While they continue to work with the Bible as a religious document they reject the Bible as the only normative rule of faith and practice.

Most Liberal Feminists concede that Scripture teaches a different functional role between men and women, but they argue that there is no need to take such teaching seriously. Different authors offer varying reasons for holding such a view. Biblical texts and teachings are regarded as time-bound, culturally conditioned, androcentric (male-centered), rabbinic in origin, antifeminist in nature, hopelessly corrupted by a patriarchal mentality.

Liberal Feminists employ the historical-critical method for determining which texts can be rightly used for developing a theology of female ordination and which texts are unacceptable. In the final analysis Liberal Feminists find their ultimate authority in their own interpretation rather than in the teachings of Scripture. By so doing they themselves become victims of their own culturally conditioned interpretation.

Among the writers representing this stance are Rosemary Radford Ruether, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Adela Yabro Collins, Mary Daly, Josephine Ford, Albertus Magnus McGrath, Phyllis Trible and George Tavard. No attempt will be made in this study to interact with Liberal Feminists since their rejection of the authority and applicability of Scripture offers no basis for any fruitful dialogue.

“Evangelical Feminists.” The second approach to the ordination of women is represented by “Evangelical Feminists.” The key term that best characterizes their approach is *reinterpretation*. For the most part Evangelical Feminist writers respect the authority of Scripture, but they protest against what they view as a misinterpretation of Bible texts by “Biblical Feminists.” They believe that the Bible does not teach that the male headship role at home carries over to the church.

For Evangelical Feminists the true Biblical picture is one of perfect equality between male and female in all spheres of life. There are no “leaders,” or “heads,” and thus no church offices from which a woman can be legitimately excluded. All ministries in the church are equally open to men and women.

To sustain this equality position, Evangelical Feminists *reinterpret* those texts which speak of a functional hierarchy between men and women and which exclude women from the office of teaching as pastor or elder. For example they insist that the word “head” in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23 means “source” or “origin” and thus it does not indicate any headship role on the part of man or any subordination on the part of the woman. The purpose of Ephesians 5:21-33 is not to exhort the wife to be subordinate to her husband but rather to exhort the husband to care for his wife.

The head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11 are simply a symbol of woman’s authority and not of her subordination. Paul’s injunctions that “women should keep silence in the churches” (1 Cor 14:34) and that they are not “to teach or have authority over men” (1 Tim 2:12), are interpreted as “non-Pauline” interpolations, or as culturally conditioned, or as representing the early stage of Paul’s thought (“Paul in process”) before he had worked out the “equality theology” expressed in Galatians 3:28. The resounding affirmation of the latter text, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female” (Gal 3:28), is seen as the great breakthrough, designed to abolish all role differences, thus opening the way for the ordination of women.

Some of the representatives of the Evangelical Feminist approach are Gilbert Bilezikian, Mary J. Evans, Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, Paul K. Jewett, Patricia Gundry, Virginia Mollenkott, and Aida Besancon Spencer. To these can be added many other evangelical writers, including a few Seventh-day Adventist teachers. Their major arguments will be examined at length in the course of this study.

“Biblical Feminists.” The third approach to the ordination of women is represented by “Biblical Feminists.” Whereas the key term used to characterize Liberal Feminists was *rejection*, and the term for Evangelical Feminists was *reinterpretation*, the term that best describes Biblical Feminists is *reaffirmation*.¹³

Biblical Feminists reaffirm the teachings of the Bible regarding a divinely established functional hierarchy that exists both in the home and in the church. They insist that there *are* different functional roles between men

and women. Such differences do not imply superiority or inferiority but complementarity. Women are called to minister in the church in a variety of roles, but are not eligible to function as elders/pastors of the congregation. The reasons for their exclusion from such offices are not cultural and time-bound but theological and timeless.

Among the large number of writers supporting this position, the followings may be selected as representatives: Stephen Clark, Susan T. Foh, James B. Hurley, George W. Knight III, Wayne Grudem, Douglas J. Moo, and Charles Caldwell Ryrie.

METHOD AND OBJECTIVES

Method. This book is written from a Biblical Feminist's perspective. I accept the Bible as normative for defining Christian beliefs and practices. Because the words of the Bible contain a divine message written by human authors who lived in specific historical situations, every effort must be made to understand their meaning in their historical context. My conviction is that an understanding of both the historical and literary context of relevant Biblical texts, is indispensable in establishing both their original meaning and their present relevance. This conviction has influenced my examination of texts and the discussion of the roles of women in the church.

Objectives. This book has both a general and a specific objective. The general objective is to ascertain the Biblical understanding of the role of women in the church. To accomplish this a brief survey has been made in the first two chapters of the major roles women have filled in the religious life of ancient Israel and of early Christianity. The final chapter considers some of the vital ministries women can fulfill within the church today.

The specific objective is to examine the major reasons suggested by Scripture for the exclusion of women from serving as priests in the Old Testament and as pastors/elders/bishops in the New Testament. In spite of the voluminous literature on this subject, there is no book which, to my knowledge, presents in a clear and orderly fashion the arguments pro and con for the ordination of women. Most of the books I have read fall broadly into two categories: either they deal with very specific exegetical, historical and social questions, or they examine the general roles of men and women in the various cultures of the ancient world during Bible times.

In this book I have attempted to deal primarily with the question of the ordination of women, by limiting my analysis to the *religious* roles of women

in the Bible. For the sake of clarity I have presented each of the arguments for the exclusion of women from ordination in a separate chapter, beginning with chapter 3. In these chapters the pro-ordination arguments of feminist authors are examined, not for the sake of polemic, but because they seriously obscure important truths.

My concern is not to oppose the feminist pro-ordination program, whether inside or outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but rather to make a positive statement concerning what I perceive to be a vital Biblical principle, namely: *men and women are equal before God by virtue of creation and redemption. Yet God assigned distinctive and complementary roles for men and women to fill in their relation to each other. These roles are not nullified but clarified by Christ's redemption and should be reflected in the church.*

Target Audience. This book is written first of all for Seventh-day Adventist lay-members, pastors, church administrators, and theologians who are currently seeking for a fuller understanding of the teaching of Scripture regarding the role of women in the church. The impetus for this new investigation has come from the decision taken at the 1975 Spring meeting of the General Conference to allow local churches to elect and ordain women as local elders. This decision has paved the way for the ordination of women as pastors, a question scheduled to be addressed at the 1990 General Conference.

In view of this impending resolution I felt compelled to re-examine the witness of Scripture on this sensitive subject. It is my fervent hope that the findings of this research will help my fellow Adventist members in formulating Biblical convictions and decisions on this matter.

This book is also written with an ecumenical audience in mind. Many questions regarding the ordination of women are approached differently in various churches. Catholics and Orthodox, for example, focus a great deal on the sacramental and canonical aspects of the priesthood. Yet many of the same arguments are used in every church. Moreover the methods of Scriptural interpretation are not significantly different in the many churches. Thus, much of the material in this book should be of interest to Christians of many persuasions.

It is my sincere hope that this book will be received in the same spirit of Christian love and respect in which it is offered. May the Spirit of God, whose ministry is to guide us into all truth (John 16:13), make all who read these pages receptive and responsive to the revealed will of God regarding the role of women in the church.

ENDNOTES

1. James Brice Clark, "Women's Ordination," *The Christian Century* (September 26, 1986): 1078; Similarly, Rev. Richard J. Anderson, Director for Development and Stewardship of the Anglican Church, notes that the situation "is to a large extent polarization, confusion and turmoil" ("Where Do We Go from Here: Prospects for the 1976 Convention," in *The Ordination of Women: Pro and Con*, ed. Michael P. Hamilton and Nancy S. Montgomery [New York, 1975], p. 154).
2. Kerstin Berglund, "The Swedish Lutheran Church," in *The Ordination of Women: Pro and Con* (n. 1), p. 105.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
4. John Maust, "Conflicts Stretch Presbyterian Unity to the Breaking Point," *Christianity Today* (September 2, 1979): 58.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
6. Susan Lockwood Wright, "SBC Women Ministers Break Their Silence," *The Christian Century* (November 12, 1986): 998-999.
7. The bibliography compiled by Prof. Alan F. Johnson is published in Gilbert Bilezikian's *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids, 1985), pp. 271-291.
8. C. E. Cerling, Jr., "An Annotated Bibliography of the New Testament Teaching About Women," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 19 (1976): 210-215; David M. Scholer. *Introductory Reading List for the Study of the Role and Status of Women in the New Testament* (David Scholer, 1981), pp. 1-4; Kathleen Storrie, "Contemporary Feminist Theology: A Selective Bibliography," *TSF Bulletin* 7 (May-June 1984): 13-15.
9. Sara Maitland, *A Map of the New Country, Women and Christianity* (London, 1983), p. xi.
10. Susannah Herzel, "The Body is the Book," in *Man, Woman and Priesthood*, ed. P. Moore (London, 1978), p. 103.
11. A brief but perceptive analysis of the influence of the Women Liberation Movement on the ordination of women is provided by Gervase E. Duffield, "Feminism and the Church," in *Why Not? Priesthood and the Ministry of Women*, (n. 1), pp. 9-25.
12. Cited in Krister Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women* (Philadelphia, 1966), p. 8.

13. Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1980), p. 230.

14. I am indebted for the use of these three terms to Prof. Carl B. Hoch's paper, "A Survey of Current Approaches to the Role of Women in the Church," presented at The Midwest Section of the Evangelical Theological Society, on April 12, 1986.

Chapter 1

THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN

IN THE

OLD TESTAMENT

What role should women fill in the church today? To provide a Biblical answer to this question it is necessary to examine first of all the religious roles of women in the Bible. Such an examination is more complex than it might first appear. First, the Bible covers a broad canvas of time: almost two millennia separate the nomadic culture of Abraham's time from the urban culture of Paul's time. Second, both the civil and religious roles of women seem to be paradoxical: at times women filled important public civil and religious positions such as judges or prophetesses, while at other times they functioned primarily within the home.

Objective. This chapter aims to give the reader a brief overview of the religious roles women have filled during the Old Testament times. Since women's roles in religious life cannot be divorced from their roles in social life, some consideration will also be given to the latter.

PART I

MAN AND WOMAN AT CREATION

To appreciate the social and religious roles of women in Old Testament times, it is important to understand the different functional roles between men and women. The foundational information on this subject is found in the opening chapters of Genesis, which will be examined at length in chapter 3. As it will be shown, the relationship between man and woman in the creation story is presented as being one of both equality and submission.

Equality in Being. The account of the creation of man and woman is first given in Genesis 1:27-28 and then expanded in Genesis 2:18-24. Genesis 1 speaks of the creation of mankind in these words: "So God created man in

his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (v. 27). The concern of this text is not just with the creation of the first human being but of the whole human race.

The English word “man” is a translation of the Hebrew *’adam* which can be translated equally well as “human being” or “mankind.” In other words Genesis 1:27 tells us that God created mankind in two sexes, as male and female, and both of them equally reflect His image. This means that there is an essential equality in being between men and women. It also means that sexual differentiations are good because they are part of God’s original purpose for the human race.

Submission. Genesis 2 complements the account of chapter 1 by explaining how God created Eve out of Adam’s rib to be “a helper fit for him” (v. 18). The fact that God created Eve out of Adam’s body (“rib”) suggests both equality and submission. The woman is equal to man because she is made of the same substance of Adam’s body and is taken from his side to be his equal. Yet the woman is subordinate to man because she is created second and from and for man. The priority of Adam’s formation and the derivation of woman from man, as we shall see in chapter 6, are seen in Scripture (1 Tim 2:13; 1 Cor 11:8-9) as typifying the headship role God called man to fulfill in the home and in the church. Woman’s submission, however, does not imply inferiority but complementarity. Contrary to the patriarchal system, the woman is seen in Genesis 2 as the helpmate of man and not as his property.

As Susan T. Foh perceptively points out: “The man and the woman knew each other as equals, both in the image of God, and thus each with a personal relationship to God. Neither doubted the worth of the other nor of him/herself. Each performed his/her task in a different way; the man as the head and the woman as his helper. They operated as truly one flesh, one person. In one body does the rib rebel against or envy the head?”¹

The happy relationship of equality in being and submission in function which existed in Eden was largely disrupted as a result of the Fall. The rule of love was replaced by domination, tyranny, manipulation and struggle. Some of the Old Testament legislations, such as the one regulating divorce (Deut 24:1-4), must be seen as temporary accommodation to the sinful realities of the time. Yet, in spite of cultural accommodations, it is still possible to see the outworking of the original principle of equality and submission in the social and religious roles of women in Old Testament times. The following examples will illustrate this point.

PART II

WOMEN AND PRIVATE WORSHIP

Members of the Covenant. There is no question that women played a less conspicuous role than men in the worship of the covenant community of Israel. Not only could women not receive the sign of the covenant, circumcision, but they also could not function as leaders of the household in most cultic acts. This fact has led some like L. Koehler to conclude that the old covenant discriminated against women: "It is a covenant with those who are competent to enter into such a thing; that is to say with men; they represent the people . . . woman has no place in this revelation, therefore she is a constant danger to the worship of Yahweh."²

This conclusion is obviously wrong because, as Walther Eichrodt points out, "The congregation of Yahweh includes the family, . . . neither age or sex bestow any special privileges."³ Women not only shared with men in the blessings and responsibilities of the covenant, but they were also vital to the fulfillment of its blessings, which included long life, prosperity, children and land (Deut 5:29-33). Women shared equally with men in the blessings of worship by resting on the Sabbath (Ex 20:10), listening to the reading of the law (Deut 31:9-13) and rejoicing before the Lord.

Headship of Man. Women's lack of circumcision is not seen as excluding them from the covenant, because they are never despised as "uncircumcised." In fact, the introduction of circumcision as a covenant sign in Genesis 17:10-14 is followed immediately by the special blessing upon Sarah as "a mother of nations" (vv. 15-21).

The reason for women's exclusion from circumcision, aside from physiological differences, could be that the rite was seen as the sign of the functional headship role which marked out the men as the ones who would represent their families before God.⁴ As Calvin says, "Although God promised alike to males and females what he afterwards sanctioned by circumcision, he nevertheless consecrated, in one sex, the whole people to himself."⁵

The same reason may explain why a mother was ceremonially unclean for seven days after the birth of a son and fourteen days after the birth of a daughter. "The difference in time," as Susan T. Foh explains, "may be to mark the difference between the sexes from birth. In connection with the headship of man, the boy is received into the covenant community before the girl (as Adam was created first), and this time difference affects the mother's ceremonial cleanness."⁶ Examples such as these suggest that the socio-

religious role of women in ancient Israel was governed by the creation principle of equality and submission discussed above.

Learning and Keeping the Law. The Israelite woman was equally responsible with the man for learning and keeping God's law. Moses commanded all the Israelites to attend the public worship gatherings in which God's law was taught: "Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law" (Deut 31:12).

At the time of Nehemiah when the people gathered to hear the law, women too were in attendance: "And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding" (Neh 8:2). Women were to be present in the worship assembly of God's people to hear His word and they were expected to obey it (Deut 13:6-11; 17:2, 5; 29:18; 2 Chron 15:12-13).

Prayer. The participation of women in the religious life of Israel extended beyond the hearing and obeying of the law. They were free to approach God in prayer in just the same way as men. Several women such as Hannah, Rebekah, and Sarah, are mentioned as praying (1 Sam 1:10; Gen 25:22; 30:6, 22; 21:6-7). A Shunammite woman told her husband to set up a guest room for Elisha and later on to arrange for a servant to escort her to the house of the prophet (2 Kings 4:9-10, 20-23). Women such as Rebekah (Gen 25:22), Hagar (Gen 21:17), Jeroboam's wife (1 Kings 14:1-4), and Hannah (1 Sam 1:9-11) inquired of God independently of their husbands.

Home Teacher. The greatest religious influence of the Hebrew mother was undoubtedly in the home. Proverbs admonishes children to heed the instruction of both father and mother: "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and reject not your mother's teaching" (Prov 1:8). "The home," writes a Jewish scholar, "is the real temple of woman, the education of her children is her divine service, and her family is her congregation."⁷

It is noteworthy that in the history of the kings of Israel and Judah the name of each king's mother is mentioned, presumably to the shame of those mothers who reared evil men and to the praise of those who instilled principles of righteousness in their sons who became great kings. It is equally significant that Scripture gives us the names of mothers of such a great spiritual leaders as Moses, Samuel, Jesus, John the Baptist, Timothy, undoubtedly because each of these godly women made a significant contribution to the success of her son's ministry.

Vows. A widow could make her vows without any interference (Num 30:9). A married woman, however, came under the authority of her husband and a betrothed woman of her father. Their vows could be revoked by their husbands or fathers within 24 hours. Otherwise the vows would stand. As Susan T. Foh rightly explains, “The authority to nullify vows is an expression of the headship of the husband and makes sense if we consider how the wife’s vows might affect her husband. He might have to pay for his wife’s extravagance in money or goods or have to suffer from deprivation of his conjugal rights for a time. It is not women *per se* who cannot make their own vows. It is only if their position is under the God-established authority of husband or father.”⁸

Noteworthy is the fact that women like men, could take the Nazirite vows which involved a high degree of devotedness (Num 6:2-21). Clarence J. Vos points out that because of the cleansing regulations, “the Nazirite vow . . . brought one in some respect to the level of consecration of a high priest.”⁹ It is very significant therefore that both men and women were equally eligible to take this vow.

PART III

WOMEN AND PUBLIC WORSHIP

Festivals and sacrifices. Women participated not only in individual and family worship but also in several forms of public worship. The Mosaic law expected women to be present at the great festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut 12:7; 16:11-14; 1 Sam 1:1f.). Their attendance, however, was not obligatory, presumably because of their responsibilities at home.¹⁰

The majority of sacrifices were brought by men as representative of their household, but there are indications that women also in certain instances were expected to act independently in bringing their own sacrifices (Lev 12:6; 15:29). Manoah and his wife are described as participating together in offering a sacrifice to the angel of the Lord (Judges 13:15-20). Hannah, in spite of the presence of her husband, Elkanah, plays a major role in bringing a sacrifice to the house of the Lord at Shiloh, in presenting the child to Eli, and in praying a psalm of praise (1 Sam 1:24-27; 2:1-10).

In his book *Woman in Old Testament Worship*, Clarence J. Vos offers this insightful comment regarding the story of Hannah: “It is evident that Hannah was at the sanctuary and near enough to the priest to have her seemingly unusual conduct be observed by him. There is therefore, no hint that women were supposed to be kept at a distance from the sanctuary. Finally

we should note that after Eli has rebuked her it does not seem improper that she, a woman, defend herself; and her defence is immediately accepted. In all this we receive the impression that Hannah, the woman, moved as one who enjoys a large margin of cultic freedom and respect.”¹¹

Ministry at the Sanctuary. Women contributed to the sanctuary in two ways: through their gifts and their services. They brought their gifts for the building of the tabernacle, not through their fathers or husbands, but individually and personally (Ex 35:22). Special mention is made of the things women made with their hands (Ex 35:25-26) and of the laver of bronze which was made “from the mirrors of the ministering women who ministered at the door of the tent of meeting” (Ex 38:8).

Reference to “the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting” is also found in 1 Samuel 2:22. There is scholarly debate regarding the nature of the service rendered by these women at the entrance of the tabernacle.¹² Whatever the nature of their service these women did have a recognized function at the tabernacle.

We have also several examples of women participating in the worship of the temple by singing. Ezra speaks of “two hundred male and female singers” (Ezra 2:65; 1 Chron 25:5-6; 2 Chron 35:25). The Psalmist suggests that women played a vital role in the choir of the tabernacle: “Thy solemn processions are seen, O God, the processions of my God, my King, into the sanctuary—the singers in front, the minstrels last, between them maidens playing timbrels” (Ps 68:24-25).

Women also rendered a significant service in national religious songs and dances. Exodus reports that “Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dancing” (Ex 15:20).

Women in Office. The fact that the Old Testament assigns to women a subordinate role in the religious and social life—in accordance with the functional submission established by God at creation—did not prevent some women from serving as prophetess (2 Kings 22:14; Neh 6:14), judge (Judges 4:4), and even queen (though a wicked usurper, 2 Kings 11:3).

The case of Deborah stands out because, though a woman, she functioned as both a judge and prophet in Israel. The book of Judges introduces her in an impressive way: “Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah . . . and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment. She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam . . . and said to him, ‘The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you, ‘Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor . . .’” (Jud 4:4-6).

There is no indication in this story that the people of Israel or the commander of the army, Barak, resented the spiritual and civil leadership of Deborah because she was a woman. The Old Testament does not exclude women from leadership positions in general but only from the role of priests. The reason for this exclusion, as it will be shown later, was not cultural but theological.

A Woman Prophet. The story of Huldah, the prophetess, exemplifies even more explicitly the important ministry that women fulfilled within the religious life of ancient Israel. Desiring to know the fate of his nation, King Josiah sent the high priest and several of his notables to the prophetess Huldah to “inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people and for all Judah” concerning the newly found book of the law (2 Kings 22:13-14). The fact that King Josiah sent these men, not to Jeremiah or Zephaniah who were contemporary prophets, but to the prophetess Huldah, strongly indicates that in Old Testament times there was little if any prejudice against the spiritual leadership and ministry of women.

The very existence of female prophets points to the considerable religious influence women could legitimately exercise. This is also corroborated by the fact that Joel predicted a future widespread manifestation of the gift of prophecy among both men and women (Joel 2:28-29).

No Priestesses. In view of the important religious leadership roles women like Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah, exercised in the Israelite society, it is important to ask: “Why were women excluded from the priesthood?” Two main reasons are generally given and both of them are incorrect.

The first reason is the alleged frequent ritual impurity of women. Elisabeth M. Tetlow clearly states: “A major reason why women were excluded from the priesthood and from full participation in the temple cult was their frequent ritual impurity.”¹³

This reason lacks both Biblical and practical support. Biblically there is absolutely no suggestion that women were excluded from the priesthood because of their monthly menstrual flow which rendered them ceremonially unclean for seven days (Lev 15:19-24). The truth of the matter is that men were also frequently ritually unclean. In fact, every time a man had a discharge of semen during sexual intercourse he was unclean until the evening (Lev 15:1-12). This would obviously happen not just once a month, as in the case of the woman’s menstrual cycle.

Margaret Howe, a leading feminist and a British scholar, acknowledges the validity of this observation: “The emission of semen by the male was also

a defilement and disqualified him from officiating in the holy place. As a result, it became customary for priests to abstain from sexual intercourse for the duration of their priestly service. However, it was recognized that an emission of semen could take place at times other than copulation, and this was equally a defilement (Lev 15:16-18). *Indeed, the male emission of semen can occur with more frequency and less predictability than the menstrual flow in a woman. As priestly service was, in any case, intermittent, it is not clear why menstruation in itself would disqualify a woman from priesthood.*"¹⁴

It is noteworthy that "an unnatural discharge from male organs made the man unclean for seven days after the discharge had ceased (Lev 15:1-15)."¹⁵ A man was unclean for seven days also when he had sexual intercourse with a woman during her menstrual period (Lev 15:24). If all this frequent ritual uncleanness did not disqualify men from serving as priests, why should it disqualify women? Could not women serve at the temple like men on a rotating basis (1 Chron 24; Luke 1:5, 9), according to their ritual status?

Practically, the argument is discredited by the fact that women did serve in a limited role at the tabernacle. If ritual impurity were the factor for the exclusion of women from the priesthood, why then were they not excluded also from ministering at the entrance of the tabernacle (Ex 38:8; 1 Sam 2:22)? Considerations such as these indicate that the argument about ritual impurity is a fabrication of those who are bent on believing that the Old Testament is sexist and biased against women.

Danger of Sacred Prostitution. The second reason given for the exclusion of women from the Old Testament priesthood, is the need that existed "to avoid the dangers of the fertility cults and sacred prostitution."¹⁶ It is argued that "the sacred prostitution of old Canaanite cults was still too vivid a memory for the intervention of a woman in the celebration of sacred rites not to appear immediately ambiguous and suspect."¹⁷ This argument falls short on at least two counts.

First, the fact that some of the pagan priestesses served as prostitutes cannot be a valid reason for God to exclude Israelite women to function as exemplary priestesses at the sanctuary. A legitimate practice cannot be prohibited because of its perversion. The sons of Eli "lay with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting" (1 Sam 2:22). There is no indication, however, that these prostitutional acts resulted in the abolition of the priesthood in general or of the ministry of women at the entrance of the sanctuary in particular. If the argument were valid, then not even men should have functioned as priests because of the danger of male prostitution which the

Bible views as more abominable than female prostitution, by calling the male cult prostitutes “dogs” (Deut 23:18; Rev 22:15).

Second, there are indications that many, if not most, of the pagan priestesses in the ancient world, lived celibate and devoted lives. Some of the Babylonian priestesses lived in cloisters.¹⁸ The women priests who officiated, for example at the temples of Vesta, Apollo, Athena, Polias, Dionysius, as well as in the various mystery religions, were in most cases either celibate or very continent in their lifestyles.¹⁹

In the light of the foregoing considerations we conclude that the reason for the exclusion of women from the priesthood was not because of their frequent ritual impurity or the danger of sacred prostitution. Rather, the true reason is to be found in the unique Biblical view of the role the priest fulfilled as representative of the people to God.

The Representative Role of the Priest. The priesthood developed through several stages in the Old Testament. During patriarchal times the head of the household or of the tribe fulfilled the priestly function of representing his household to God. Thus Noah (Gen 8:20), Abraham (Gen 22:13), Jacob (Gen 35:3), and Job (Job 1:5) each served as representative priest of his family.

With the establishment of the theocracy at Sinai and the erection of the tabernacle, God appointed the tribe of Levi to serve as priests in place of the first-born or head of each family (Num 3:6-13). While God called all the people of Israel, male and female, to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:5-6; cf. Is 61:6), as a result of the Sinai apostasy the Levites were chosen to serve as representatives for the whole nation, because of their allegiance to God (Ex 32:26-29). When the priests ministered they acted as the representatives of the people.

It was because of this representative role which the priest fulfilled as the head of the household of Israel, that women were excluded from the priesthood. A woman could minister as prophet because a prophet was primarily a communicator of God’s will, but she could not function as a priest because a priest was appointed to act as the representative of the people to God and of God to the people. As James B. Hurley rightly observes, “The Mosaic provision [for an exclusively male priesthood] stands in a historical continuum and continues the practice of having representative males serve to officiate in public worship functions.”²⁰

“The fact that most pagan religions of the time did have priestesses, as well as priests,” notes John Meyendorff, “shows that a male priesthood was

the sign of a specifically biblical, i.e. Jewish and Christian identity.”²¹ This unique, counter-cultural Jewish and Christian identity stems not from the religious genius of Judaism or Christianity but from divine revelation which established a functional headship role which man is to fulfill in the home and in the household of faith.

CONCLUSION

Our survey of the religious roles of women in the Old Testament shows that women played a most vital role both in the private and public religious life of ancient Israel. As full members of the covenant community, women participated in the study and teaching of the law to their children, in offering prayers and vows to God, in ministering at the entrance of the sanctuary, in singing and in the prophetic ministry of exhortation and guidance.

The religious roles of women, however, were different from those of men, in accordance with the principle of equality of being and submission in function which is implicit in the creation story. The principle of appointive male leadership in the home and in public worship was threatened then as it is today, and would have been easily lost had it not been for many of the Old Testament laws which were designed to distinguish between the roles that God has called men and women to fulfill in the socio-religious life.

Clarence J. Vos, though himself an Evangelical Feminist, reaches essentially the same conclusion: “Although it is clear from the Old Testament that woman takes a different role in Israel’s worship than man, there is no evidence to consider her an inferior creature. As a member of the religious community we can view her as taking an equal place among the people of God. It was not her task to lead the family or tribe in worship; normally this was done by the patriarch or the eldest male member. That a male was appointed to this function no doubt rested on the idea that the male was considered the “first-born” of the human family—a motif discernible in the creation story of Genesis 2.”²²

The implications of our conclusion regarding the ministry of women in the Old Testament for the ministry of women today will be discussed after our examination of the witness of the New Testament. At this point it suffices to note that the religious roles of women in the Old Testament were different and yet complementary to that of men, in accordance with the Biblical principle of equality in being and submission in function.

ENDNOTES

1. Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1979), p. 62.
2. L. Koehler, *Old Testament Theology* (Lutterworth, London, 1957), p. 69.
3. Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (SCM, London, 1961), p. 131.
4. For a discussion of circumcision as a sign of the functional role of men, see Clarence J. Vos, *Woman in Old Testament Worship* (Delft, England, 1968), pp. 51-59.
5. John Calvin, *Corpus Reformatorum* LI, p. 453.
6. Susan T. Foh (n.1), p. 81.
7. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1948 ed., s.v. "Woman," by Hirschel Revel, vol. 10, p. 565.
8. Susan T. Foh (n. 1), p. 73.
9. Clarence J. Vos (n. 4), p. 201.
10. See J. B. Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1962), p. 229.
11. Clarence J. Vos (n. 4), pp. 153-154.
12. See Ismar J. Peritz, "Women in the Ancient Hebrew Cult," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 17 (1898): 145.
13. Elisabeth Meier Tetlow, *Women and Ministry in the New Testament: Called to Serve* (Lanham, Maryland, 1980), p. 22. In a similar vein Roger Gryson writes: "Since she was subject to multiple legal impurities, it was inconceivable that she would have access to the priesthood or that she would be part of the personnel attached to the sanctuary" (*The Ministry of Women in the Early Church* [Collegetown, Minnesota, 1976], p. 1); also Clarence J. Vos (n. 4), p. 193.
14. E. Margaret Howe, *Women and Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982), p. 100.
15. L. E. Toombs, "Clean and Unclean," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, 1962), vol. 1, p. 644.

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16. Mary J. Evans, *Women in the Bible* (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1983), p. 30.
 17. Roger Gryson (n. 13), p. 1.
 18. G. R. Driver and J. C. Miles, *The Babylonian Laws* (Oxford, 1952), pp. 359-360.
 19. For documentation and discussion, see Elisabeth Meier Tetlow (n. 13), pp. 7-20.
 20. James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981), p. 52.
 21. John Meyendorff, "The Orthodox Churches," in *The Ordination of Women: Pro and Con*, ed. Michael P. Hamilton and Nancy S. Montgomery (New York, 1975), p. 130.
 22. Clarence J. Vos (n. 4), p. 207.

Chapter 2

THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

What impact did the coming of Christ make on the social status and religious roles of women? Was Jesus' treatment of women as human *persons* to whom and for whom He had come and His inclusion of some of them among His inner circle of companions, designed to pave the way for their full access to the pastoral ministry? Does the New Testament respect or reject the social and religious role distinctions between men and women which we have found in the Old Testament?

Two Opposing Views. Two opposing answers are generally given to these questions. Some Bible students argue that the New Testament abolished "the distinction between priest and laity"¹ by granting to women equal and full access to all the forms of ministry open to men.² Elizabeth Meier Tetlow, for example, concludes her book *Women and Ministry in the New Testament*, by saying: "There is nothing inherent in the character of Christian ministry as it is presented in the writings of the New Testament which would give reason for the exclusion of women. On the contrary, the New Testament portrays Jesus treating women as equal human persons. It also portrays women and men serving side by side in the various ministries of the early church. . . . According to the evidence of the New Testament, the exclusion of women from ecclesiastical ministry is neither in accord with the teaching or practice of Jesus nor with that of the first century Church."³

Other Bible students disagree with this conclusion, maintaining instead that the New Testament upholds the Old Testament role distinctions between men and women in the home and in the church. For example, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church—

Missouri Synod, states in its report issued in September 1985: “This analysis of the order of creation and redemption leads to the formulation of a second principle, derived from the Holy Scriptures, for clarifying the function of women in the church today: *Distinctive identities for man and woman in their relation to each other were assigned by God at creation. These identities are not nullified by Christ’s redemption, and they should be reflected in the church.*”⁴

A similar conclusion is presented in the 1984 report issued by the commission appointed by the Christian Reformed Church. The report declares: “‘The headship principle,’ which means that the man should exercise primary leadership and direction-setting in the home, in the church, and in society in general, is a creational norm recognized in both the Old and New Testament.”⁵

A Reason for Opposing Views. How can evangelical Christians, committed to the authority of the Word of God, reach two opposing conclusions regarding the New Testament teaching on the role of women in the church? A major reason is the seemingly contradictory data found in the New (and Old) Testament regarding the social status and religious roles of women. Some statements and examples suggest that women shared equally with men in the various ministries of the church, while others indicate that women were excluded from the appointive representative roles of apostles, pastors, and elders/bishops.

Jesus, for example, on the one hand elevated women to a position of equal worth with men, admitting some of them to His inner circle of companions, and commissioning them to witness for Him (Matt 12:49-50; 27:55-56; 28:7; Luke 8:1-3; John 4:26-30; 20:17-18). Yet on the other hand Jesus did not include any women among His twelve apostles nor did He commission any to “feed my sheep” (John 21:17).

Similarly, Paul, on the one hand, speaks of women as “fellow workers” (Rom 16:1-3, 6, 12; Phil 4:2-3), prophets (1 Cor 11:5), persons who “have labored side by side with me in the gospel” (Phil 4:3) and as being equal to men and one in Christ (“neither male nor female”—Gal 3:28). Yet, on the other hand the Apostle teaches the submission of wives to their husbands (Eph 5:22-24; Col 3:18) and the exclusion of women from the authoritative teaching role of pastor or elder (1 Tim 2:11-12; 1 Cor 14:34-35).

The existence of these apparently contradictory teachings can easily give rise to conflicting views. This happens when one chooses to maximize those statements or examples which favor one’s view and to minimize opposing statements by ignoring, reinterpreting or rejecting them. This is not

a new phenomenon in Biblical interpretation. A classic example is the two opposing views regarding Paul's seemingly contradictory statements about the law. Antinomians appeal to those Pauline statements which speak of Christ *abolishing* the law (Eph 2:15; cf. Rom 3:28; 7:6) to negate the value of the law in the process of salvation. Legalists make use of those Pauline texts which speak of Christ *establishing* the law (Rom 3:31; cf. Rom 7:12; 1 Cor 7:19) to teach law-keeping as the basis of salvation.

Method. A responsible interpretation of seemingly contradictory Biblical teachings, must first recognize the existing tension and then seek for a resolution by trying to understand its causes. In the case of Paul's contradictory statements about the law, I have shown elsewhere⁶ that the contradiction can be explained by simply recognizing the *different contexts* in which Paul speaks about the law. In the *context of salvation* (justification—right standing before God), Paul clearly affirms that law-keeping is of no avail (Rom 3:20). But, in the *context of Christian conduct* (sanctification—right living before God), Paul maintains the value and validity of God's law (Rom 7:12; 13:8-10; 1 Cor 7:19).

The same methodology will be used in the present study. First, we shall endeavor to delineate the seemingly contradictory teachings of the New Testament regarding the role of women in the church and then we shall seek to resolve the apparent contradiction by trying to understand its causes.

Objective. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part examines the role of women in the ministry of Jesus. The second part focuses on the ministry of women in the apostolic church. The concern is not merely to survey the various forms of women's ministries but primarily to understand the Biblical rationale for the inclusion of women in certain ministries and their exclusion from others. The latter question will be investigated more fully in the subsequent chapters.

PART I

WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

1. Jesus' Attitude toward Women

Radical Break. Most scholars acknowledge that Jesus' treatment of women represents a radical break with the Jewish cultural tradition of His time. Joachim Jeremias, for example, writes: "Jesus knowingly overthrew custom when he allowed women to follow him." He calls the presence of women in the inner circle of Jesus' followers "an unprecedented happening in the history of that time."⁷

To appreciate the revolutionary attitude of Jesus toward women it is important to note that in the centuries following the close of the Old Testament canon, the subordinate role of women was hardened to a considerable degree. Women became relegated to a position of marked inferiority. In religious life, contrary to the Old Testament practice, women were largely excluded from participation in public worship, being considered unfit to learn and inappropriate to teach.

The prevailing rabbinic attitude toward the role of women in the temple or synagogue is well reflected in Rabbi Eliezer ben Azariah's comment, "The men come to learn, the women come to hear" (bHag. 3a). The women could listen to the reading of Scripture but were not expected to gain any deep understanding. On account of this perception women were almost totally excluded from any formal religious education. Rabbi Eliezer said: "if a man gives his daughter a knowledge of the Law, it is as though he taught her lechery" (mSot. 4:3). The depreciation of women was such that men, especially rabbis, would not speak to them in public. Against this background Jesus' attitude toward women is "without precedent in contemporary Judaism."⁸

Women as Persons. Central to Jesus' attitude toward women is His view of them as *persons* for whom He had come. He viewed them not in terms of sex, age or marital status, but in terms of their relation to God. "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt 12:50). Here Jesus identifies as disciples and members of His family, any person, male or female, who does the will of God. This sentiment is echoed in Paul's great proclamation: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

The value Jesus placed on women as persons stands out in His teaching on divorce. Women are not objects that can be dismissed at will "for any cause." Rather they are persons who by God's design can enter into a sacred marital relationship which no man has the right to "put asunder" (Matt 19:3, 6).

The description of the crippled woman as a "daughter of Abraham" (Luke 13:16) is also indicative of the value Jesus gave to women. The title "son of Abraham" was commonly used to emphasize the worth of a man as a member of the covenant community. But the title "daughter of Abraham" was virtually unknown, because women were seen not as citizens of the nation but as members of their families. By the use of this title Jesus intended to bring out the value he placed on the crippled woman in particular and on women in general.

Women's Intelligence and Faith. The encounters of Jesus with women illustrate not only His respect for them as persons but also His appreciation for their intelligence and faith. His conversation with the Samaritan woman (John 4:7-30) shows His willingness to dismiss the cultural conventions of His time. According to rabbinic thinking Jesus should not have talked with her for three reasons: she was a Samaritan, a woman, and immoral. Jesus refused to be restricted by such cultural conventions in revealing to her His Messiahship.

The conversation indicates that Jesus considered this woman as capable of grasping profound theological concepts such as the "living water" (John 4:10), the correct place of worship (4:21), and the spiritual nature of God (4:24). It is instructive to note that this woman is the first person to whom Jesus, in John's Gospel, reveals Himself as Messiah. She not only accepted Jesus as the expected Messiah but was also the first messenger to witness for Him to the Samaritans. The success of her witness is emphasized by John who says that "Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony" (4:39).

Jesus' encounter with a Canaanite woman provides another example of His appreciation for women's intellectual and spiritual capabilities (Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30). Seeking healing for her daughter, this woman followed Jesus until the disciples became so irritated that they begged Jesus to send her away. Jesus' attitude was different. He refused to send her away. Instead, He chose to talk with her and test her faith. She understood that Jesus' first responsibility was to Israel, but she also believed that He could bestow upon her "the crumbs" of His blessings. Jesus commended her "great faith" (Matt 15:28) and granted her request. What is significant here is that Jesus recognized the woman's intelligence and faith by talking with her and deliberately bringing out her intellectual and spiritual capacities. She receives a place in sacred history as the first Gentile convert.

Other encounters of Jesus with women further demonstrate His appreciation for their faith and love (Mark 5:25-34; Luke 7:36-50). The encounter with the repentant woman at the home of Simon is most revealing of a woman's faith and love in action (Luke 7:36-50). While Simon would have never permitted such a "sinner" to touch him, Jesus accepted the public demonstration of her love and gratitude as an example of godly faith in action. Once again Jesus shows respect for women as persons, without reference to their sex. He received them as full-fledged participants in the blessings of God's people.

Women in the Parables. The parables further illustrate Jesus' acceptance of women as treasured members of the human family. The parables present women in ordinary activities which dramatically illustrate the lessons Jesus wanted to teach. A woman mixing leaven in flour illustrates the hidden but pervasive nature of God's kingdom (Matt 13:33). A woman looking for a lost coin exemplifies God's concern for lost sinners (Luke 15:8-10). The wise and foolish bridesmaids illustrate the need of constant readiness for the unexpected moment of Christ's return (Matt 25:1-13).

A persistent woman confronting an unscrupulous judge teaches the need of perseverance in prayer and of not losing heart (Luke 18:1-8). A poor widow who gives her last penny illustrates that God measures our devotion not by the size of our gift but by the commitment of our hearts (Mark 12:38-44). Thus, contrary to the rabbinic custom of generally avoiding mentioning women in their teachings, Jesus often refers to them, and always in positive ways, to illustrate the principles of His kingdom.

Women as Learners. Jesus taught women not only in those casual encounters mentioned above, but also in formal settings. The best example is that of Jesus teaching in the home of Lazarus where Mary "sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teachings" (Luke 10:39). Here we have the typical picture of a rabbi instructing his students. What is uncommon, however, is the fact that the student is a woman. Contrary to the view of Rabbi Eliezer, who would rather burn the Scriptures than teach their truth to women, Jesus not only takes time to teach Mary, but also praises her for having laid aside all other concerns in order to listen to Him (Luke 10:41).

Martha too was taught by Jesus. In connection with the death of Lazarus, Jesus took time to teach her and to lead her to accept Him as her Messiah and the source of the resurrection from the dead (John 11:25-27). It is interesting to note that Martha's confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of God" (John 11:27), is the nearest equivalent to Peter's confession of Christ (Matt 16:16).

The above examples suffice to show that Jesus' attitude toward women was in many ways revolutionary. He rejected the prevailing prejudices against women by treating them as human persons of equal worth to men, by appreciating their intellectual and spiritual capacities, by admitting them into His fellowship, and by taking time to teach them the truths of the kingdom of God. Was Christ's recognition of the human worth of women and His appreciation for their spiritual, intellectual, and moral capacities, intended to open the way for women to function as pastors/elders in the church? In the rest of this chapter we shall begin to answer this question by examining first the participation of women in the ministry of Christ, and then in the apostolic church.

2. Women in the Ministry of Jesus

Unique Role. The role that some women filled in the ministry of Christ is absolutely unique. It is remarkable that while Christ ministered to men, women are shown as ministering to Him. Whenever the Gospels speak of ministry being rendered directly to Jesus, it is the ministry of either angels or women. (This does not imply that all women are angels.) After the temptation “angels came and ministered to him” (Matt 4:11; cf. Mark 1:13). All the other instances speak of the ministry of women. After Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law, “she arose, and ministered unto them” (Matt 8:15, KJV). Mention is made of a band of women who followed Christ constantly and who “ministered unto him of their substance” (Luke 8:3, KJV). On two occasions it is recorded that Martha served Jesus (Luke 10:40; John 12:2).

The Greek verb used in all the above examples is *diakoneo*, which is translated “to serve” or “to minister.” This verb “has the special quality of indicating very personally the service rendered to another.”⁹ It is from the root of this verb that the English word “deacon” is derived. The personal and dedicated service that women offered to Christ included the preparing and serving of food, especially since the original meaning of *diakoneo* was “to wait at table.”¹⁰

Travelling Companions. Perhaps the most amazing aspect of Christ’s relationship with women is the small band of women who followed Him together with the disciples. Luke provides this insightful description: “Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means” (Luke 8:1-3).

This is the only passage in the Gospels which tells us how Jesus and His disciples lived when they were not entertained by hospitable people. It is noteworthy that the travelling party of Jesus included a group of women besides the twelve disciples. Each of the synoptic writers records that there were many other women besides those which are mentioned by name (Matt 27:55; Mark 15:41; Luke 8:3)

At a time when women appeared in public only when absolutely necessary, it must have been a matter of considerable gossip to see a group of women travelling with Jesus. It was not uncommon for a rabbi to travel with a band of followers, but it was most unusual for women to be among them. The fact that Jesus accepted both the presence and the service of

these devoted women clearly shows that His actions were not conditioned by the custom of the day.

Women at the Crucifixion and Resurrection. Some of the women who followed Christ during His ministry assumed a prominent role at the time of the crucifixion and resurrection. At the risk of their lives they followed Christ to the Cross and then they followed His body to the burial place. They wanted to show their tender love for Him by returning later to embalm His body with spices and ointment (Luke 23:55-56; Matt 27:59-61; Mark 15:47-16:1).

When the women returned to the tomb after the Sabbath to anoint Christ's body, they were honored with the news of the resurrection. Their loyalty and devotion to Christ were rewarded by their being the first to encounter the risen Savior (Matt 28:9; Mark 16:9; John 20:14) and to be commissioned to break the news of the resurrection to the disciples (Mark 16:7; Matt 28:7, 10). In the Passion narratives the women clearly show a greater loyalty, courage and faith than the twelve disciples.

The same women who ministered to Jesus during His travels and at His death were also present among the disciples in the period between the resurrection and Pentecost. Presumably they were also among those upon whom the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost (Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4, 14-47).

3. No Women Apostles

The foregoing considerations have shown that women had a special place in the life of Christ. He affirmed their personhood, related to them with love and respect, appreciated their intellectual and spiritual capacities, taught and healed them, accepted them in His inner circle of travelling companions and honored them with the first announcement of His resurrection.

In the light of these facts we may ask, Why did Jesus call no woman to be part of the twelve apostles? Furthermore, Why didn't the apostles and "the women" (Acts 1:14) who deliberated over the replacement of Judas, at least also propose the name of a woman as a possible candidate? Obviously it was not a question of qualifications, since several women fulfilled the conditions for apostleship, namely, someone who had accompanied Jesus and had witnessed His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22).

Cultural Reason. Two reasons are often given for Christ's omission of women from the apostles: the first is cultural and the second is theological. Culturally, it is argued that in that "particular cultural setting only males would have been acceptable both as the closest companions of Jesus and as leaders of the community which was to be formed."¹¹ This explanation is unacceptable for three major reasons.

First, if Jesus broke radically with the customs of the time by admitting women into the inner circle of followers, why should He have felt constrained by customs not to commission women to preach or teach publicly? It is unconvincing that Jesus radically rejected the conventions of His time in His treatment of women, but conceded to them by not allowing women to be apostles.

Second, as Susan T. Foh points out, “to argue that Jesus’ choice of apostles was determined by culture is to ignore the fact that God chose the culture and time in which his Son was to be born. No detail escapes God’s consideration.”¹²

Third, in the Roman-Hellenistic culture of the time, as we shall see, women played leading priestly roles in the religious life. Thus, if Jesus had been conditioned by the culture of His time, he could have appointed some women among the apostles, in view of the fact that they would have been readily accepted in the Gentile world where the Gospel was to be preached.

Theological Reason. Some reason that Jesus did not appoint women as apostles because He believed that “the end of time was coming soon” and consequently He “was not concerned to legislate for His church for all time.”¹³ If this reasoning were true, then Jesus should not have bothered to appoint twelve apostles as the representatives of the new spiritual Israel, and to commission them to preach the Gospel to the whole world. It is true that Jesus did not define the distinct functional roles men and women are to fulfill within the church, but He did choose and train twelve men to feed His sheep and to make disciples of all nations (John 21:15-17; Matt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

Jesus’ choice of twelve male apostles was not conditioned by the social conventions of the time, but rather was consistent with the Old Testament headship role man is called to fulfill in the home and in the community of faith. This role structure, as we shall now see, was retained and respected in the life and order of the church which the apostles raised up under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

PART II

WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

1. The Participation of Women

Visible and Active. Women were visible and active not only in the ministry of Jesus, but also in the life of the apostolic church. Immediately after Christ’s ascension the disciples gathered in the upper room “together

with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers” (Acts 1:14). These women were there not to cook for the men, but to pray with them and to seek divine guidance over who should be Judas’ successor. The women who had filled a significant role in the ministry of Christ now continue their service within the life of the community.

On the day of Pentecost women were in the upper room together with the disciples when the Holy Spirit was poured out and all of them began speaking in tongues (Acts 2:1-4). Peter explained the event to the skeptical crowd by quoting Joel: “Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, . . . and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit” (Acts 2:17-18). The specific reference to “daughters” and “maidservants” presumably served to justify why the women also had received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Women in the Expanding Church. Women joined the expanding church in large numbers. Luke notes that “more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women” (Acts 5:14). When Philip preached the Gospel in Samaria, the result was the same: many “were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).

One of the early converts in Jerusalem was Mary, the mother of John Mark. She offered her house as a meeting place for believers in that part of the city. It must have been an important meeting place, since Peter went there immediately after his release from prison (Acts 12:12). Some scholars believe that the upper room was in her house.¹⁴

When the Gospel reached Europe, women again were prominent. The first European convert was a woman named Lydia, “from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods” (Acts 16:14). The next convert mentioned by Luke was also a woman, a former demon-possessed slave—an example of how the Gospel reached all classes (Acts 16:16).

The rest of the book of Acts is replete with examples of women who responded to Paul’s proclamation of the Gospel by becoming active participants in the life of the church. In Thessalonica and Berea among the many who believed there were “not a few Greek women of high standing” (Acts 17:4, 12). In Athens one woman, Damaris, is specifically mentioned among the few who believed (Acts 17:34). In Corinth Priscilla, together with her husband Aquila, took an active role in instructing the learned Apollos (Acts 18:2, 26).

Paul, who sometimes has been unjustly accused of being an anti-feminist, repeatedly mentions in his letters many women as worthy of

commendation for the special work they were doing in the church (Rom 16; Phil 4:2-3; 1 Cor 16:19). There is no doubt that the apostolic church followed Christ's example by including women in the ministry of the church. The question, however, is: what specific roles did women fill within the apostolic church? To this question we must now address ourselves.

2. The Roles of Women

Charitable Service. A major need in the primitive church was caring for the needy, the sick, the widows, the orphans and the visitors. The apostles were made forcefully aware of such a need soon after Pentecost by the murmuring of the Hellenists over the apparent neglect of their widows (Acts 6:1). To remedy the problem "seven men of good repute" were appointed at that time (Acts 6:3). Soon women, especially widows, became active in the charitable services of the church, communicating Christian love by deeds of mercy and hospitality (1 Tim 5:9-10).

Acts reports the story of a woman, Tabitha (Dorcas), who "was full of good works and acts of charity" (Acts 9:36). Her works of charity consisted in making clothes for the poor (v. 39). The fact that "All the widows stood beside . . . weeping" (v. 39) after her death, suggests that she herself was probably one of the widows in the local church. There is no indication in the story that at this point the widows were organized as a group or order within the church.

By the time Paul wrote 1 Timothy widows were recognized as a special group within the church, since the apostle writes: "Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age. . . . But refuse to enroll younger widows" (1 Tim 5:9, 11). Some have argued that the enrolling represented an official appointment to certain offices in the church.¹⁵ However, as James B. Hurley points out, "A close look at the text indicates that the roll is a welfare roll rather than an employment roll."¹⁶

The ministry performed by these widows apparently consisted of prayer and supplication for the church (1 Tim 5:5), as well as "doing good in every way" (v. 10). There is no indication that their service was perceived as an official order of ministry in the church. As Charles C. Ryrie puts it: "Official support was part of the enrolling; official duties were not. The catalogue was instituted to correct and systematize financial matters, and no doubt it paved the way for the development of orders of ministry among women, but at this point in history matters are still undefined."¹⁷

"Deaconesses." Closely related to the ministry of widows is that of women who became known as "deaconesses." This ministry is highlighted

by Paul's reference to Phoebe, "a deaconess of the church of Cenchreae . . . she has been a helper of many and of myself as well" (Rom 16:1-2). The word "deaconess" is a translation of the Greek *diakonos*, a masculine noun which was used both for men and women with two distinct meanings.

In the vast majority of its occurrences in the New Testament, the term *diakonos* simply means "servant" or "one who ministers" to another. Paul, for example, speaks of himself and of his co-workers as *diakonoï* (servants, ministers) of Christ, of the Gospel and of the new covenant (1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 3:6; Eph 3:7; 1 Thess 3:2). He also speaks of his apostolic work as a *diakonia* (Rom 11:13)

In a few cases the term *diakonos* is used to describe the church office of "deacons" (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-13). Usually the context gives the clue to whether *diakonos* is used in the general sense of ministering or in the restricted sense of an established diaconate. The question then is to determine whether Paul is commending Phoebe as a member of the church at Cenchreae who has served others, or as a deacon in that church. Scholarly opinion is almost equally divided on this matter. Personally I tend to think that *diakonos* is used by Paul in a technical sense to describe the official deaconess role of Phoebe in the church. The main reasons are three.

First, the use of the participle "being" (*ousan*) in Greek and the connection with the church—"Phoebe, *being* a deacon of the church in Cenchreae"—reads like an official title. Paul may have chosen to introduce Phoebe to the Romans by her official role in her home church, especially if she was the carrier of his letter, as is generally believed.

Second, the characterization of Phoebe as a "helper of many" (Rom 16:2), suggests that she played a vital role in the Cenchreanean church by offering assistance to many, including Paul himself. Such a service was associated especially with the office of the deacon.

Third, in 1 Timothy 3:11 Paul describes the qualifications of a group of women serving in the church—qualifications which are point for point parallel to that of the deacons given immediately before (1 Tim 3:8-10). "The parallel lists of qualifications strongly suggests," as James B. Hurley observes, "that the function of these women was parallel to that of the deacons."¹⁸

The reason why Paul does not call these women deaconesses (*diakonissa*) is simply because such a term did not yet exist. The term first appears in the Syriac *Didascalia* (ch. 16), a document written in the early part of the third century. The masculine form of "deacon—*diakonos*" was used for both men and women as in the case of Phoebe (Rom 16:1). In 1 Timothy 3:11 Paul uses

the word “women—*gynaikas*” instead of “deacons—*diakonoī*” presumably to avoid confusion, since he had already used *diakonos* to introduce the men in 1 Timothy 3:8. Thus, it would seem best to understand the “women” of 1 Timothy 3 as a group of persons who served the church in a similar capacity to that of the deacons. The example of Phoebe, identified as *diakonos*, lends positive support to this conclusion.

Female deacons were needed in the early centuries when the sexes could not mingle freely. According to the *Didascalia* they performed a great variety of services in the care of women, including assistance at the baptism and burial of women, the catechizing of women and caring for sick women at home.¹⁹ They never functioned, however, as heads of the community, but served in a role auxiliary to that of the pastors, elders and bishops.

Women as “Fellow-workers.” Women distinguished themselves in the apostolic church not only at the level of local churches but also in the wider missionary outreach of the church. Much of the missionary activity reported in the New Testament focuses on Paul and his co-workers, many of whom were women.

In Romans 16 Paul greets several women whose missionary endeavors contributed significantly to the life and growth of the church. Outstanding among them is Prisca (a diminutive of Priscilla) and her husband, Aquila. Of them Paul says: “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I but also all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks; greet also the church in their house” (Rom 16:3-5).

This couple lived in Rome until about A. D. 49 when they were forced to move to Corinth after Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome (Acts 18:1-3). From Corinth they moved their tentmaking business first to Ephesus (Acts 18:18-26; 1 Cor 16:19) and then back to Rome. It is noteworthy that both Paul and Luke mention Prisca almost always before her husband, Aquila, presumably because she was the more prominent in missionary endeavors. In Acts she is engaged with her husband, Aquila, in teaching the great orator Apollos (Acts 18:26). Prisca, therefore, must have been well-grounded in the Christian faith and a most capable instructor.

Paul refers to this couple as “fellow-workers.” The term was often used by Paul to characterize those persons who worked with him, including Titus and Timothy (Rom 16:9, 21; 1 Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 1:24; 8:23; Phil 2:25; 4:3; Col 4:11; 1 Thess 3:2).

Other women greeted by Paul are: Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis, all of whom “worked hard” in the Lord (vv. 6, 12). The term Paul uses

here is descriptive of the toil in proclaiming the Gospel (cf. 1 Cor 4:12; 15:10; Phil 2:16; 1 Tim 4:10). In Philippians 4:2, 3 Paul mentions two other women, Euodia and Syntyche, as persons who “have labored side by side with me in the Gospel.”

Paul: a Chauvinist? The fact that Paul commends such a significant number of women for working hard with him in the missionary enterprise of the church, suggests two things. First, the characterization of Paul as “anti-feminist” is based on prejudice. Paul appreciated women and admired their contribution to the mission of the church. Thus, his insistence on the role differentiation between men and women in the home and in the church, which we shall examine in later chapters, must be seen as an indication not of Paul’s chauvinism but rather of his respect for the role distinctions established by God at creation.

Second, women as well as men can participate legitimately in the ministry of the church. The question, however, is: In what roles? As appointive leaders of the church or as “fellow-workers” ministering to the needs of believers and unbelievers? This question will be addressed in the following chapters where we shall examine those texts which address specifically the roles of women within the congregational structures of the New Testament church.

Women as Prophets. Women as well as men also participated in the prophetic ministry of the apostolic church. Two specific New Testament passages refer to women functioning as prophets. Acts 21:9 speaks of the four daughters of Philip, “who prophesied.” In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul recognizes the presence of women who prophesied in the worship services: “Any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head” (1 Cor 11:5).

The prophetic ministry of women in the apostolic church confirms the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost: “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; . . . yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17-18). It is possible that Peter quoted this prophecy to explain to the surprised crowd of onlookers why the gift of prophecy had been bestowed upon women also. The prophetic ministry of women in the New Testament stands parallel to that of prophetesses in the Old Testament.

The high regard for the prophetic ministry in the New Testament is indicated by Paul’s listing of spiritual gifts where “prophets” are mentioned immediately after “apostles” and before “teachers” or “evangelists,” and

“pastors” (Eph 4:11, 1 Cor 12:28). This order suggests that the prophetic ministry, which women exercised in the church, was in no way seen as inferior to that of the pastor/teacher.

The exact nature of the prophetic ministry is not clearly defined in the New Testament. Its primary function appears to have been to serve the Christian community through edification, encouragement, counseling and consolation. The chapter most descriptive of the prophetic ministry is found in 1 Corinthians 14. Here Paul explains that the person “who prophesies speaks to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. . . . He who prophesies edifies the church” (1 Cor 14:3-4; cf. Acts 15:21).

Some wish to see in the prophetic ministry of women in the apostolic church an indication that women functioned as leaders in the church. This view is obviously wrong because prophets functioned not as the appointed leaders of the congregation, but as private believers with a God-given message of exhortation for the congregation. The office of prophet was not restricted to anyone but was open in a sense to everyone. Paul clearly says: “For you all can prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged” (1 Cor 14:31). While women shared in the prophetic ministry of encouraging, guiding, and exhorting the Christian communities, there are no indications that they were ever appointed to serve as the representative leaders (pastors/elders). The reason for this, as it will be shown in the following chapters, is the New Testament acceptance of the Old Testament role structure for men and women.

A Woman “Apostle”? Appeal is often made to Paul’s reference to Junias (Rom 16:7) to defend the alleged leadership role women fulfilled in the apostolic communities. The text reads: “Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and fellow prisoners; they are men of note among the apostles, and they were in Christ before me” (Rom 16:7). Among a long list of fellow workers, Paul here acknowledges two Jews who shared in his imprisonment. Their service makes them noteworthy “among the apostles.” Is Paul here characterizing a woman, Junias, as an “apostle”? If so, in what sense?

Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty view the case of Junias as a major example of the fact that “from the beginning women participated fully and equally with men”²⁰ in the leadership of the church. They write:

One woman “apostle” is even mentioned in the Bible! Junia, saluted by Paul in Romans 16:7 (KJV), is a common Roman name for a woman, but since she is identified as an “apostle,” many translators have assumed the name to be a contraction for a much more common male one.²¹

This categorical conclusion is discredited by three important considerations. First, the name *Jounian* in the Greek text grammatically could be the name of either a man or a woman. Thus, the grammatical form does not permit a categorical conclusion in either direction.

Second, it is possible that the passage does not identify Andronicus and Junias as apostles at all, because the grammatical form of “men of note *among* the apostles” can be translated equally well as “They are noted *by* the apostles.” The latter appears more plausible because, as John Murray explains, “they were Christians before Paul and, no doubt, were associated with the circle of apostles in Judea if not in Jerusalem.”²²

Third, the term “apostle” is used in the New Testament in both a narrow and broad sense. In a narrow sense it designates “the twelve,” as when Matthias “was enrolled with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:26) to replace Judas. Because of this exclusiveness, Paul had to labor to prove the legitimacy of his apostleship (1 Cor 15:9-11; 2 Cor 12:11-13; Gal 1:1,11; 2:9). In a broad sense the term “apostle” means a “messenger,” someone sent out for a specific mission (cf. 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25). If Andronicus and Junias were apostles, most probably it would be in the latter sense, since nowhere else are their names associated with the inner circle of the apostles.

In light of the foregoing considerations we conclude that Paul’s reference to Junias lends no support to the view that she was a woman apostle. The name can refer equally well to a man, and whether the person is a man or a woman, she/he was not an apostle in the narrow sense of the word.

CONCLUSION

Several conclusions emerge from our study of the ministry of women in the New Testament. These can be summarized in the following points:

Jesus’ treatment of women was in many ways revolutionary. He rejected the prevailing prejudices against women, by treating them as human persons of equal worth to men, by respecting their intellectual and spiritual capacities, by admitting them into His fellowship and by teaching them the truths of God’s kingdom.

Women played a very prominent role in the ministry of Jesus. They ministered to His physical needs, a group of them traveled with Him and His disciples, and some of them followed Jesus to the Cross at the risk of their lives. Their loyalty and devotion to Christ stand out in the passion narratives as more exemplary than that of the apostles. Women were the first to

encounter the risen Lord and to be commissioned to break the news of the resurrection to the disciples.

In spite of His revolutionary treatment of women, Jesus did not choose women as apostles nor did He commission them to preach the Gospel. Such an omission was not a matter of concession to the social conventions of His time, but rather of compliance with the role distinction for men and women established at creation.

The apostolic churches followed the pattern established by Christ by including women as integral members in the life and mission of the church. Women joined the church in large numbers, attended worship services, organized charitable service for the needy, learned of the faith and shared it with others, performed a variety of services in the care of women, worked hard as “fellow-workers” alongside numerous men in the missionary outreach of the church, and shared in the prophetic ministry of edification, encouragement and consolation.

Though women ministered in the church in a variety of vital roles, including that of prophet, there are no indications in Scripture that they were ever ordained to serve as priests in the Old Testament or as pastors/elders/bishops in the New Testament.

Why were women able to participate equally with men in various ministries of the apostolic church, and yet were excluded from the appointive roles of apostles/pastors/elders? The Scriptures suggest several reasons which we shall now consider in the following chapters.

ENDNOTES

1. Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation* (Waco, Texas, 1975), p. 208. The same authors write: "From the beginning women participated fully and equally with men" (p. 60).
2. See, for example, Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1985), pp. 118, 206; Paul K. Jewett, *The Ordination of Women* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1980), p. 135.
3. Elizabeth Meier Tetlow, *Women and Ministry in the New Testament: Called to Serve* (Lanham, Maryland, 1980), p. 131.
4. *Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice*, A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, September 1975, p. 27.
5. Quoted by Nicholas Wolterstorff, "On Keeping Women Out of Office: The CRC Committee on Headship," *The Reformed Journal* 34 (May 1984): 8.
6. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath in the New Testament* (Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1985), pp. 108-120.
7. Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (Philadelphia, 1969), p. 376.
8. W. Forster, *Palestinian Judaism in New Testament Times* (Edinburgh, 1964), p. 127.
9. Hermann W. Beyer, "Diakoneo," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974), p. 81.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
11. Mary J. Evans, *Women in the Bible* (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1983), p. 50.
12. Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1979), p. 93.
13. Reginald H. Fuller, "Pro and Con: The Ordination of Women in the New Testament," in *Toward a New Theology of Ordination: Essays on the Ordination of Women* (Somerville, Massachusetts, 1976), p. 2.

14. See W. Sunday, *Sacred Sites of the Gospels* (Oxford, 1903), p. 83.

15. See E. F. Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles, Moffat New Testament Commentary* (London, 1936), p. 26.

16. James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981), p. 121.

17. Charles Calwell Ryrie, *The Role of Women in the Church* (Chicago, 1958), p. 84.

18. James B. Hurley (n. 16), p. 231. Hurley provides a very cogent interpretation of who the “women” were in 1 Timothy 3:11 (see pp. 229-233).

19. R. Hugh-Connolly, ed. *Didascalia Apostolorum* (Oxford, 1929), ch. 16, pp. 146-148.

20. Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty (n. 1), p. 60.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

22. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans, The New International Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982), p. 230.

Chapter 3

THE ORDER OF CREATION

The survey of the ministry of women in the Old and New Testaments presented in chapter 2, has shown that women played a vital role in both the private and public religious life of God's people. In the apostolic church they participated actively not only in the charitable services of the church but also in the missionary program of spreading the Gospel. Some women distinguished themselves as "fellow workers" of the apostles, and others as prophets who encouraged and edified the churches.

The recognition of the important spiritual ministry performed by women in Bible times, must not obscure an equally evident Biblical fact, namely, that women were precluded from serving as priests in the Old Testament and as apostles/pastors/elders/bishops in the New Testament. We have already indicated that, in our view, the reason for their exclusion from these appointive roles, was not adaptation to the cultural conventions of the time, but rather respect for the role distinctions of men and women established by God at creation.

Objectives. This chapter takes a closer look at the significance of the original order established by God at creation concerning the role relationship between men and women. Our aim is to ascertain if the principle of equality in personhood and submission in certain functional roles—to which we have alluded in the previous chapters—is legitimately derived from God's purpose in the creation of mankind or is the result of the Fall.

The chapter is divided into three parts, each of which examines one of the first three chapters of Genesis. We will focus especially on the information these chapters provide on the role relationship of men and women. Brief

consideration will be given at the end of each part to Paul's use of Genesis 1, 2, and 3 in his teachings on the role of women in the church.

Importance of Creation. Both Jesus and Paul appeal to the account of creation to explain God's original intent for human relationships (Matt 19:3-9; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15). This indicates the foundational importance Scripture attaches to the creation account for understanding the subject of the role relationship of men and women. Thus, in order to understand the New Testament teaching on the role of women in the church, it is important to begin, like Jesus, at "the beginning" (Matt 19:8) by examining God's original purpose for male/female relationship as revealed in His creation of mankind.

The three passages of Genesis which are central for our understanding of the relationship between man and woman are: (1) Genesis 1:26-31, which gives the account of the creation of the human race; (2) Genesis 2:18-25, which describes the creation of woman; (3) Genesis 3:1-24, which relates the story of the Fall and its consequences. Let us briefly examine what each of these passages teaches regarding the relationship between men and women.

PART I

GENESIS 1: MALE AND FEMALE

1. Equal, yet Different

Genesis 1:26-31 is primarily concerned with the place of the human race in God's creation of this universe. Three key statements are contained in this passage: (1) God created mankind in His own image and likeness; (2) God created mankind as male and female; (3) God gave mankind dominion over all the living things and power to increase and multiply, that is, to become a race. These three statements embody two vital concepts: equality in being and differentiation in sex.

Equality. Equality is suggested by the fact that both man and woman are created in the image of God. Genesis 1:26 states: "Then God said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea . . .'" "Man" here refers inclusively to men and women. This is indicated first by the Hebrew word for "man" (*'adam*) which can be translated equally well as "mankind, humanity": "Let us make mankind in our own image." The second indication is the plural "them," which points to "man" here, is a plurality consisting of both man and woman. The fact that Genesis 1:26-28 moves back and forth three times between the singular "man" and the plural "them," clearly indicates that the term "man" (*'adam*) is used collectively to refer to both man and woman.

This conclusion is corroborated by Genesis 1:27 where the statement, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him,” is clarified by the following statement “male and female he created them.” Thus, both man and woman were created equally in the image of God and both were blessed by God and told to multiply and subdue the earth. The idea that the image of God in woman is second hand, derived from that of man, is clearly discredited by the account of creation in Genesis 1.¹

Different. Equality, however, must not obscure the sexual differentiation which is equally clear in the passage: “male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). The two sexes are part of God’s original purpose for the human race and both are good. Both men and women are essential to the proper functioning of the human race. Denial or perversion of sexual differentiation is a rejection of the order established at creation.

Genesis 1 does not say much about the roles of men and women. It simply affirms that man and woman are equally created in the image of God, but they are sexually different. This notion of man and woman being equal and yet different is fundamental for all further consideration of the roles of men and women.

2. Image of God in Man

Maleness and Femaleness. There has been considerable discussion over what is the image of God in man. Recently Paul Jewett adopted and developed Karl Barth’s understanding of the image of God in man as being the combination of the human maleness and femaleness. Jewett affirms: “I do insist that Man’s creation in the divine image is so related to his creation as male and female that the latter may be looked upon as an exposition of the former. His sexuality is not simply a mechanism for procreation which Man has in common with the animal world; it is rather a part of what it means to be like the Creator.”²

This interpretation is used by Jewett and many others as the basis for their rejection of any functional submission on the part of women and for their espousal of male-female equal partnership in every respect, including the office of pastor/elder. The basis of this interpretation is primarily the proximity of the phrase “male and female he created them” to the phrase “in the image of God he created him” (Gen 1:27). As Jewett explains it: “the text of Genesis 1:27 makes no direct comment on Man in the image of God save to observe that he exists as male and female.”³

There is undoubtedly some theological truth in the notion that the image of God is reflected in the male-female fellowship as equals. The problem with

this interpretation is that it makes too much of too little. First it reduces the image of God exclusively to the male-female fellowship of equals and then it uses this unilateral interpretation to reject as biased those Biblical passages which speak of a functional submission of women in the home and in the church.

Dominion, Rationality. In our view, there are four main reasons why the image of God includes more than the male-female fellowship. First, in Genesis 1:26 the image of God in man is associated not with Man as male and female, but rather with dominion over the earth. The chapter appears to be saying that while the sun rules the day, the moon the night, the fishes the sea, mankind images God by having dominion over all the realms.

Second, the structure of Genesis 1:27 (synthetic parallelism)⁴ suggests that “male and female” elucidates what is meant by the plural “them” already used but not explained in v. 26. Third, in the New Testament the image of God in humanity is never associated with male-female fellowship, but rather with moral and rational capacities: “put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Col 3:10; cf. Eph 4:24). Similarly, conformity to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49) is generally understood in terms of righteousness and holiness rather than male-female fellowship.

Fourth, Galatians 3:28 indicates that the male-female relationship does not have the significance assigned to it by those who associate it with the image of God. The phrase “male and female” in Galatians 3:28 is identical to that used in the Septuagint to translate Genesis 1:27 (“male and female he created them”). This suggests that Paul’s statement that in Christ “there is neither male nor female,” as Susan T. Foh points out, “abolishes the distinction upon which Jewett’s whole theology rests.”⁵

In the light of these reasons we conclude that the image of God is not reflected specifically in the male-female relationship. The phrase “male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27) specifies the extent of the image of God, namely, that it includes both man and woman. Those who try to interpret a male-female image of God in Genesis 1:27 as the basis for rejecting role distinctions or the submission of woman to man are reading into the passage what is not there. What the passage simply says is that God created mankind as male and female and both of them are in His image. This suggests that men and women are equal in their relationship to God and yet they are different in their sexuality: men are male and women are female. The implications of the sexual differentiation for role relationship are to be found not in Genesis 1 but in Genesis 2 in conjunction with the creation of the woman.

3. Paul's Use of Genesis 1

Woman: Secondhand Image? Paul uses the terms “image” and “glory” in 1 Corinthians 11:7 in his discussion of the manner in which men and women ought to participate in public worship. He writes: “For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man” (1 Cor 11:7). Some commentators interpret this verse as implying that woman reflects the image of God to a lesser degree than man. Rousas J. Rushdoony, for example, writes: “Paul declares in Corinthians that even as man was created in the image of God, so woman was created in the image of man—so that the image of God in woman is a reflected image, a secondhand image, as it were.”⁶

This conclusion is unwarranted for two main reasons. First, in 1 Corinthians 11:7 Paul neither asserts nor denies that woman is created in God's image. The focus of his discussion is not the personal dignity or worth (ontological value) of men and women which is mentioned in Genesis 1:26-28, but rather the headship of man in marriage and worship, which is implied in Genesis 2:18-23, to which Paul specifically refers (1 Cor 11:8-9). It is in this context that man images God and that woman does not. It is obvious that women bear God's image in *other senses*, as Paul himself recognizes in Colossians 3:10-11 where he speaks of all believers being renewed according to God's image.

Glorify of Man. Second, Paul is careful in 1 Corinthians 11:7 not to say that the woman is man's image. Rather he says that “woman is the glory of man.” The language of Genesis 1:26-27 in the Septuagint is “image” (*eikon*) and “likeness” (*homoioima*) and not image and glory (*doxa*). Thus Paul's use of the term “glory” is significant. To understand its meaning it is important to note that Paul uses “glory” in the context of the relation of man to God and of woman to man. Man images God and gives Him glory by being submissive to Him and by being a loving, self-sacrificing head (Eph 5:25-29). The wife is the glory of her husband in the way she honors his headship by her life and attitude. This meaning is well expressed in the Septuagint version of Proverbs 11:16 which says, “A gracious wife brings glory to her husband” (cf. Prov. 12:4).

We conclude, therefore, that Paul's use of “image” and “glory” is not an abuse of Genesis 1:26-29. Indeed, he appeals primarily not to Genesis 1 but to Genesis 2 to explain why the woman is the glory of man, namely, because she was created from and for man and not vice versa (1 Cor 11:8-9).

PART II

GENESIS 2: EQUALITY AND SUBMISSION

1. Complementary Information

Creation of Mankind. Genesis 2 contains a considerable expansion on the creation of mankind covered in Genesis 1:26-31. While Genesis 1 affirms that God created mankind as male and female in His own image, Genesis 2 elaborates on how the two sexes were created and on the relationship between them. God created man from the dust and breathed into him the breath of life. He placed man in the garden of Eden, giving him permission to eat of every tree except of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Adam names the animals brought to him by God, but he could not find among them “a helper fit for him” (v. 20). God, who had already planned to create for Adam such a “helper fit for him” (v. 18) even before He brought the animals to Adam, now proceeds to create the woman from the rib of man. The latter constitutes the central action of Genesis 2.

Equality and Oneness. Why did God create the woman from Adam’s body instead of making her a separate creation from the dust like Adam? Four reasons stand out. First, the creation of woman from man’s rib suggests the sameness of nature between man and woman. As Adam acknowledges, the woman is the very bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (Gen 2:23). The actual selection of man’s rib from which to create the woman suggests 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.”⁷

Second, the human race, including the first woman, derives from the same source, Adam, who is the head and representative of humanity (Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:22). Third, the creation of woman from man establishes the basis for the one-flesh principle in marriage (Gen 2:24; 1 Cor 7:4). This principle rests on a real biological and historical foundation.

Functional Submission. Fourth, the woman’s creation from man and for him (“a helper fit for him”—Gen 2:18) suggests a functional dependency and submission. As von Rad points out, Genesis describes the woman not in romantic terms as a companion to man, but in pragmatic terms as a “helper” to him.⁸ Bible writers speak of human relationships with a certain practicality.

Many resent and reject the notion of a functional submission of woman to man in Genesis 2. They argue that in Eden before the Fall there was a perfect 50-50 partnership between husband and wife. The notion of the headship of man and the submission of woman is seen as a consequence of the

curse. In their view Christ lifted this submission (Gal 3:28) and consequently Christians must work to eradicate any form of submission in the relations between man and woman.

This view stems from a negative evaluation of all forms of submission and especially of the submission of woman. This conviction has led many either to interpret all the Scriptural references to submission as reflecting the post-Fall condition or to treat Scriptures as sexist or male-chauvinistic.

The strongest objection to this view is that submission is present in Genesis 2, that is, before the Fall described in Genesis 3. Moreover, the New Testament, as we shall see, urges the submission of woman to man not on the basis of the curse, but of the purpose of God in creation.

2. Submission in Genesis 2

Although the focus of Genesis 2 is on the sameness of nature and partnership between man and woman, there exists within that equality and partnership an overall sense of woman's submission to man. The term "submission" is used here not in its negative connotation of oppression, domination or inferiority, but in its positive sense of depending upon another person for direction. Its purpose is to ensure unity and harmony.

Central Role of Man. Submission is suggested in Genesis 2 first of all by the central role of man in the account of the creation of woman. Man is created first and is provided by God with a garden, an occupation, and finally a wife to be "a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18). Feminist authors argue that the Hebrew word *'ezer* (helper) does not imply submission, because, as Clarence J. Vos points out, in 15 out of the 19 times the word is used in the Old Testament, it refers to God as the "helper" of the needy.⁹

It is true that the word "helper" by itself, whether in Hebrew or in English, does not necessarily imply submission. But the meaning of a word cannot be determined without consideration of its context. In this case the word occurs within the phrase which says that God created woman to be a helper fit for man. "If one human being is created to be the helper of another human being," rightly notes George W. Knight, "the one who receives such a helper has a certain authority over the helper."¹⁰ This does not mean that woman exists solely for the sake of helping man, but rather that she is a helper who corresponds to man because she is of the same nature.

Name of Humanity. Second, submission is suggested in Genesis 2 by the fact that man bears the name "Man" or "Human" which designates the whole human race. In spite of the objections from feminists today, the name for the human race in Genesis is the proper name of the man, because he is seen

as the embodiment of the race. Eve is seen as the mother of all human beings, but not as the embodiment of the race. She is the wife to the man who is the embodiment of the race.

Priority of Creation. Third, submission is suggested by the temporal priority of the creation of man. Paul refers to this fact to support the exclusion of women from the pastoral teaching role in the church (1 Tim 2:8-15). Some object to this argument, saying: “If beings created first are to have precedence, then the animals are clearly our betters!”¹¹ This objection is discredited first by the fact that in the story of the creation of man and woman, priority of creation is associated with derivation, as 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 shows. The animals were created before man but man does not derive from animals. The objection is further discredited by the meaning the Bible attaches to primogeniture.

The first son inherited twice as much as his brothers and became the head of his father’s house and the leader of its worship upon the father’s death (Deut 21:15-17). It is because of this meaning that Christ Himself is called “the first-born of all creation” (Col 1:15). The prior formation of Adam is seen by Paul as typifying the leadership role man is called to play in the home and in the church. This typological understanding of the priority of Adam’s formation may appear irrational from an empirical standpoint, but, as we shall see in chapter 6, it is rational from a Biblical standpoint, because it reveals a divine design for the role of men and women.

Naming of Animals and Woman. There are other indications of the submission of woman to man. Man names not only the animals, but also the woman herself, both before and after the Fall (Gen 2:23; 3:20). In Hebrew thought name-giving is the prerogative of a superior. God exercises this prerogative by naming the things He created and later on by giving a new name to Abraham and to Jacob (Gen 17:5; 35:10).

Man demonstrates his God-given headship when he names first the animals and then the woman God brought to him. Man is also instructed by God regarding the forbidden tree and is apparently held responsible for passing on the information to his wife (Gen 2:16-17). After the Fall, God holds man accountable for the original transgression (Gen 3:9). Indications such as these make it abundantly clear that woman, though equal in being, is subordinated to man before the Fall.

3. Objections to Submission

Cleaving to his Wife. Feminist writers seek to deny the presence of any submission of woman to man in Genesis 2 by appealing to two elements of

the chapter. The first is the phrase that man “cleaves to his wife” (Gen 2:24), which is seen as denoting submission of man to woman. As Clarence J. Vos puts it: “It is the man who cleaves to the woman, and usually with regard to persons the lesser cleaves to the greater.”¹² This argument is discredited by the fact that in its context the phrase suggests not submission of man to woman but the formation of a committed marital relationship.

Last in Creation. The second element to which feminist writers appeal is the placement of woman as last in the creation, a fact which is interpreted as making woman rather than man the climax of creation.¹³ This view ignores the different literary structure of Genesis 1 and 2. While in Genesis 1 the creation of the human race as last represents the climax of creation, in Genesis 2 the creation of woman as last represents the consummation of man’s search for a fitting partner. As Cassuto points out, the model for the creation of the woman appears to be that of a father finding a wife for his son. When the partner who is truly fitting for him is found, she is brought to the man.¹⁴ Her place as last represents the fulfillment of man’s search for a fitting companion and not woman’s superiority to man.

There are feminist writers who acknowledge the presence of the submission of woman to man in Genesis 2, but they try to negate its legitimacy as a permanent principle by appealing to Genesis 1, which affirms the equality of man and woman. According to this view, the creation account of Genesis 1:1-2:4, where man and woman are presented as equals, is more credible than the second account of Genesis 2:4b-25, where the woman is subordinated to man.

Dichotomy between Genesis 1 and 2. This view creates an unwarranted dichotomy between Genesis 1 and 2, by assuming that there is a fundamental incompatibility between the two chapters. Is this true? Apparently the author who put the two chapters together did not think so. He must have seen them as complementary rather than contradictory, otherwise he would not have put them together. As Stephen B. Clark remarks, “We ought to credit the author with some understanding of the central meaning of the material he was putting together.”¹⁵

The resolution to the apparent tension between Genesis 1 and 2 is found, not by discrediting the latter, but rather by recognizing the different context of the two chapters. In Genesis 1 the context is man and woman in relation to God. In such context they are equal. In Genesis 2 the context is man and woman in relation to one another. In such context woman is functionally subordinated to man. We have already shown that the recognition of this principle of equality in being and submission in function adequately explains why women in the Bible are both equal to men in personhood and yet subordinate to men in certain roles.

Those who accept the authority of Scripture as it has been written down and canonized cannot accept any interpretation which views any part of the Bible as less credible than other parts (2 Tim 3:16). Biblical principles have to be established on the basis not of subjectively selected texts, but on the cumulative witness of the Bible.

4. Nature of Submission

Contradiction in Terms. It is difficult to appreciate the principle of equality in personhood and submission in function which is present in Genesis 2 because this principle is becoming increasingly foreign to our modern Western society. An example of this difficulty may be seen in the following comment by Scanzoni and Hardesty: “Many Christians thus speak of a wife’s being equal to her husband in personhood, but subordinate in function. However, this is just playing word games and is a contradiction in terms. Equality and submission are contradictions.”¹⁶

Example of Christ. To claim that equality and submission are an unacceptable contradiction, means to fail to recognize that such an apparent contradiction coexists in our Savior Himself. On the one hand Christ says: “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30) and “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9), and, on the other hand, He states “I can do nothing on my own authority; . . . I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me” (John 5:30) and “the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). Christ is fully God (John 1:1; Col 1:15-20) and yet “the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3; cf. 15:28).

Equality and Submission. In our idealistic understanding of equality, “submission” connotes inferiority, limitation and humiliation. “In its original sense, however,” as Fritz Zerbst explains, “‘to be in subjection’ means to ‘be placed in an order’ to be under definite *tagmata* (arrangement of things in order, as in ranks, rows, or classes).”¹⁷ To accept one’s role within God’s order established at creation means to find the fulfillment for which we were created.

The submission in Genesis 2 is similar to the one that exists in the Godhead between Father and Son. In fact Paul appeals to the latter model to explain in what sense a husband is the head of a wife, namely, as God is the head of Christ (1 Cor 11:3). This is a unique kind of submission that makes one person out of two. Man was the head of a relationship that was “one flesh.” Thus, submission in the Scripture does not connote subservience, as commonly understood, but willing response and loving assistance.

As Susan T. Foh aptly remarks, “We know only the arbitrariness, the domination, the arrogance that even the best boss/underling relationship has.

But in Eden, it was different. It really was. The man and the woman knew each other as equals, both in the image of God, and thus each with a personal relationship to God. Neither doubted the worth of the other nor of him/herself. Each was to perform his/her task in a different way, the man as the head and the woman as his helper. They operated as truly one flesh, one person. In one body does the rib rebel against or envy the head?"¹⁸

Unity-Submission. The submission God intended to exist in His original creation is a unity-submission. It is the submission in which some are subordinate to others for the sake of a greater unity. It is a submission in which the head governs out of genuine love and the subordinate responds out of a desire to serve common goals.

Genesis 2 deals primarily with the husband-wife relation, but its underlying principle of equality and submission has a broader social application. In Scripture, as we shall see, the marriage relationship is the foundational model of the broader relationship between men and women. The pattern in the larger household of faith is an extension and reflection of the pattern in the home.

5. Paul's Use of Genesis 2

It is from Genesis 2 that Paul draws most of his arguments to explain why women should be subordinate to the headship of man in the home and in the church. He develops three specific arguments out of Genesis 2: (1) Adam was formed first (1 Tim 2:13; Gen 2:20-22); (2) Eve was taken out of man (1 Cor 11:8; Gen 2:21-22); (3) she was made for his sake (1 Cor 11:9; Gen 2:20-22). These arguments will be examined more fully in chapter 5. At this juncture it suffices to note the importance Paul attaches to Genesis 2 for determining the role of women in the church.

Adam Was Formed First. In 1 Timothy 2:13 Paul appeals to the prior formation of Adam to support his teaching that women should not be permitted "to teach or to have authority over men" (1 Tim 2:12). We have seen that in the Old Testament the first-born son inherited not only a "double portion" of his father's goods, but also the responsibility of acting as the leader of worship upon his father's death.

Paul sees Adam's priority of formation as representing the leadership role of the firstborn that man is called to fulfill in the home and in the church. This meaning is only implicitly expressed in Genesis 2 which speaks only of the prior formation of Adam and of the creation of woman out of Adam to be his helper. Paul offers here an explicit interpretation of this historical fact. We have no reason to reject this interpretation if we believe that Scripture must be allowed to interpret Scripture.

Eve Was Taken out of Man. In 1 Corinthians 11:8 Paul defends the headship of man by appealing to the fact that the woman was taken out of (Greek: *ek*) man (cf. Gen 2:21-22). In Biblical thought origin and authority are interrelated (cf. Col 1:15-18). A child must respect the authority of his parents because he derives from them. In Adam's historical situation Eve derived from him in the sense that God formed her from his body. Thus, Adam was her "source," and to him was due appropriate respect.

This line of reasoning, though present in Hebrew minds, is not explicit in Genesis 2. What is explicit in the text is the fact that Adam exercises his God-given headship by naming first the animals and then the woman herself, both before and after the Fall. By this act, as we noted earlier, Adam exercised the leadership role assigned him by God. In the light of this fact, Paul's cryptic remark that the woman was taken "out of" the man represents a faithful interpretation of Genesis 2, which implies the headship of man over the woman, especially through man's naming of his wife (and of the animals).

Eve Created for Sake of Man. In 1 Corinthians 11:9 Paul draws the final conclusion from Genesis 2, namely, that woman was created for the sake of man. This fact is evident in Genesis 2 where God formed the woman out of man because no appropriate companion or helper was found for him. This text and its interpretation in 1 Corinthians 11:9 do not say that woman was made to be man's slave or plaything, but rather to meet man's need for a fitting companion and fellow-worker. When men view their wives as less than a God-given help, they are unfaithful not only to the teaching of Genesis but also to the example of Christ's headship, which is the model for husband-wife relationships (Eph 5:23-30).

The foregoing considerations show the fundamental importance attached by Paul to the order of creation of man and woman found in Genesis 2. This order constitutes for Paul the theological justification for the exclusion of women from the leadership role in the worship service. Such a role would not be in accord with the subordinate, helping role envisaged for women in creation. To accuse Paul of reading into Genesis 2 his own rabbinic thinking,¹⁹ means to fail to grasp the theological significance of the order of creation for the relationship of men and women and to reject what Paul under inspiration presents as a divinely established principle. The headship of men in the home and in the church is not designed to rob women of their equality and purpose in life, but rather to provide the basis for a harmonious relationship based on complementary roles.

PART III**GENESIS 3: SIN AND SUBMISSION****1. Distortion of Creation**

The first two chapters of Genesis present God's creation as He originally intended it to be. The third chapter describes the disruption and distortion of the order of creation brought about by the Fall. The first part of the chapter relates the temptation of Eve and the immediate consequences of the Fall made evident in the hiding of the man and his wife from God (Gen 3:1-8). In verse 9 God calls upon man to answer for the pair, presumably because he is seen as the head of the family.

Curse on Serpent. After the interrogation of the first human couple, God states the consequences of their actions to the serpent, the woman, and the man. These consequences have been generally referred to as "curses." The curse upon the serpent affects not only the serpent as an animal (Gen 3:14), but also the relation between Satan and mankind, characterized by "enmity" and hostility which will be eventually terminated by the destruction of Satan himself (Gen 3:15).

Curse on Man. The consequence of the disobedience for man is the immediate distortion of his relation to the ground and the ultimate experience of death. Whereas previously man had control over the ground which yielded its fruit peaceably, henceforth the ground would resist his efforts and cause him pain by raising up thorns and thistles (Gen 3:17-18). Worst of all, the possibility of eternal life has now become the reality of death (v. 19). We have here a painful distortion of an existing situation.

Curse on the Woman. Against this background we need to examine the curse upon the woman in Genesis 3:16. This curse is of central concern for our study, both because it deals directly with the husband-wife relationship and because it raises the question of the role of the Fall in the relationship between men and women.

The curse upon the woman has two aspects. The first relates to childbearing and the second to her relation to her husband. Childbearing, which was part of the pre-Fall divine design for the filling of the earth (Gen 1:28), will now become a very painful process (3:16). The husband-wife relationship will also now experience a painful distortion: "your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (3:16).

2. Institution of Submission?

Curse upon Woman. Some view the curse upon the woman as marking the beginning of her submission to man and consequently as an undesirable consequence of sin which has been lifted by Christ (Gal 3:28). Thus, Christians must work for the eradication of all forms of submission because its origin is satanic. Kenneth S. Kantzer emphatically states this conviction in a special issue of *Christianity Today* dedicated to the role of women in the church. He writes: “We believe the subservience of women is part of the curse (Gen 3:16) from which the gospel seeks to free us.”²⁰ In a similar vein Gilbert Bilezikian writes: “Male rulership was precipitated by the Fall as an element of the curse It was not part of God’s design for relationships between men and women.”²¹

This view, that the submission of the woman to man is the result of sin and consequently satanic, derives from a strong negative view of submission. It leads to the conclusion that much of the Old Testament and certain Pauline passages are misogynistic, male chauvinistic or, as Bilezikian puts it, “a partial accommodation to sinful realities as a way of achieving their resolution in the new covenant.”²²

Submission in Genesis 2. The strongest objection to this view is the fact that submission begins, as we have seen, not in Genesis 3 but in Genesis 2 with the creation of woman. As George W. Knight cogently points out: “Genesis 3 presumes the reality of childbearing (Gen 1:28), in which the woman will now experience the effects of the Fall and sin (3:16). It presumes the reality of work (Gen 1:28; 2:15), in which the man will now experience the effect of the Fall and sin (3:17ff.). And it presumes the reality of the role relationship between wife and husband established by God’s creation order in Genesis 2:18ff., a relationship that will now experience the effects of the Fall and sin (3:16). “He shall rule over you” expresses the effect of sin corrupting the relationship of husband (the head) and wife. Just as childbearing and work were established before the Fall and were corrupted by it, so this relationship existed before the Fall and was corrupted by it. Neither childbearing, nor work, nor the role relationship of wife and husband is being introduced in Genesis 3; all are previously existing realities that have been affected by the Fall.”²³

Submission in the New Testament. Another important objection is that when the New Testament talks about the importance of the submission of woman to man, it appeals to the order of creation in Genesis 2 (see Eph 5:31; 1 Cor 11:8-9; 1 Tim 2:13-14) and not to the curse of the woman in Genesis 3:16. The foundation of the New Testament teaching on Christian submission is found in the purpose of God’s creation and not in the consequences of the curse.

3. Genesis 3: Origin of Oppressive Submission

Curse: Distortion of Submission. A number of considerations suggest that the curse on the woman marks not the institution but rather the distortion of submission, as the latter degenerated into oppressive domination by sinful man. First, we have found that submission is already present in Genesis 2. Second, the analogy between the curse on man's work, childbearing, and the curse on the marital relationship suggests that as a result of the Fall the rulership of man, like work and childbearing, became corrupted and painful.

The Verb "to Rule." Third, the meaning of the verb "to rule" ("he shall rule over you"—Gen 3:16) both in Hebrew (*mashal*) and in the Septuagint (*kyrieuo*) commonly denotes domination. A fitting example is found in Genesis 4:7 where the Lord says to Cain: "And if you do not do well, sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master (*mashal*) it." If we permit this meaning to determine the meaning of "rule" in Genesis 3:16, then, as Clarence Vos notes, "we can hardly escape the impression that there is a connotation of suppression involved."²⁴

Genesis 3:16: Not Basis of Submission. Fourth, the New Testament, as noted earlier, bases the submission of women to men in marriage upon the effects of sin manifested in Genesis 3:16, but rather on the pre-Fall order of creation. Genesis 3:16 contains not a new commandment but a prediction of how man would pervert his leadership role. As Russell Prohl keenly observes: "God is not here issuing a special commandment, "Be thou ruled by him!" or, "Thou shall not rule!" But here in Genesis 3:16 we have a statement, a prediction, a prophecy, of how man, degenerated by sin, would take advantage of his headship as a husband to dominate, lord it over, his wife. Nowhere in the Bible is Genesis 3:16 quoted or referred to as establishing a general submission of woman to man."²⁵

The above considerations lead us to the conclusion that the curse on the woman (Gen 3:16) allows for the possibility of an oppressive, dominating form of submission. This must be seen as a painful distortion of an already-existing hierarchical relationship, the existence of which we have already found in Genesis 2. The purpose of redemption, as we shall see in chapter 4, is to remove a husband's oppressive rule over his wife, but not his headship over her.

4. Paul's Use of Genesis 3

We have considered earlier in this chapter Paul's use of Genesis 1 and 2. We have seen that he faithfully reflects the implication of these chapters in his teaching on the headship role men are called to fulfill in the home and

in the church. We must now turn our attention to Paul's use of Genesis 3. His main reference to Genesis 3 is found in 1 Timothy 2:14 which says: "and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor." This is the second of the two reasons offered by Paul to support his teaching that women ought not "to teach or to have authority over men" (1 Tim 2:12), the first reason being the priority of the formation of Adam (1 Tim 2:13).

Dangerous Interpretations. The second reason has produced many dangerous interpretations. Some have assumed that this verse teaches that women are disqualified to act as leaders in the church because they are more gullible than men. Paul "may have in mind the greater aptitude of the weaker sex to be led astray."²⁶ A variation of this interpretation is that women "are inferior in their gifts so far as the teaching office is concerned."²⁷

These interpretations are untenable because nowhere does the Scripture suggest that women are more prone to err than men or that their teaching gifts are inferior. If the latter were true, how could Paul admonish women to teach their children and other women (Titus 2:3-5; 2 Tim 3:15)? How could he praise women fellow-workers for their roles in the missionary outreach of the church (Rom 16:1, 3, 12; Phil 4:3)?

Connection between Two Reasons. To understand the meaning of 1 Timothy 2:14 it is important to note that this verse is linked to the preceding one by the conjunction "and" (*kai*), which is often used by Paul as an explanatory connective (see 1 Tim 4:4; 5:4-5). In this case the connective "and" suggests that the typological meaning of the priority of Adam's formation mentioned in verse 13, is connected with the typological meaning of Eve's deception mentioned in verse 14.

What Paul appears to be saying is that both Adam's formation and Eve's deception typologically represent woman's submission to man. The first reason appealing to the order of creation and the second reason to the Fall, show what happens when the order of creation is disregarded. When Eve asserted her independence from Adam she was deceived.

The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* supports this interpretation: "The apostle's second argument for the submissiveness of women is that when Eve tried to assert leadership she was beguiled."²⁸ On a similar vein George W. Knight writes: "In 1 Timothy 2:14 Paul also refers to the Fall after citing the creation order . . . to show the dire consequences of reversing the creation order on this most historic and significant occasion."²⁹

This interpretation brings Paul's reasons in line with his other uses of Genesis, discussed earlier. It provides yet another example of Paul's concern

to re-establish the creational relationship of equality in personhood and submission in function. It shows that Paul bases his teachings concerning the role distinction of men and women not on the consequences of the Fall described in Genesis 3, but on the pre-Fall order of creation found in Genesis 1 and 2.

CONCLUSION

Our study of the first three chapters of Genesis has shown their fundamental importance for determining the role relationship of men and women in the home and in the church.

Genesis 1 simply affirms that man and woman are equally created in the image of God, but they are sexually different.

Genesis 2 clarifies the equality and difference of Genesis 1 in terms of sameness and submission. Man and woman are the same because they share the same human flesh and bones and because they have been created to complement one another. Yet woman is subordinated to man, as indicated by: her role as a fitting helper for man, the priority of the creation of man, man's bearing of the name of humanity, and man's naming of the animals and of the woman herself before and after the Fall. The headship of man is implied also in chapter 3 where God calls upon man to answer for the pair.

Genesis 3 describes the distortion of the order of creation brought about by the Fall. This affected not only the serpent, the land, work and childbearing, but also the submission of woman to man. Sinful man would now take advantage of his headship to dominate and oppress his wife. Contrary to what many believe, the curse on the woman marks not the institution of submission but rather its distortion into oppressive domination.

Paul attaches fundamental importance to the teachings of the first three chapters of Genesis. He appeals to the pre-Fall order of creation to defend the submission of women to the leadership of man both in marriage and in the church. Paul's appeal to the order of creation is in line with Christ's teaching that calls for a restoration of the creational relationship (Matt 19:8) by the members of His kingdom.

Contrary to prevailing thinking, we found that Paul bases his teaching concerning the role of women in the church, not on the consequences of Fall described in Genesis 3, but on the pre-Fall order of creation presented in Genesis 1 and 2. The foundation of his teaching is not the "curse" of the Fall, but the original purpose of God in creation.

What are the implications of the order of redemption for the roles men and women are called to fill in the home and in the church? To this question we must now turn our attention.

ENDNOTES

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2. Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975), pp. 13-14.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

4. For a structural analysis of Genesis 1:27, see Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1979), pp. 54-56.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

6. Rousas J. Rushdoony (n. 1), p. 14.

7. E. G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, California, 1958), p. 46.

8. G. von Rad, *Genesis*, trans. J. H. Marks (Philadelphia, 1961), p. 80.

9. Clarence J. Vos, *Woman in the Old Testament Worship* (Delft, Holland, 1968), p. 16.

10. George W. Knight III, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Chicago, 1985), p. 31.

11. Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation* (Waco, Texas, 1974), p. 28; cf. Paul K. Jewett (n. 2), pp. 126-127.

12. Clarence J. Vos (n. 9), p. 18; cf. Paul K. Jewett (n. 2), pp. 127-128.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 18, n. 25; John A. Bailey, "Initiation and Primal Woman in Gilgamesh and Genesis 2-3," *Journal of Biblical Literature* (June 1970): 143.

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16. Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty (n. 11), p. 110.
 17. Fritz Zerbst, *The Office of Woman in the Church* (St. Louis, Missouri, 1955), p. 69.
 18. Susan T. Foh (n. 4), p. 62.
 19. See, for example, Paul K. Jewett (n. 2), p. 119.
 20. Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Proceed with Care," *Christianity Today* (October 3, 1986): 15-1.
 21. Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1985), pp. 55-56.
 22. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
 23. George W. Knight (n. 10), p. 31.
 24. Clarence J. Vos (n. 9), p. 25.
 25. Russell Prohl, *Woman in the Church: A Study of Woman's Place in Building the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1957), p. 39.
 26. Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: an Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1957), p. 77. See also H. P. Liddon, *Explanatory Analysis of St. Paul's First Epistle to Timothy* (Minneapolis, 1978), p. 19.
 27. Paul K. Jewett (n. 2), p. 60.
 28. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C., 1957), vol. 7, p. 296.
 29. George W. Knight III (n. 10), p. 32. The same view is expressed by Douglas J. Moo: "In vv. 13-14, then, Paul substantiates his teaching in vv. 11-12 by arguing that the created order establishes a relationship of submission of woman to man, which order, if bypassed, leads to disaster" ("1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance," *Trinity Journal* 1/1 [1980]: 70).

Chapter 4

THE ORDER OF REDEMPTION

A victorious proclamation rings through the New Testament like a clarion call: “If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come” (2 Cor 5:17). What are the implications of the “new creation” inaugurated by Christ’s coming for the role relationship between men and women? Does the order of redemption abrogate the role distinctions of the order of creation, thus making it possible for women to function as head in the home and in the church?

Much of the current debate on the role of women in the church revolves around these questions. The perception on the part of many is that creation and redemption stand in antithesis as far as the role distinctions between men and women are concerned. The order of creation is seen as establishing the subordination of women to men and consequently their exclusion from the headship role of priest/pastor/ elder. The order of redemption is seen as inaugurating equality and mutuality and consequently the inclusion of women in this headship role. Richard Longenecker aptly states this prevailing perception: “At the heart of the problem as it exists in the church is the question of how we correlate the theological categories of creation and redemption. When the former is stressed, subordination and submission are usually emphasized . . . where the latter is stressed, freedom, mutuality and equality are usually emphasized.”¹

Objectives. The aim of this chapter is to examine the relationship between the order of creation and redemption as far as the role distinctions of men and women are concerned. Specifically, we shall ask: Does the “new creation” inaugurated by Christ change or abrogate the original creational relationship between men and women?

To find an answer to this question, first we shall review briefly the teachings of Jesus, already examined in chapter 2, and then we shall consider the teachings of Paul, especially the implications of Galatians 3:28. The study of the Galatian text will be the central focus of this chapter, since this text is viewed by many as the great “breakthrough” which paved the way for the abolition of national (Jew/Greek), social (slave/free), and sexual (male/female) barriers, and ultimately for the inclusion of women to the appointive function of priest/pastor/elder in the church.

PART I

JESUS AND THE ROLE OF MEN AND WOMEN

Limited Treatment. A striking fact about Jesus’ teaching in the Gospels is its limited treatment of the role relation of men and women in the new kingdom of God. We noted in chapter 2 that much coverage is given in the Gospels to the attitude of Jesus toward women, which we have found to be revolutionary in many ways. He rejected the prevailing prejudices by treating women as human persons of equal worth to men, by appreciating their intellectual and spiritual capacities and by admitting them into the inner circle of His followers.

Was Jesus equally revolutionary in calling into question the Old Testament pattern of roles for men and women? The few passages on sex, marriage, and divorce which are relevant to this question offer no support to this prevailing contention. Rather, these passages show that Christ’s concern was to expose the perversion which had taken place in the creational design for the relation of men and women.

Adultery. Regarding adultery (Matt 5:27-30), “Jesus condemned the iniquity and resolved the iniquity. The iniquity resulted from the violation of the “one-flesh” creation principle. Jesus went to the root of the problem by denouncing not only the act but also the lustful attitude of predatory men who looked at women as playthings rather than persons, as objects for sexual gratification rather than subjects to be respected.

The inequity consisted in the double standard which condoned men committing adultery while mercilessly condemning women found guilty of it. Jesus cut across human perversion and casuistry by requiring a radical change of heart that will make it possible for men to treat women as God intended at creation: not as disposable playthings but as worthy partners. Such a radical change of mentality may be as demanding as plucking out an eye or cutting off a hand (Matt 5:29-30).

By focusing on the thoughts of men rather than on the seductive presence of women, Jesus differed from the rabbinic thought of His time. While the rabbis taught their disciples to avoid women, Jesus taught His followers to discipline their thoughts. This attitude of Jesus “made possible the free participation of women in the apostolic church, a participation which would have been unthinkable in Judaism.”³

Marriage and Divorce. Christ’s concern to restore the relation of men and women to the creational design is evident especially in His teaching on marriage and divorce (Matt 19:3-12; 5:31-32). In an attempt to discredit the authority of Jesus, some Pharisees posed Him this testing question: “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” (Matt 19:3). The question suggests that the Pharisees looked at marriage from the perspective of the Fall. Since man was seen as the ruler (Gen 3:16), he had the right to determine not only who should be his wife but also whether and why to dismiss her.

In His answer Jesus removes the discussion from the level of the destruction of marriage which resulted from the Fall to that of God’s original order of creation: “Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female; and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt 19:4-6).

In this answer Jesus bases His definition of marriage squarely on the “one flesh” creation ideal (Gen 2:24). His opponents sought to challenge this ideal by arguing that, after all, Moses did “command one to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away” (Matt 19:7). Jesus responded by simply pointing out that Moses did not command divorce, but permitted it “for your hardness of heart . . . but from the beginning it was not so” (Matt 19:8). This implies that divorce is not only a rebellious act but it is also an act against the creational design.

The bottom line of the whole exchange between Jesus, the Pharisees, and the disciples is that in the age of redemption the relations between men and women are to be restored to their creational pattern. Thus, any attempt to interpret the teachings of Jesus as representing an abolition of the role relationships established at creation is negated by the very fact that Jesus appealed to the creational design to define such relationships.

Signs for the New Age. Some interpret the actions and teachings of Jesus about women as the signs for the new age in which the church was to ordain women to the priesthood. One wonders, which “new age”? The “new age” of the New Testament or the “new age” of the contemporary Women’s

Liberation movement? All the Gospels tell us is that Jesus greatly respected women and restored to them human dignity and worth. However, there is no indication in the Gospels that this had theological implication for the ordination of women as pastors of the flock.

If the actions and teachings of Jesus are to be regarded as “signs” for the attitude that the church today must adopt toward the ordination of women, why is not Christ’s exclusive choice of men to be apostles to be equally regarded as a “sign” for the church today? A responsible interpretation of Christ’s actions and teachings cannot be based on the selective principle of choosing only what is supportive of one’s predetermined convictions.

Respect for Jewish Culture. Some argue that Jesus would have liked to do away with the role distinctions for men and women, but He chose to keep silent out of respect for Jewish culture. If this were true, then He certainly would have been less confrontational in his teaching about Sabbathkeeping, ritual purity, tax-collectors, and the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees. There is no indication that Jesus restrained His convictions out of respect for the prevailing cultural values of the Jewish people.

The fact that Jesus was revolutionary in His attitude toward women, treating them as full-fledged citizens of God’s kingdom, suggests that He would not have hesitated to condemn the role differentiation between men and women, if He had viewed such a differentiation as a perversion of God’s creational design.

Christ came not to abolish the law but to restore its rightful understanding, and one aspect of that restoration was the change in the role of women from second class citizens in Israel to first class in the kingdom of God. Though Jesus was revolutionary in advocating the equal spiritual status of men and women in His kingdom, He was not revolutionary with regard to the roles of men and women. His revolution lay rather in the area of what constituted true righteousness.

The consequence of Jesus’ teaching was a significant change in the spiritual and social status of women—a change that made it possible for women to be treated with the same “brotherly love” as men, and to participate actively in the life and mission of the church. There is no indication, however, that Jesus’ proclamation of the spiritual and moral equality of men and women in the kingdom of God was intended to be understood as a theological justification for the ordination of women. Those who argue for the latter, do so on the basis of a selective principle, settled in advance but seldom expressed.

PART II

PAUL AND THE ROLE OF MEN AND WOMEN

1. A Comparison between Jesus and Paul

Contrasting Attitudes toward Women? Some find the attitude of Paul toward women to be in stark contrast to that of Jesus. A recent author expresses the contrast in this way: “Actually, Jesus’ attitude toward women was completely unlike Paul’s.”⁴ While Jesus was “woman’s best friend” who treated women as “persons” of equal worth to men,⁵ Paul was an antifeminist who viewed women as inferior to men and thus excluded them from leadership roles within the church. This view is based primarily on the fact that most of the scriptural passages which enjoin the subordination of woman to man in marriage and their exclusion from the “pastoral” teaching role in the church are found in Paul’s epistles.

This contemporary prejudice against Paul cannot be supported legitimately from his writings. First, Paul categorically affirms the equality in Christ of men and women in the now well-known statement: “there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). Second, Paul’s appreciation for women is similar to that of Jesus. We noticed in chapter 2 that Paul commends a significant number of women for working hard with him in the missionary enterprise of the church.

Third, Paul appears to have worked more actively with women than did Jesus. While there are no indications that Jesus used women in His preaching in the way He made use of the twelve or of the seventy, there are ample indications that Paul used women as “fellow-workers” and “deaconesses” in his missionary outreach (Rom 16:1-3, 6, 12, 13, 15; Phil 4:2-3). Indications such as these suffice to show how unfounded is the popular prejudice against Paul. Both Jesus and Paul valued and respected women.

Two Different Environments. The key difference between Jesus and Paul lies in the fact that while Paul explicitly explains the distinction between the roles of men and women in the home and in the church, Jesus does not. The explanation for this difference may lie in the two different social environments in which Jesus and Paul were called to minister.

Jesus lived and taught in the social and cultural environment of Palestinian Judaism. In such an environment it was not necessary for Jesus to teach that adultery and homosexuality are sinful practices or that women should be subordinate to men in the home and in the church. Such teachings were well-accepted norms. The father was the undisputed head of the family and women held no position of leadership in the synagogue.

Christianity soon moved beyond the Palestinian Jewish environment into regions that were predominantly pagan. In the pagan environment the sexual ethics and the role distinctions of men and women were different from those of Palestinian Judaism. Priestesses officiated at pagan temples. Women were occupying new roles in the Greco-Roman society, different from those held by women in Palestinian Judaism or in the earlier Greco-Roman society.⁶

Paul had to face the influence of the pagan culture within the Christian communities he had founded, especially in the areas of sexual immorality and the roles of men and women. Thus, Paul's teachings on the latter arise from the challenge that Christian churches were facing in a new pagan environment where Biblical values were disputed.

Significance of Paul's Teachings. Paul's teaching on the role of women in the church is, then, most significant because it represents the explanation of Christian standards to new converts who, because of their pagan background, were not familiar with the Biblical principles. To these believers Paul had to teach many things which Jesus did not have to teach, not because Paul was developing new teachings, but because many of these converts came from a radically different religious and social environment.

As Stephen B. Clark rightly observes: "Had Jesus preached and taught in the same environment as Paul, he undoubtedly would have had to say many of the same things. The fact that the New Testament teaching on roles is Pauline and not explicitly from Jesus is no reason to call into question its authentic Christianity. One could just as logically reconsider the circumcision question because only Paul left explicit teaching on the subject."⁷

In view of the fact that Paul developed his teaching on the role of women in the church in response to the problems that arose in the context of his mission to the Gentiles and the Jews who lived among them, the relevance of his teaching, as in the case of circumcision, extends beyond the cultural setting of his time.

Our immediate concern in this chapter is not to examine those Pauline texts which speak explicitly about the role of women in the church (1 Tim 2:11-15; 1 Cor 11:5; 14:34-36). Rather, we shall direct our attention to Galatians 3:28 because many "have found this text to be a rallying cry in the movement for women's rights and the recovery of the New Testament practice of women in ministry."⁸ Moreover, this passage does provide an important background to the other texts to be examined in the following chapters. It also gives us an opportunity to reflect upon the impact of redemption on the role distinction between men and women.

2. The Context and Significance of Galatians 3:28

Context. The overall issue addressed by Paul in Galatians is the tension between salvation based primarily upon human works and salvation by grace. In the immediate context of Galatians 3:26-28 Paul argues that faith, and not works, provides the basis of salvation. Any person irrespective of race, social status, and sex, can be saved only by faith and consequently all persons stand on an equal footing before God. In this context Paul makes the memorable statement: “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26-28).

The specific issue that provoked this statement is the role of circumcision and of the law in the salvation of the individual. Paul’s opponents (“the circumcision party”—Gal 2:12) argued that Gentiles should be circumcised and keep the law in order to enter into the Abrahamic covenant with its attendant blessings (Gal 2:3, 7-9; 5:2-3, 6, 11-12; 6:12-13, 15). In other words, they wanted the Gentile Christians to become full Jewish proselytes by being circumcised.

Paul vehemently opposes this false teaching, by asserting that baptism provides the same benefits as circumcision in one’s relationship with God. Baptized Gentiles, as long as they are in Christ, “are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:29), that is, they receive all the blessings that a circumcised Israelite is entitled to.

Significance. In the light of this context, the phrase “neither male nor female” takes on special significance because women could not be circumcised. Women participated in the covenant of Israel through the circumcised male Israelites. Paul emphasizes that through baptism into Christ a new value system begins in which religious (Jews/Greek), social (slave/free), and sexual (male/female) differences play no part in one’s status before God. The woman comes into a covenant relation with God’s people, not through circumcised men, but through her own faith and baptism.

Galatians 3:26-28 centers on the new status of “one in Christ” offered to all believers by faith. Paul’s key statements are contained in the sentences: “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith . . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (vv. 26, 28).

Restoration of Creation Order. The notion of becoming one person in Christ is possibly a reference to the original creation of humanity in the image of God. This is suggested especially by the phrase “male and female” which

in Greek (*arsen kai thelu*) is identical to the phrase used in the Septuagint to translate Genesis 1:27 (“male and female he created them”).⁹ In other words, as there was no distinction of status between “male and female” in God’s original creation because they were both created in the same image of God, so there is no distinction between “male and female” in God’s redemption because both of them are re-created in the image of Christ.

This interpretation is supported especially by the parallel passage of Colossians 3:9-11. After exhorting the Colossians to put away sinful practices, Paul says that they, “have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all” (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-13).

Here Paul emphasizes the same point as in Galatians 3:28, namely, that all Christians share equally in the restoration of the image of God in and through Christ, despite national, religious and social status. The human race is restored through Christ to “the image of its creator” and thus to the relationship it had with God when it was first created. This means that the order of redemption does not abolish the order of creation. On the contrary, redemption is intended to restore the creational order of the human race, that is, the oneness of men and women with God and among themselves.

Klyne R. Snodgrass expresses the same conviction in his perceptive article on Galatians 3:28. He writes: “I do not see an intended contrast between the order of creation and the order of redemption. Paul does not set the one against the other anywhere else; rather, redemption includes creation within its scope. Paul’s point is not that gender distinctions are obliterated.”¹⁰

Parallels to Galatians 3:28. One intriguing aspect of Galatians 3:28 is the number of texts in the ancient world which are similar to it, and yet different. The most pertinent of these is a male thanksgiving that is found both in Hellenistic and Jewish literature. The Hellenistic parallel is variously attributed to Socrates, Plato and Thales. In this the speaker gives thanks “that I was born a human being and not an animal, that I was born a man and not a woman, and that I was born a Greek and not a barbarian.”¹¹

The Jewish version of this thanksgiving is found in a Jewish prayer attributed to Rabbi Jehuda, which may go back to Paul’s time:

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe,
who hast not made me a Gentile (heathen)

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe,
who hast not made me a slave

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe,
who hast not made me a woman.¹²

The significance of this prayer for the understanding of Galatians 3:28, is shown in a comment from the Tosefta by a rabbi who lived in the second century A.D.:

Blessed be God that he had not made me a Gentile:

“because all Gentiles are nothing before him” (Jer 40:17).

Blessed be God that he has not made me a woman:

because woman is not obligated to fulfill the commandments.

Blessed be God that he has not made me a boor:

because a boor is not ashamed to sin.¹³

This comment indicates that the issue for all the three pairs was one of religious status. The law, as interpreted by the rabbis, made distinctions in the status before God in all three categories. As Strack-Billerbeck explains: “This thought (Gal 3:28) could not be realized in the synagogue, because it was precisely those natural differences which significantly determined the relationship of the individual to the law: the born Jew had a different relationship to the law than the proselyte, the man a different relationship than the woman, the free man a different relationship than the slave.”¹⁴

Against this background Galatians 3:28 gains added significance. What Paul is saying is that the distinctions that the law made, especially as interpreted by the rabbis, no longer applied among Christians. Through faith in Christ, all the differences in religious status between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, disappear. All become “Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:29).

3. Galatians 3:28 and Social Roles

How then does the message of Galatians 3:28 relate to the roles of men and women in the home and in the church? Does Paul intend by this message to eliminate all role distinctions and thus to open the way for women to function as pastors/elders in the church? Or is he referring only to the spiritual relationship of men and women to God, thus leaving untouched their social roles? Three major interpretations have been given and each of them will now be briefly considered.

Abolition of All Differences? Many interpreters view Galatians 3:28 as the great breakthrough, designed to abolish all role differences between men and women, thus opening the way for women to be ordained as pastors/elders. Virginia Mollenkott, for example, believes that this text expresses Paul's vision "of a classless, non-racist, non-sexist society."¹⁵

According to this view, Galatians 3:28 is incompatible with those New Testament texts which enjoin the subordination of woman to man. This contradiction is explained in various ways. Some, like Paul K. Jewett, argue that Paul is merely inconsistent. Galatians 3:28 reflects Paul's best thought, while texts such as 1 Timothy 2:12-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-36 hark back to his rabbinic training which prevented him from seeing the full implications of redemption.¹⁶

Other scholars such as Richard Longenecker, Krister Stendahl and Scott Bartchy regard Galatians 3:28 as the normative text, while the other texts they see as descriptive or conditioned by the problems of Paul's time.¹⁷ Thus all the texts dealing with the role of men and women in the church must be interpreted in the light of Galatians 3:28.

Culturally Conditioned? The argument for cultural conditioning and rabbinic reasoning has no support in the texts themselves where Paul appeals not to sociological but to theological reasons. Moreover, such argumentation fails to recognize that it is the interpretation of the texts rather than the texts themselves that is culturally conditioned, if the interpreter evaluates the text in the light of twentieth century social patterns. The underlying belief that the modern social pattern of role interchangeability is more true than the ancient Biblical pattern of role distinctions is a gratuitous assumption. In matters of faith and morals what is new is not necessarily better than what is old.

Biblical history gives ample evidence of moral and social decline rather than progress. There is no evolutionary process of moral and spiritual progress. To equate modernity with social enlightenment is to commit the fallacy of attributing to our modern culture greater authority than to divine revelation. This does not mean that every social pattern contained in Scripture is permanent and normative for all time. A distinction must be made between permissive rules regarding, for example, slavery, divorce, and polygamy, and permanent norms which are grounded in the creation order and clarified in the redemption order. This means, for example, that monogamous, heterosexual, and patriarchal (husband's loving headship) marriages are normative for Christians, and not merely a matter of social convention. On the contrary, slavery has no abiding validity because it represents a distortion of creation structures.

Paul's Inconsistency? The view that Paul was inconsistent not only negates the inspiration of all Scriptures, but also assumes that an intelligent man like Paul was sometimes incoherent. It makes more sense to assume that Paul saw no tension between oneness and equality in Christ (Gal 3:28) and functional subordination of women in the church (1 Tim 2:12-15; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:33-35).

Madeleine Boucher, though an Evangelical Feminist herself, candidly concludes: "Then, the ideas of equality before God and inferiority in the social order are in harmony in the NT. To be precise, the tension did not exist in first-century thought, and it is not present in the texts themselves. The tension arises from *modern man's* inability to hold these two ideas together."¹⁸

Religious, not Social Issue? The solution to the apparent incompatibility between Galatians 3:28 and the other Pauline passages, is to be found in the recognition of the real thrust of Galatians 3:28. This passage does not eliminate the different social roles for men and women established at creation, but does erase the distinctions in religious status related to the keeping of the law and introduced after creation during the period of immaturity or hardness of heart.

The phrase "male and female" refers to human beings in their sexual differentiation and not in their social roles, as the words "man and woman" would convey. This means that if the abolition view were correct, Galatians 3:28 would be teaching the abolition of male-female sexual differences and the realization of an androgynous person, that is, a person having male and female characteristics. This interpretation, though upheld by some scholars,¹⁹ is unwarranted because Paul was passionate in maintaining the role distinctions of men and women (1 Cor 11:3-15; Eph 5:22), while rejecting any value judgment based on them.

Different Concerns. The real issue in Galatians 3:28 is religious and not social status, though, as we shall see, the former has profound implications for the latter. To understand this point it is essential to see the difference between the concern of Paul's contemporaries and that of Christians today. The great concern of first century Jews and Christians was the religious status, that is, the status of men and women before God which determined the structure of social life. The concern of people today, including many Christians, is the social status, that is, the social equality of men and women. The religious question is often of little interest, except insofar as it impacts the social question.

The prevailing perception is that true equality of worth can only be accomplished by abolishing all role distinctions between men and women and

instituting what sociologists call “role interchangeability.”²⁰ Both spouses are supposed to be able to fulfill the roles of father, mother, breadwinner, housekeeper, pastor, elder, etc. Role distinctions according to sex are supposed to disappear.

Perversion of Creational Order. This view that equality means role-interchangeability, though popular, is nothing else than a perversion of God’s creational order. In Scripture equality does not mean role-interchangeability. This fact is clearly recognized by various evangelical feminist scholars.

For example, John Jefferson Davis writes: “It should be observed, as we examine this concept of equality, that in the New Testament documents it is not assumed that equality in the sight of God implies either role interchangeability among Christians or egalitarian authority patterns. And as we have already noted, the religious equality of Christian husbands and wives does not, in the apostolic teaching, involve egalitarian and interchangeable authority patterns.”²¹

Klyne R. Snodgrass expresses the same conviction: “Paul obviously did not give up the idea of hierarchy, and I would argue that equality and hierarchy are not necessarily antithetical ideas. Nevertheless, what did change for Paul and must change for every Christian is the understanding of hierarchy. Christianity redefines hierarchy in terms of love, servanthood and mutual submission.”²²

Summing up, the evidence submitted does not support the view that Galatians 3:28 abolishes all role distinctions among Christian people. The text simply asserts the fundamental truth that in Christ every person, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, enjoys the status of being the son or daughter of God.

Only Spiritual Relationships? The second interpretation, known as the traditional position, views Galatians 3:28 as being solely a soteriological statement (pertaining to salvation) which applies only to people’s spiritual relationship with God (their standing before God—*coram Deum*), and does not affect social relationships.²³ What applies in the “religious” sphere does not apply to the social sphere. James Hurley, for example, concludes that Galatians 3:28 deals not with “relations within the body of Christ,” but exclusively with the question, “Who may become a son of God and on what basis?”²⁴

This view is correct in what it affirms but incorrect in what it denies. It is correct in emphasizing that Galatians 3:28 deals with the equal religious standing of all people before God, irrespective of religious, social, and sexual

differences, but it is incorrect in denying the social implications of such a religious standing. We noted earlier that in Paul's time religious differences were the basis of social differences.

The abolition of differences in the religious status within the Christian community affected the social relations. Jewish and Gentile Christians could now eat together at community meals (Gal 2:11-14; Acts 10:9-29). Women were baptized like men, became direct members of God's people, equally received the gifts of the Spirit, and played significant roles in both private and public worship. The equal standing before God emphasized in Galatians 3:28 had important social consequences as religious (Jew and Greek), social (slave and free) and sexual (male and female) relationships were transformed through the presence of genuine Christian love.

Both Spiritual and Social Relationships. This leads us to consider the third interpretation. This views Galatians 3:28 as being a soteriological statement which affects both spiritual and social relationships, without abolishing the creational role distinctions of men and women.²⁵ To deny the social implication of Galatians 3:28 means to fail to recognize that in the Christian faith nothing can be labelled as exclusively religious or spiritual ("merely *coram Deum*—in the eyes of God").

The social implications of Galatians 3:28 are evident in the New Testament. An example is the active roles that women exercised within the church. They exercised the spiritual gifts for the benefit of the whole church, they engaged as fellow-workers in pioneer evangelism and took full responsibility for their own spiritual development. In short, the oneness in Christ of every person proclaimed in Galatians 3:28 changed the role of women from mere spectators in the synagogue to active participants in the church.

Another example can be seen in 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul ten times carefully balances his statements so that what he says about one sex is repeated explicitly of the other. He says, for example, that both husband and wife must honor the conjugal rights of the other (v. 3) and that each of them must view the other as the ruler of his or her body (v. 4). The statement that "the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does" (v. 4) is startling, especially in the light of the contemporary view of the prerogatives of the male.

Example of Slavery. Slavery provides another example of how Paul envisions the social implications of the oneness in Christ of slaves and masters. In Ephesians 6:5-9 Paul gives the following instruction to both slaves and masters: "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your earthly masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as to Christ; . . .

knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same again from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. Masters, do the same to them, and forbear threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.”

The same ideas are expressed by Paul in 1 Timothy 6:1-2 and in Philemon. All these passages illustrate the transformation in social relationships brought about by the new life and oneness in Christ. This transformation consists not in the abrogation of the distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free and male and female, but in a new attitude of brotherly love toward one another.

Abolition of Slavery. Some argue that if the message expressed in Galatians 3:28 eventually led to the abolition of Jew-Gentile and slave-free differences, the same truth should lead to the elimination of the man-woman differences, and thus, to the ordination of women. The initial plausibility of this view is discredited by four important observations. First, Paul compares the relationships among Jew-Greek, slave-free and male-female only in one common area: the status distinction these created in one’s relationship with God.

Second, in other areas Paul recognizes that the distinctions among the three relationships still exist. Being in Christ did not change a Jew into a Gentile, a slave into a freeman and a man into a woman; rather it changed the way each of these related to the other. Paul still took pride in being a Jew and acknowledged the advantages of being a Jew, but he did not grant Jews any special standing before God (Rom 2:25-3:9; Phil 3:4-11).

Third, there is an important difference between Paul’s view of the man-woman relationship and of the slave-freeman relationship. For Paul the subordination involved in the man-woman relationship is based on the order of creation and it represents God’s purpose for human beings after the redemption in Christ which restores humanity to the original creational intent.

Paul, however, never teaches that slavery is a divine institution, part of God’s order of creation, and thus to be perpetuated. On the contrary, he encourages the slave offered the opportunity of manumission to take advantage of it (1 Cor 7:21), and classifies slave-kidnapers among the “unholy and profane” (1 Tim 1:9-10). He admonishes slaves to obey their masters, not because slavery is part of God’s purpose, but because they are now freedmen in Christ (1 Cor 7:22; cf. 1 Pet 2:16).

Abolition of Sexual Differentiations? Fourth, the possible influence of Galatians 3:28 on the abolition of slavery cannot serve as a model for the elimination of role distinctions of men and women, because, as noted earlier,

the text speaks of sexual differentiation (“male and female”) and not of social roles as would be implied by the words “man and woman.” While slavery is a temporary human institution resulting from the Fall, male-female differences are unchangeable biological features originating at creation.

Evangelical feminists recognize that Galatians 3:28 does not intend to remove biological distinctions between male and female. A warning must be sounded, however, against the unisex trend of our society. Susan Foh correctly observes: “There are trends in society moving in the direction of unisex. The visibility of homosexuals and their campaign to legitimize homosexuality is one step toward removing biological differences (by removing the significance of biological differences) between male and female. This trend is contrary to the plain command of Scripture (1 Cor 6:9-10; 1 Tim 1:9-11; Jude 5,7; Rom 1:24-27). We should also note that some gays use the biblical feminists’ hermeneutic and claim that Paul was culturally conditioned when he prohibited homosexuality.”²⁶

It is noteworthy that some of the denominations which decided years ago to ordain women have now set up study-groups to explore the feasibility of ordaining homosexuals.²⁷ It should come as no surprise to anyone if in the near future some of these churches will approve the ordination of homosexuals, by explaining away as time-bound and culturally conditioned the Biblical condemnation of homosexuality. This trend to reinterpret Scripture in the light of contemporary humanistic/secularistic cultural values should concern every Bible-believing Christian. If allowed to prevail, this trend will ultimately destroy both the normative authority of Scripture and the moral fabric of Christianity.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that the order of redemption inaugurated by Christ’s coming has greatly affected the social relationship of men and women, but has not changed or eliminated role differences.

Jesus was revolutionary in advocating the equal spiritual status of men and women in His kingdom, but He was not revolutionary in abrogating the role distinctions of men and women. The consequence of Jesus’ teachings was a significant change in the social status of women. This change made it possible for women to be treated with the same “brotherly love” as men and to participate actively in the life and mission of the church. There is no indication, however, that Jesus’ proclamation of the human dignity and worth of women was ever intended to pave the way for their ordination as pastors of the flock. Christ’s exclusive choice of men as apostles shows His respect for the role differences between men and women established at creation.

Paul, like Jesus, was revolutionary in proclaiming the oneness and equality in Christ of all believers (Gal 3:28; Col 3:9-11; 1 Cor 12:12-13). Our study of Galatians 3:28 has shown that the message of this text has significant social implications, but does not abolish role differences. The passage envisions one body into which all believers through baptism have been incorporated as living members. This is the body of Christ in which racial, social, and sexual distinctions have no validity.

However, we have found that the oneness of male and female in Christ does not eliminate the role differences established at creation. Galatians 3:28 does not teach that the individual characteristics of believers are abolished by the order of redemption. Being one in Christ does not change a Jew into a Gentile, a slave into a freeman, a man into a woman; rather it changes the way each of these relate to each other. Equality before God does not imply role-interchangeability. Galatians 3:28 speaks of the equality of all believers before God, but it does not speak to issues pertaining to order in the church and to the specific roles of women in the congregation. These issues are addressed by Paul in other passages which will be examined in the following chapters.

The analysis of the order of creation and redemption conducted in the last two chapters lead us to the formulation of the following principle: *In Scripture men and women are equal before God by virtue of creation and redemption. Yet God assigned distinctive and complementary roles to men and women in their relation to each other. These roles are not nullified, but clarified by Christ's redemption and thus they should be reflected in the church.*

ENDNOTES

1. Richard N. Longenecker, *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984), p. 92. For a brief but perceptive presentation of how the orders of creation and redemption determine respectively the stance pro or con the ordination of women, see Roberta Hestenes, "Women in Leadership: Finding Ways to Serve the Church," *Christianity Today* (October 3, 1986): 4-I to 10-I.

2. Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1985), p. 88.

3. James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981), p. 110.

4. Arlene Swidler, *Woman in a Man's Church* (New York, 1972), p. 36.

5. Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation* (Waco, Texas, 1975), p. 54.

6. For information on the status of women in ancient Greece and Rome, see Mary Lefkowitz and Maureen Fant, *Women in Greece and Rome* (Toronto, 1977); J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Roman Women* (London, 1962); Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves* (New York, 1975); Charles Seltmann, *Women in Antiquity* (London, 1956). For a brief treatment see Elisabeth Meier Tetlow, *Women and Ministry in the New Testament: Called to Serve* (Lanham, Maryland, 1980), pp. 7-20.

7. Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1980), p. 254.

8. Susie C. Stanley, "Response to Klyne R. Snodgrass 'Galatians 3:28: Conundrum or Solution?'" in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1986), p. 187.

9. For a helpful discussion on the connection between Galatians 3:28 and the creation narrative, see Krister Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women* (Philadelphia, 1966), p. 32; and David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (New York, 1973), p. 442.

10. Klyne R. Snodgrass, "Galatians 3:28: Conundrum or Solution?" in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1986), p. 177.

11. Diogenes Laertius 1, 33; also in Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes* 3, 19; Plutarch, *Lives, Caius Marius* 46.1, but without the thanksgiving for having been born a man and not a woman. For a brief survey and discussion of parallel texts, see Klyne R. Snodgrass (n. 10), p. 171.

12. Quoted in S. Singer, *Authorized Daily Prayer Book* (London, 1939), pp. 5-6.

13. Quoted in Stephen B. Clark (n. 7), p. 146.

14. Quoted in Stephen B. Clark (n. 7), p. 147.

15. Virginia Mollenkott, "Women and the Bible," *Sojourners* 5 (1976): 23; among those holding a similar view are Krister Stendahl (n. 9), pp. 32-37; Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975), p. 112; C. Parvey, "The Theology and Leadership of Women in the New Testament," in *Religion and Sexism*, ed. R. R. Ruether (New York, 1974), pp. 132-134; Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty (n. 5), p. 18; Ralph Langley, "The Role of Women in the Church," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 19 (1977): 69; David and Vera Mace, "Women and the Family in the Bible," in *Christian Freedom for Women and Other Human Beings* (Nashville, 1975), p. 18.

16. Paul K. Jewett (n. 15), p. 112; cf. R. Scroggs, "Woman in the N. T.," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume* (Nashville, 1976), p. 967.

17. Richard N. Longenecker (n. 1), pp. 84-86; Krister Stendahl (n. 9), pp. 34-35; Scott Bartchy, "Power, Submission, and Sexual Identity among the Early Christians," in *Essays on New Testament Christianity*, ed. C. Robert Wetzel (Cincinnati, 1978), pp. 58-59; Thomas R. W. Longstaff, "The Ordination of Women: A Biblical Perspective," *Anglican Theological Review* 57 (1975): 322-327; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982), p. 190.

18. Madeleine Boucher, "Some Unexplored Parallels to 1 Corinthians 11:11-12 and Galatians 3:28: The NT on the Role of Women," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31 (January 1969): 57.

19. Bernard Hungerford Brinsmead, *Galatians—Dialogical Response to Opponents* (Chico, California, 1982), pp. 150-151; Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia, 1979), p. 195-200; Wayne A. Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity," *History of Religions* 13 (1973-1974): 185-186; Robert Jewett, "The Sexual Liberation of the Apostle Paul," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (suppl. 1979): 65-69.

20. Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty (n. 5), p. 110.

21. John Jefferson Davis, "Some Reflections on Galatians 3:28, Sexual Roles, and Biblical Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 19, 3 (Summer 1976): 203.

22. Klyne R. Snodgrass (n. 10), p. 175.

23. See, for example, Fritz Zerbst, *The Office of Woman in the Church*, trans. Albert G. Merckens (St. Louis, 1955), p. 35; Madeleine Boucher (n. 18), pp. 57-58; Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1979), pp. 140-141.

24. James B. Hurley (n. 3), pp. 126-127.

25. Stephen B. Clark (n. 7), pp. 151-155; John Jefferson Davis (n. 21), pp. 202-203; Hans C. Cavallin, "Demythologizing the Liberal Illusion," in *Why Not? Priesthood and the Ministry of Women*, eds. Michael Bruce and G. E. Duffield (Appleford, England, 1972), pp. 81-94.

26. Susan T. Foh (n. 23), p. 141.

27. John Hogman, "Homosexuality, Sexual Ethics and Ordination," *Touchstone* 3 (May 1985): 4-14; Leslie K. Tarr, "United Church of Canada Task Force Recommends Ordaining Gays," *Christianity Today* 28 (May 18, 1984): 100; Jean Caffey Lyles, "Pain and the Presbyterians," *Christian Century* 99 (October 6, 1982): 988-993; John Maust, "The Episcopalians' Great Debate on Ordination of Homosexuals," *Christianity Today* 23 (October 19, 1979): 38-40; David A. Scott, "Ordaining a Homosexual Person: a Policy Proposal," *St. Luke's Journal of Theology* 22 (June 1979): 185-196.

Chapter 5

HEADSHIP

AND

SUBMISSION

Is the principle of male headship in the home and in the church derived legitimately from Scripture or illegitimately from men's efforts to dominate women? The answer to this question has fundamental implications for the role of women in the church. If the male headship in marriage and in the church is a Biblical principle, then the ordination of women as pastors/elders is an unbiblical practice. On the other hand, if the Scriptures teach that the headship role can be equally exercised by men and women, then the ordination of women as pastors/elders must be accepted as a Biblically-sanctioned practice.

Both liberal and evangelical feminists have long recognized the negative implications of the male-headship principle for the ordination of women. Consequently they have made a strenuous effort to reinterpret the male "headship texts" of the New Testament (Eph 5:23; 1 Cor 11:3-16), in accordance with the "partnership paradigm" upon which the ordination of women is based.¹

The New Testament texts which say that "the husband is the head of the wife" (Eph 5:23), and "the head of a woman is her husband" (1 Cor 11:3) historically have been understood to mean that husbands have "authority over" their wives. Recently this interpretation has been challenged, especially by liberal and evangelical feminists who contend that the word "head" in such passages means "source" or "origin" rather than designating "authority over."

This interpretation is used by feminists to reject any form of women's submission to their husbands and to argue for sexual equality and role-interchangeability. For example, Scanzoni and Hardesty write: "If we think of the term 'head' in the sense of *arche* (beginning, origin, source), we are

again reminded of the *interdependence* of the sexes, each drawing life from the other.”² This interdependence supposedly allows both spouses to fill the roles of father, mother, breadwinner, housekeeper, pastor, elder, etc.³

Objectives. The purpose of this chapter is threefold. First, we shall ascertain the meaning of “head” as used in Ephesians 5:23 and 1 Corinthians 11:3. Second, we shall examine the principle of headship and submission in marriage. Third, we shall consider the principle of headship and submission in the church. The chapter is divided into three distinct parts, each of which examines one of the three cited objectives.

PART I

THE MEANING OF HEADSHIP

1. Head as “Source”

What did Paul mean when he wrote that “the head of a woman is her husband” (1 Cor 11:3) and that “the husband is the head of the wife” (Eph 5:23)? Numerous recent authors have argued that in these texts “head” does not mean authority but rather “origin” or “source.”⁴ The implication of this definition is that Paul was not teaching that man “has authority over” (=head over) his wife, but rather that he is her “source” and consequently he must be especially concerned for her.

Modern Authors. The first to propound that “head” (*kephale*) in 1 Corinthians 11:3 should be understood as “origin” or “source” seems to have been Stephen Bedale in an article published in 1954.⁵ Since then, numerous writers have expressed the same view.⁶ Among them, the most influential have been Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen. In several articles they have argued that Paul used the term “head” in 1 Corinthians 11:3, not in the sense of “authority” or “hierarchy” but rather in the sense of “source, base, derivation,” and in Ephesians 5:23 in the sense of “one who brings to completion.”⁷ The implication of this interpretation is that the “head texts” do not preclude women from being ordained to serve as pastors/elders in the church.

Arguments for “Source.” The various arguments advanced for interpreting “head” as “source” or “origin” rather than as “ruler or authority” have been examined and compellingly refuted by Wayne Grudem.⁸ The reader is referred to Grudem’s exhaustive analysis for a fuller treatment of this question. Briefly stated the main arguments for this view fall into four categories:

(1) **Linguistic.** In classical and contemporary Greek “head” (*kephale*) does not normally mean “ruler” or “authority over.”⁹ The Mickelsens support this claim by appealing to the Liddell-Scott lexicon where the meaning of “authority over” is not listed. Instead, this lexicon cites two examples (Herodotus 4, 91 and *Orphic Fragments* 21a) where “head” is used with the meaning of “source.”¹⁰ The latter meaning of the “head” as the ruling part of the organism “would be unintelligible to St. Paul or his readers.”¹¹

(2) **Cultural.** The ancient world did not view the head as the seat of thinking and the executive part of the body. “In St. Paul’s day, according to popular psychology, both Greek and Hebrew, a man reasoned and purposed, not ‘with his head,’ but ‘in his heart.’”¹² Consequently, the metaphor of source is supposedly present in the “head texts” (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:23).

(3) **Septuagint.** The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) supposedly shows that “head” (*kephale*) can mean “source.” The main support for this conclusion is that when the Hebrew word *ro’oh* (“head”) means “ruler” or “chief,” it was translated by either *kephale* (“head”) or *arche* (“beginning” or “ruler”). Since *arche* sometimes means “source,” then *kephale* in Paul’s writings may mean “source” as well.¹³

(4) **Parallelism.** The word “head” (*kephale*) is supposedly used by Paul in Colossians 2:19 and Ephesians 4:15 with the meaning of “source of life.” Christians are exhorted in Colossians 2:19 to hold fast “to the Head, *from whom* the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.” The Mickelsens argue that in this passage Christ is the “head” in the sense that He is “the source of life,” and not of “superior rank.”¹⁴ They believe that the same meaning applies to 1 Corinthians 11:3, since in verses 8 and 12 of the same chapter, Paul says that “woman was made *from* man.”

Analysis of Linguistic Argument. The first argument is based on an unproven assumption. Wayne Grudem has discredited this assumption by finding and quoting thirty-two examples in which *kephale* (“head”) is used to mean “authority over” or “ruler” in Greek writings outside the New Testament (seventeen are from Greek translations of the Old Testament and fifteen are from other literature).¹⁵

The absence in the Liddell-Scott lexicon of “authority over” as a meaning for “head” is not conclusive evidence for the nonexistence of such a meaning. The reason is, as Wayne Grudem rightly explains: “Liddell-Scott is the standard lexicon for all of Greek literature from about 700 B.C. to about A. D. 600 with emphasis on classical Greek authors in the seven centuries prior to the New Testament. Liddell-Scott is the tool one would use when

studying Plato or Aristotle, for example; but it is not the standard lexicon that scholars use for the study of the New Testament. (The standard lexicon for that is Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker).”¹⁶

Analysis of Cultural Argument. While it is true that in the ancient world “the heart” rather than “the head” was generally viewed as the seat of thinking (Prov 14:33; 22:17, in Hebrew and KJV; Luke 5:22), there is also significant evidence that the “head” was regarded as the thinking and ruling part of the body. Plutarch (A.D. 46-120), a prominent Greek author contemporary to the New Testament period, explains why the words “soul” (*psyche*) and “head” (*kephale*) can be used to refer to the whole person: “We affectionately call a person ‘soul’ or ‘head’ from his ruling parts.”¹⁷

Similarly the Jewish philosopher Philo (c. 30 B.C.—c. A.D. 45) writes: “The mind is the head and the ruler of the sense-perception in us.”¹⁸ Also he says: “As the head in the living body is the ruling place, so Ptolemy became head among kings.”¹⁹ Examples such as these discredit the claim that the metaphor of the head ruling the body would have been “unintelligible to St. Paul or his readers.”

Analysis of Septuagint Argument. The argument that “head” in the Septuagint sometimes means “source” is a gratuitous assumption, devoid of any textual support. The reader will search in vain for examples in the articles by Stephen Bedale and the Mickelsens showing that “head” (*kephale*) was ever used with the meaning of “source” in the Septuagint. The fact that *kephale* is sometimes used in the Septuagint interchangeably with *arche*, which can mean “source,” or “beginning,” does not per se demonstrate that *kephale* generally means “source.”²⁰

Wayne Grudem explains this inconsistency by using a fitting example from the English language: “A parallel to Bedale’s argument in English would be if I were to argue (1) that ‘jump’ and ‘spring’ could both be used to translate some foreign word when it referred to a ‘leap in the air,’ and (2) that therefore there is a virtual equation of ‘jump’ and ‘spring’ in English. I would then go on to argue that ‘jump’ also can mean ‘a fountain of water,’ or ‘a coil of metal,’ or ‘a pleasant season of the year when flowers begin to bloom.’”²¹

Analysis of Parallelism Argument. The imagery of Christ as “the Head” of the church, which is compared to the word “body” in Colossians 2:19 and Ephesians 4:15, does allow for “Head” to mean “source,” but it certainly does not exclude the meaning of “authority over.” The context of Colossians 2:19 indicates that Paul encourages his readers to abandon the worship of angels and serve only Christ as the true “Head.” In this context of allegiance to Christ instead of to angels, the reference to Christ as the “Head”

best implies “authority over” the church. Moreover, even if it meant “the source” of the church, it would still imply “authority over” the church by virtue of the very fact that the church derives her origin and sustenance from Christ.

Similarly, the context (vv. 8, 10-12) of Ephesians 4:15 shows that Christ is “the Head” of the church in the sense that He is the sovereign Lord who rules the church and nourishes her growth. The fact that Christ as “the Head” is the source of growth of the church, presupposes that He is also the leader of the church.

This brief analysis of the four arguments used to interpret “head” in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23 as meaning “source” rather than “authority over,” suffices to show that this interpretation lacks textual, contextual and historical support.

2. Head as “Authority Over”

Are we correct in understanding that “head” in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23 means “authority over”? When we read that “the head of a woman is her husband” (1 Cor 11:3) and “the husband is the head of the wife” (Eph 5:23), are we right to think that these mean that the husband is in a position of authority with respect to his wife? We believe that this understanding is correct. The main evidences supporting this conclusion fall into five major categories, each of which will be briefly stated here.

(1) New Testament Lexicons. All the standard lexicons and dictionaries for the New Testament do list “authority over,” “ruler,” or “superior rank” as meanings for “head” (*kephale*). The Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich lexicon gives the following definition under the word *kephale*: “in the case of living beings, to denote superior rank.”²² Thirteen examples are then listed of such usage, including 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23.

The same meaning is given by Heinrich Schlier in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Referring to the use of *kephale* in the Septuagint, he writes: “*kephale* is used for the head or ruler of a society.”²³ Again, with reference to 1 Corinthians 11:3, Schlier says: “*kephale* implies one who stands over another in the sense of being the ground of his being.”²⁴ Similar definitions are given by *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* and by the older New Testament lexicons by Thayer and Cremer.

(2) Textual Evidences. There are ample textual evidences from ancient Greek literature attesting to the use of “head” (*kephale*) with the meaning of “authority over.” Wayne Grudem conducted a painstaking survey of 2,336 examples, by utilizing a computerized database of the Thesaurus Linguae

Graecae at the University of California-Irvine. This listing included the major classical Greek authors, in addition to the Septuagint, Philo, Josephus, the Apostolic Fathers, the New Testament and others.

The results of the survey are very significant. In the vast majority of instances *kephale* refers to an actual physical head of a man or animal (87%).²⁵ Of the 302 instances where *kephale* is used metaphorically, 49 times it is used to denote a “ruler” or a “person of superior authority or rank.” “The other interesting conclusion from this study is that no instances were discovered in which *kephale* had the meaning ‘source, origin.’”²⁶ These data openly contradict the Mickelsens’ statement that “a more common meaning [of ‘head’] was source, or origin, as we use it in the ‘head of the Mississippi river.’”²⁷

A sampling of a few instances in which “head” (*kephale*) refers to a ruler or a person of superior authority will suffice to substantiate this usage. One of the 13 examples from the Septuagint is Judges 11:11: “So Jephthah went with the elder of Gilead, and all the people made him *head* and leader over them” (cf. Judges 11:8, 9; Is 7:8, 9; 9:14-16, [LXX 13-15]). Philo, in addition to the two examples already quoted, writes: “The virtuous one, whether single man or people, will be the *head* of the human race and all others will be like the parts of the body which are animated by the powers in the *head* and at the top.”²⁸

Referring to an army, Plutarch writes: “the light-armed troops are like the hands, the cavalry like the feet, the line of men-at-arms itself like the chest and breastplate, and the general is like the *head*.”²⁹ These and other examples listed by Wayne Grudem amply show that the meaning “ruler, authority over” has sufficient attestation to establish it as a legitimate sense in those New Testament texts which speak of man as the “head” of a woman and the husband as the “head” of the wife.

(3) Patristic Testimonies. The early Christian writers who referred to 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23 understood the word “head” used in these texts to mean “authority, superior rank.” The testimonies of such writers as Clement and Tertullian, who lived about a century away from the time of the New Testament, deserve consideration. Ruth A. Tucker has examined the references of these and other patristic writers to the “head” in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23. She concludes her survey, saying: “It [*kephale*] was generally interpreted by the church fathers and by Calvin to mean authority, superior rank or preeminence. These findings bring into question some of the Mickelsens’ assumptions—particularly that the ‘superior rank’ meaning of *kephale* is not ‘one of the ordinary Greek meanings’ but rather a ‘meaning associated with the English word *head*.’ . . . it seems clear

that the fathers used this so-called English meaning long before they could have in any way been influenced by the English language.”³⁰

(4) Contextual Evidences. The context of both 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23 excludes “source” as a possible meaning of “head.” In 1 Corinthians 11:3 Paul presents three sets of parallels: Christ/man, man/woman, God/Christ: “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.” If “head” is taken to mean “source,” as James Hurley convincingly shows, “there is no way to construct a satisfactory set of parallels.”³¹

Adam could be the source of Eve in the sense that she was physically taken out of him, but Christ cannot be the source of Adam in the sense that Adam was physically taken out of Him. Nor can God be the source of Christ in the sense that Christ was physically created from a piece taken out of God. The latter is not only incompatible with other Pauline teachings, but was also specifically rejected at the time of the Arian controversy.

On the other hand, if “head” means “authority or head over” a consistent set of parallels can be established. The husband is the head over his wife in the sense that she is “subject” to him (Eph 5:22). Christ is head over every man in the sense that every man must model his behavior after that of Christ (Eph 5:25). God is head over Christ in the sense that the incarnate Son of God was obedient to God’s authority (headship), even to the point of death (Phil 2:8).

Support for this set of parallels is provided also by the meaning of the head covering discussed in 1 Corinthians 11. This, as we shall see, was seen as the sign of a woman’s relation to her husband’s authority. Thus, reading “head” as “authority or head over” in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23 is consistent with the central issue in these chapters.

The meaning of “source or origin” is excluded also by the context of Ephesians 5:23, where Paul calls upon wives to be subject to their husbands “for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior” (Eph 5:22-23). In this context, the language of headship and subjection precludes the notion of “origin or source” for three main reasons.

First, the idea of subjection to an authority (“head”) is implied by the very verb “be subject” (*hypotasso*)—a verb which implies a relation to authority (cf. Eph 1:22). Second, while Adam was in a sense the source of Eve, husbands in the New Testament were not the physical source of their wives. Third, even if the husband were the actual source of his wife, that would make his authority, more rather than less complete, contrary to what some wish to argue.

(5) Unnecessary Opposition. The attempt to interpret the meaning of “head” as “source” to the exclusion of “authority, head over,” creates an unnecessary opposition between the two meanings. This fact is recognized even by Stephen Bedale, who is often quoted by those who do not see the meaning of “authority” in Paul’s use of “head” in Ephesians 5:23 and 1 Corinthians 11:3. Having argued that Paul saw man as *kephale* (“head”) of the woman in the sense of being her *arche* (“source, beginning”), Bedale goes on to say: “In St. Paul’s view, the female in consequence is “subordinate” (cf. Eph 5:23). But this principle of submission . . . rests upon the order of creation. . . . That is to say, *while the word kephale (and arche also, for that matter) unquestionably carries with it the idea of “authority,”* such authority in social relationships derives from relative priority (causal rather than merely temporal) in the order of being.”³²

It is obvious that Bedale offers no support to those who quote his article to prove that authority is not inherent in Paul’s use of *kephale* (“head”). Even if it could be proven that Paul uses “head” with the meaning of “source,” such a conclusion would still carry with it the idea of man’s “authority, leadership” role in marriage and in the church.

Conclusion. The foregoing considerations indicate that “head” is used by Paul in Ephesians 5:23 and 1 Corinthians 11:3, to mean “authority, head over” rather than “source, origin.” We must now examine the implications of this meaning for the role relationship of men and women in marriage and in the church.

PART II

HEADSHIP AND SUBMISSION

IN MARRIAGE

The preceding discussion has established that Paul uses “head” in Ephesians 5:23 and 1 Corinthians 11:3 with the meaning of “authority over.” At this juncture two questions need to be addressed: (1) In what sense is the husband to exercise authority over his wife? To put it differently, What is the nature of the headship role a husband is called to fulfill in marriage? (2) In what sense is the wife to be submissive to her husband? Or, What is the nature of the submission role a wife is called upon to fulfill in marriage? The clearest discussion of these two questions is found in Ephesians 5:21-33. Thus, we shall examine this passage to ascertain Paul’s teachings, first regarding the submission of the wife and then about the headship of the husband.

1. Submission in Marriage

Context. Ephesians 5:21-33 forms part of a section of the epistle commonly described as a “household code.” This consists of a series of exhortations, which are similar to those found in Colossians 3:18-19 and 1 Peter 3:1-7, and are given to wives and husbands, children and parents, and slaves and masters. These exhortations are part of a longer instruction on how the members of the body of Christ should love one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

The “household code” in Ephesians deals not with all the aspects of marital relationships, but with a specific one, namely, the aspect of order characterized by the wife’s submission and the husband’s headship. Regarding the former Paul writes: “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands” (Eph 5:21-24).

Mutual Submission? The opening statement, “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ” (v. 21), is taken by many to be the key that interprets the whole passage in terms of mutual submission.³³ In other words, Paul is calling upon husbands and wives to be mutually submissive by serving one another in love. This interpretation obviously excludes the notion of the husband’s headship over the wife. Though the idea of mutual submission is not foreign to the intent of the passage, in our view it does not represent the main teaching of the passage. Verse 21 can best be understood as a general heading for the whole section which deals with the role relations of wives/husbands, children/parents, slaves/masters (Eph 5:21—6:9). Objections to the mutual submission interpretation of the passage are basically four:

Structure of the Passage. First, the whole passage (Eph 5:21 to 6:9) consists of a series of three exhortations in which wives, children, and slaves are urged to submit to or obey respectively husbands, parents and masters. These exhortations negate the notion of mutual submission, especially in the case of children/parents and slaves/masters. They can best be understood as explanations of what is meant by being subject to one another.

Exhortation to Subordinate. Second, the exhortation to be submissive or to obey is given to the subordinate partner, not to both. The corresponding exhortations to husbands/parents/masters are not for them to be submissive, but to respect and love their subordinates. Thus both the structure and context of the passage recognize a distinction of roles. This view is also strengthened by the absence of the corresponding exhortation for masters and husbands in the parallel passage of 1 Peter 2:18 to 3:2.

Meaning of Verb. Third, the New Testament use of the verb *hypotasso*, translated “to make subject” in the active and “to be subject” in the passive, consistently expresses the idea of exercising or yielding to authority.³⁴ “Each of the more than forty New Testament uses of the verb carries an overtone of authority and subjection or submission to it.”³⁵ The meaning of the verb “to be subject” then, contains the idea of an order where one person subordinates himself or herself to the leadership of another.

Meaning of “to one another.” Fourth, the phrase “to one another,” which is the basis for the idea of mutual submission, does not always require reciprocity. An example of this is found in James 5:16 where the same phrase occurs: “confess your sins *to one another*.” This instruction is given in the context of a sick person confessing his or her sins to an elder as part of the healing process. There is no indication in the context of a reciprocal confession of sin, that is, of the elder also confessing his sins to the sick person. In the same way the exhortation “Be subject to one another” does not necessarily require the idea of reciprocity. In the light of the above structural, contextual, and verbal considerations, the phrase “Be subject to one another” can simply mean, “Let each one be subject to his or her respective authority (head).”

2. The Nature of Submission

Reasons for Submission. What is the meaning of the exhortation, “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord” (Eph 5:22)? In what sense are wives to be subject or submissive to their husbands? There are different kinds of submission and for different motivations. There is the calculating kind of submission designed to achieve the fulfillment of secret desires through the practice of “feminine wiles.” There is the submission of conciliation which is accepted for the sake of peace. There is the submission of resignation to bitter necessity. There is the submission to the superior wisdom of another person.

Paul rejects the worldly patterns of submission, substituting for them a new definition: “as to the Lord.” This does not mean that a wife’s submission to her husband must have the unconditional ultimacy of her commitment to Christ. This would be an idolatrous form of submission. The phrase suggests two possible meanings. First, the *manner* of a wife’s submission to her husband should be similar in quality to her devotion to the Lord. This meaning is supported by the parallel text, Colossians 3:18, which states: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”

Second, the *reason* for a wife's submission is "because the Lord wants it." This meaning is suggested by the preceding and following verses. In the preceding verse (v. 21) the reason given for being submissive is "out of reverence for Christ." "Reverence" is a soft translation of the Greek *phobos* which means "fear." The KJV retains the literal meaning: "in the fear of God."

In Scripture the "fear of the Lord" is the response which produces obedience to His commandments. Thus, submission "in the fear of Christ" means to accept the authority of another (in this case, the husband) out of obedience to Christ who has delegated that authority. This interpretation is supported by the following verse (v. 23) which says, "For the husband is the head of the wife," that is to say, because the Lord has appointed the husband to function as the head. The recognition of this fact leads Paul to conclude his exhortation by urging wives again to fear their husbands: "Let the wife see that she respects [literally 'fears'—*phobetai*] her husband" (Eph 5:33).

Theological, not Cultural Reasons. The main conclusion relevant here is that a wife's submission to her husband rests not on cultural but on theological reasons. Wives are asked to submit not for the sake of social conventions or the superior wisdom of their husbands, but for the sake of Christ. Paul grounds his injunction not on a particular culture, but on the unique relationship of loving mutuality and willing submission existing between Christ and the church.

The submission of a wife to her husband is not merely a cultural convention, but a divine principle. As stated in the "Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod," "The woman is reminded, always in the context of an appeal to the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ, that she has been subordinated to man by the Creator and that it is for this reason that she should willingly accept this divine arrangement."³⁶

Christ has appointed the husband to function as the "head," so that when the wife subordinates herself to him, she is obeying Christ. This does not mean that a wife is to relate to her husband as if he were Christ. Paul's exhortation is "Wives, be subject to your husbands, *as* to the Lord," and *not* "because they are the Lord." Husbands are human beings, but are appointed by the Lord to act as "heads" in the marital relationship. Thus, Paul takes what could be a natural submission and places it within a spiritual order, an order that Christ stands behind.

The wife's submission to her husband is not based on the husband's superiority or the wife's inferiority, but, as we have seen, on the husband's headship role established by God at creation (1 Cor 11:8-9). This order

has been established because it affords greater harmony and effectiveness in the marital relationship. The authority to which a wife bows is not so much that of her husband as that of the creational order to which both of them are subject.

Voluntary Submission. A wife's submission to her husband is not imposed but consciously chosen. It is a free, willing and loving submission. It is not subservience but loving assistance. The voluntary nature of her submission is indicated by two facts. First, by the command to the husband to love his wife rather than to make her obey. Second, by the model of the submission of the church to Christ which Paul gives as an example for the wife's submission to her husband. This means that as the church willingly chooses to obey Christ in response to His creative and redeeming love, so the wife willingly chooses to obey the husband as a response to his caring and self-sacrificing love. This form of active obedience is not self-demeaning but self-fulfilling and upbuilding.

This kind of submission stems from the underlying unity that should exist between husband and wife, as illustrated by the comparison with Christ and the church (Eph 5:25-27) and the head and the body (vv. 28-30). The purpose of this submission is not to suppress the individuality of the wife, but to ensure a deeper and more solid oneness between husband and wife as they function together in the household. Elisabeth Elliot perceptively points out that "To say that submission is synonymous with the stunting of growth, with dullness and colorlessness, spiritlessness, passivity, immaturity, servility, or even the "suicide of personality," as one feminist who calls herself an evangelical has suggested, is totally to misconstrue the biblical doctrine of authority."³⁷

In the Christian faith, authentic self-realization for men and women is found in willing submission to the divinely-established structures which are grounded in creation and clarified by Christ's redemption. This liberating dynamic is exemplified in the life of the Trinity and expressed in the Scriptures.

Rejection of Submission. Most liberal and evangelical feminists reject the notion of a woman's subordinate role in the home or in the church. They view the so-called "hierarchical paradigm" as an immoral legacy of the patriarchal society. Instead, they promote the "partnership paradigm," in which there are no headship or submission roles, but only role-interchangeability. The latter must be regarded as a clear repudiation of the Biblical paradigm of a wife's submission to the headship of her husband.

Ellen White urges respect for this Biblical model: "The husband is the head of the family, as Christ is the head of the church; and any course which

the wife may pursue to lessen his influence and lead him to come down from that dignified, responsible position is displeasing to God. It is the duty of the wife to yield her wishes and will to her husband. Both should be yielding, but the word of God gives preference to the judgment of the husband. And it will not detract from the dignity of the wife to yield to him whom she has chosen to be her counselor, adviser, and protector.”³⁸

Danger of Insubordination. The outcome of the prevailing rejection of this Biblical model of authority is evident today in the ever-increasing marital conflicts, broken marriages and divorces. In the efforts to assert their independence from their husbands, more and more women are willing to sacrifice their sacred calling to serve their families.

Ellen White underscores the danger of this trend: “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.”³⁹

Susan Foh describes the current women’s striving for independence and role interchangeability as “the forbidden fruit” of our times: “Today, there is a forbidden fruit, just as there was in the garden. That fruit is role interchangeability in marriage and the church. Christian women, like Eve, are being tempted with half truths (such as submission implies inferiority) and are being told that God (or the Bible or the church) is depriving them of something quite arbitrarily. (We forget that God’s commandments are for our own good.) In some instances Christian women are deceived into thinking that God’s word forbids more than it does; they think they must not even touch the tree with the forbidden fruit. And like Eve, Christian women are guilty of sinning against their creator by discussing with other creatures whether or not God’s law is fair.”⁴⁰

3. Headship in Marriage

Headship Acknowledged. It is noteworthy that Paul speaks of the headship role of the husband only when exhorting wives and not when addressing the husbands themselves. In other words, the wives are reminded that “the husband is the head of the wife” (Eph 5:23), but that husbands are *not* exhorted to exercise their headship role by keeping their wives in

submission. Instead, Paul chose to confront husbands with the headship model of Christ's sacrificial love (Eph 5:25-27).

Paul's approach reveals his sensitivity to human abuse of power. He was aware of some men's overconcern to assert their authority. Consequently, he chose to emphasize not the husband's right to be the head, but rather his obligation to exercise his headship through care for his wife. Paul acknowledges the headship role of the husband in the marital relationship as an indisputable principle: "the husband is the head of the wife" (Eph 5:23). There was no need to restate this principle when addressing the husbands. What husbands needed to hear was what it means to be the head of their wives.

Headship Clarified. Paul clarifies the meaning of headship by calling upon husbands to imitate the sacrificial leadership of Christ Himself: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:25-27).

Paul here goes into great detail to explain how Christ exercises His headship role over the church, namely, through the sacrificial giving of Himself for her redemption and restoration. In the same way the husband's authority is to be expressed in self-giving love for the well-being of his wife. The husband who follows Christ's leadership will exercise his headship, not by forcing his wife into a mold that stifles her initiative, her gifts, her personhood, but rather by encouraging her to develop her mental and spiritual potential.

Paul further clarifies the meaning of headship by shifting back to the head/body analogy (vv. 28-30). The husband should care for his wife as he does for his own body. This means that a husband must be dedicated to his wife's welfare by providing for all her needs. This kind of loving and sacrificial leadership eliminates all the evils associated with hierarchical marriage and enables the two to "become one flesh" (Eph 5:31).

Biblical headship is for the sake of building others and not for one's own benefit. Headship means that the husband assumes a responsibility for the family in a way different from that of the wife. The husband serves as the provider and the wife as the home-builder. The two are not equivalent but complementary. Each supplements the special gifts and responsibilities of the other.

Headship and Submission. The model of Christ's sacrificial love for the church provides a most eloquent example of how headship and submission can be compatible in marital relationships. Christ's headship over the church is not diminished by His self-sacrificing love for her. By the same token, the church's submission to Christ does not diminish the possibilities for her fullest development, but rather enhances them.

The comparison between Christ/church and husband/wife points to the ultimacy of the authority structure in marriage. The latter, however, must always mirror the relation of Christ to the church. Neither headship nor submission must crush or distort the possibilities for growth or personal fulfillment. Effective leadership in any organization must encourage the fullest development of the abilities of those under authority. This requires that a leader be aware of the concerns of those under him and that the subordinates respect the wishes of the leader. As Christians we need to maintain the delicate balance between the exercise of authority (headship) and the response to authority (submission).

Conclusion. Our examination of Ephesians 5 has shown that Paul views the headship of the husband and the submission of the wife as an order established by God to ensure unity and harmony in the home. We have seen that Paul defines and defends headship and submission in marriage not on the basis of cultural customs but on the basis of theological reasons. By utilizing the model of Christ and the church, Paul effectively clarifies the meaning of headship and submission in marriage. The purpose of this clarification, however, was not to do away with role distinctions in marriage, but rather to ensure their proper expression in accordance with God's intended purpose. Our study of headship and submission in marriage provides an essential backdrop for the study which follows regarding headship and submission in the church.

PART III

HEADSHIP AND SUBMISSION

IN THE CHURCH

How is the principle of headship and submission in marriage related to the role relations of men and women in the church? Are the role differences of husband and wife in marriage the paradigm for the role differences of men and women in the church? To find an answer to these questions, we shall examine 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, where Paul speaks about headship in conjunction with his ruling about appropriate head coverings in church services.

1. Headship and Head Coverings

Background. In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Paul discusses the appropriate headaddress for men and women during the worship service. The basic rule for church order that Paul gives in this passage is that in worship services men should leave their heads uncovered, while women should cover their heads. Since more of the passage discusses the head covering for women when they pray or prophesy in the public assembly, it seems probable that Paul was responding to a report received about some Corinthian women who were either refusing to cover their heads or were questioning such practice. Possibly some women saw the abandoning of their head coverings as an expression of their liberty and equality in Christ.

The importance of this passage lies not so much in what Paul says about head coverings as such, but rather in the significance that he attaches to head coverings as a symbol of the role distinctions that men and women must preserve in the church. These distinctions, as we shall see, are for Paul not grounded on cultural conventions but on a male headship role established by God at creation.

The Order of “Heads.” Paul opens his discussion by commending the Corinthians for holding to his teachings (1 Cor 11:2). He then proceeds to set forth his basic teaching that there exists a hierarchy of headship authority, consisting of God, Christ, Man, Woman: “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3). This is a foundational statement that provides for Paul the basis for his ruling on head coverings.

In the first part of this chapter we established that the word “head” (*kephale*) is used by Paul in this text and in Ephesians 5:23 with the meaning of “authority, head over.” This meaning is evident especially in 1 Corinthians 11 where the central issue is the relation of head coverings to authority (cf. v. 10). Thus, Paul affirms the existence of an order of “headship” that must be respected in the home (Eph 5:21-30) and in the church (1 Cor 11:3-16).

Some reject the hierarchical interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:3, because Paul, “begins with Christ/man, which in a hierarchical structure should be in second position; he goes on with man/woman, which in a hierarchical structure should be in third position; and he ends with God/Christ, which in a hierarchical structure should be in first position.”⁴¹

The fact that the headship of man is sandwiched between the headship of Christ and of God can hardly represent a negation of a hierarchical order. Instead, this irregular sequential arrangement could well reflect Paul’s intent

to place the headship of man within the context of the headship of Christ and God, since such Christological and theological models must govern our understanding of the meaning of the headship of man.

Headship and Equality. Some find the notion of a hierarchical order in the Godhead, and in the human family, to stand in open contradiction of the principle of equality.⁴² How can a woman be equal to a man when she is expected to be subordinate to his headship in the home and in the church? This apparent contradiction can be resolved, as pointed out already in Chapter 3, by recognizing that the hierarchical distinctions are functional and not ontological, that is, they have to do with roles and not with essential worth or dignity of being.

As Walter Kaiser points out, “Such a ranking speaks not of their relative dignity or worth (Is Christ any less than God? Or is a woman any less created in the image of God than man?), but only of their job relationships, responsibilities to each other and ultimately to God.”⁴³ The headship of God the Father in relation to the incarnate Son in no way diminishes the dignity of Christ’s person or His full equality in the Godhead (John 10:30; 14:9; Col 1:15-20). In the same way the functional headship of man in the home and in the church in no way detracts from, or is detrimental to, the dignity and equality of woman in personhood.

The model of the headship of God in relation to Christ should dispel any notion of superiority or inferiority. George Knight states this point most clearly: “The headship of God with reference to Christ can be readily seen and affirmed with no threat to Christ’s identity. This chain of submission with its implications is apparently given to help answer the objection some bring to the headship of man in reference to woman. Just as Christ is not a second-class person or deity because the Father is His head, so the woman is not a second-class person or human being because man is her head.”⁴⁴

2. The Teaching about Head Coverings

To preserve and to symbolize the order of hierarchical relationships, Paul now teaches that “Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head—it is the same as if her head were shaven” (1 Cor 11:4-5).

Noteworthy is the fact that Paul assumes that some women at Corinth were praying and prophesying along with men in the worship assembly (cf. Acts 21:9). The gifts of the Spirit are given to the church without regard to sexual differences (Joel 2:28; 1 Cor 12:7-11). Paul does not oppose the

participation of women in the worship service. What he opposes is the behavior of those women who had disregarded their subordinate position by praying and giving prophetic exhortations to the congregation with uncovered head, like the men.

Reason for Head Coverings. The reason why Paul opposes this practice is because “any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head—it is the same as if her head were shaven” (v. 5). The “head” being dishonored is presumably her husband since Paul states in verse 3 that “the head of a woman is her husband.” Why would a woman dishonor her head, the husband, when praying and prophesying in public with her head uncovered? Simply because the head covering, whatever its nature, was seen as the sign of her being under the “head” or authority of a man (cf. 1 Cor 11:10). Thus, the removal of such a sign constituted a repudiation of her husband’s authority or headship.

It is not difficult to see how a wife would dishonor her “head,” the husband, when she repudiated publicly the symbol of his authority by removing her head covering. By that act she would make a public statement that she viewed herself free from her vow of loyalty and submission to her husband.

Apparently some of the Corinthian women had concluded that, having been raised with Christ (1 Cor 4:6-9), they were now released from wearing a sign of submission to their husbands and thus they were free to participate in the worship by praying and prophesying with their heads uncovered. Paul defends their right to pray and prophesy, but opposes their rejection of the symbol of their marital submission.

Symbol of Submission and Honor. Paul argues that if a woman chose to reject the symbol of her marital submission, “then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil” (1 Cor 11:6). To understand the meaning of this statement, we need to note that in New Testament times the Jews could no longer execute an adulteress (Lev 20:10). Instead, they punished her by shearing off her hair and expelling her from the synagogue.⁴⁵ Apparently a similar practice existed in Roman society since, according to Tacitus, the husband of an adulterous wife cut off her hair and drove her from her house.⁴⁶

The clipped or shaven hair was thus a highly visible sign of a woman’s shame resulting from her repudiation of her husband’s authority. On the contrary the long hair was for a wife the symbol of her dignity (v. 15) and submission to her husband. As Stephen Clark points out: “This sign brought her honor and respect, because her position as a wife and as a woman

was honorable. In fact, for her not to have the appropriate expression of her position as a wife and woman would be degrading. A woman without a veil and a woman without long hair would be disgraced.”⁴⁷

This reasoning appears strange to us who live in a Western society which is losing its awareness of how certain symbols of status and submission can be honorable. The situation was much different in Paul’s time. Fritz Zerbst correctly observes: “The people of Paul’s day felt much more keenly than do people of our day that the outward demeanor of a person is an expression of his inner life, specifically, of his religious convictions and moral attitude. The arguments of Paul will be rightly understood and appreciated only when the attempts of Corinthian women to lay aside the headcloth are recognized as an attack in general upon the relations between man and woman as established in creation. This attack Paul strives to counter with a meaningful custom.”⁴⁸

The concern of Paul is not merely to promote the outward maintenance of a custom, but rather to protect the creational principle of the role distinctions men and women must respect in the home and in the church. To defend this principle Paul appeals not merely to cultural customs (head coverings, head shaven, and hair length), but especially to theological reasons derived from the order and manner of the creation of Adam and Eve. Before examining the latter, two clarifications are in order: (1) Is Paul addressing exclusively wives or inclusively all women? and (2) What is the head covering that Paul wanted on women’s head?

Wives or Women? The statement “the head of a woman is her husband” (1 Cor 11:3), is ambiguous because the words used in Greek (*aner* and *gune*) can refer either to husband and wife or man and woman. The fact that Paul uses the same words in Ephesians 5:23 when speaking of the headship of the husband over his wife has led some to conclude that Paul’s ruling here regards exclusively husbands and wives and not inclusively all men and women.

In spite of this evidence, this interpretation is unacceptable, especially because verses 3 and 5 speak inclusively of “every man” and “every woman” respectively. The qualifying word *pas*, “every” suggests that the ruling about head coverings applies to all men and women and not just to husbands and wives.

Some of the other reasons for this inclusive interpretation are cogently given by Ralph Alexander: “Verses 7-11 are concerned with creation as a basis for the regulations given. This, in turn, would tend to stress men and women in general rather than just husbands and wives. Verses 11-12 speak of the mutual interdependence of the sexes in the process of procreation. If husband and wife were meant, these verses would be illogical, for the husband

does not come into being through the wife nor is the wife the source of the husband. Verses 13-16 argue from nature, which would give greater support that man and woman in general is being discussed, rather than just husbands and wives.”⁴⁹

The ambiguity which is caused by the double meaning of *gune*, namely, wife and woman, can be clarified when we bear in mind that for Paul the husband-wife relationship in marriage is the paradigm for the man-woman relationship in the church. The role of a married woman is for Paul a model for women in general. This means that though 1 Corinthians 11 focuses on husbands and wives, the principle of headship and submission is applicable to the broader relations of men and women in the church. Thus, we would conclude with Fritz Zerbst that, “the Apostle had husband and wives in mind when he wrote this passage. However, Paul in this passage at the same time speaks also generally of man and woman. In order to understand Paul we must bear in mind that the relationship between the sexes always has its center in marriage.”⁵⁰

What is the Head Covering? Perhaps the most debated question is, What is the head covering that Paul wanted on women’s heads? The traditional understanding has been that the covering is some sort of shawl or veil over the head. It should be noted, however, that Paul does not mention any “veil” as such except in verse 15 where he says: “For her hair is given to her for (*anti*, instead of) a covering.”

On the basis of this text and of Numbers 5:18, James Hurley argues rather convincingly that the covering is not a veil or a shawl, but rather long hair which a woman was to wear in a bun or up when praying or prophesying. Such a hair style is supposedly viewed by Paul as a head covering.⁵¹ Support for this conclusion is provided also by 1 Timothy 2:9 and 1 Peter 3:3, where women are instructed not to have gold-braided hair. Such an instruction would seem redundant if women covered their heads with a shawl.

In spite of these valid observations, it seems reasonable to suppose that Paul refers to a covering consisting of a veil or a shawl. Support for this conclusion comes primarily from the custom of Jewish women in Paul’s time to cover their heads when in public. Josephus, for example, bears witness to head veiling when he writes in his *Antiquities* about the bitter-water ceremony to which a wife suspected of adultery was subjected. The relevant text reads: “One of the priests set the woman at the gates that are turned toward the temple, and *took the veil from her head*, and wrote the name of God on parchment, and enjoined her to swear that she had not at all injured her husband.”⁵²

After sifting through written and graphic sources, Hans Conzelman concludes: “For a Jewess to go out with her head uncovered is a disgrace (3 Macc 4:6) and grounds for divorce . . . ; it can also be assumed that respectable Greek women wore a head covering in public.”⁵³ Similarly Morna Hooker, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University, writes: “According to Jewish custom a bride went bareheaded until her marriage, as a symbol of her freedom; when married, she wore a veil as a sign that she was under the authority of her husband.”⁵⁴

The veiling of the head by women appears to have been a predominant Jewish custom. Tertullian (c. A.D. 160-225) notes that Jewish women could be recognized on the street of North Africa by the veils they wore on their heads: “Among the Jews, so usual is it for their women to have the head veiled, that they may thereby be recognized.”⁵⁵ “The Jew regarded it as typical of Gentile women that they should go about unveiled (Nu. r., 9 on 5:18, Str.-B., III, 429).”⁵⁶ Thus, it appears that Paul was introducing into Greek congregations a custom which corresponded to especially Jewish (oriental) sensibility rather than Greek.

Although there is disagreement on whether the head covering was a veil or long hair worn up as a bun, there is no doubt that Paul saw such a covering as a fitting cultural expression of a woman’s acknowledgment of the headship of man. The head covering was a *custom* (vv. 13-15) subservient to the *principle* “the head of a woman is the man” (v. 3—literal translation). While the principle is permanent, its application will vary in different cultures.

3. Theological Justification

Glory of Man. To defend the principle of the headship of man expressed in the rule about head covering, Paul appeals especially to the way in which man and woman were created in relationship to one another. First, he says: “For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man” (1 Cor 11:7).

Our analysis of this text in Chapter 3 indicated that Paul uses the terms “image and glory,” not with reference to personal dignity and worth, but in the context of the relation of man to God and of woman to man. In this context man images God’s dominion and gives Him glory by exercising his headship role in a loving and self-sacrificing way (Eph 5:25-29). On the other hand, a woman is the glory of man in the way she honors his headship by her life and attitude (Prov 12:4; Eph 5:21-24). Another possibility, suggested by F. W. Grosheide, is that a woman is the glory of man in the way she “reveals how beautiful a being God could create from a man.”⁵⁷

Woman for the Sake of Man? Paul continues in verses 8 and 9 to explain the reason why a man is the glory of God and a woman is the glory of man, namely, because (“for”) the woman was taken out of (*ek*) man (v. 8; cf. Gen 2:21-22) and because woman was created for the sake of man (v. 9; Gen 2:18). These two facts, namely, the derivative origin of the woman and her creation to be man’s helper, constitute for Paul the fundamental theological justification for the headship of man, expressed culturally through the head covering on the part of women.

The significance of the order of creation for the role distinctions of men and women in the church will receive further consideration in the next chapter in conjunction with our analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15, where Paul refers to the same creation texts. At this juncture it suffices to note that “Paul makes everything a question of creation.”⁵⁸ He bases his argument for headship and submission not on the cultural conventions of his time, but on the created relationship between man and woman.

Authority on the Head. Paul concludes his theological defense of the need for women to maintain a subordinate role in the worship service by wearing a head cover, saying in verse 10: “For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head” (NIV). This cryptic remark has been the subject of much discussion. The problem centers on the meaning of “authority” (*exousia*) and on the role of angels.

Most commentators agree that “authority” is a metonym (the name of one thing referring to another) for the covering on the head. On the basis of this view the RSV translates *exousia* by the word “veil.” The question is, In what sense is a woman’s head cover the sign of authority? To put it differently, What is the function of the veil? For some, the veil is the symbol of the authority given to the woman to participate in public worship by praying and prophesying.⁵⁹ The support for this interpretation derives primarily from the fact that the word *exousia* is generally used in the New Testament not in the passive sense of “being under authority,” but in the active sense of “having authority.”

This interpretation, though appealing, can at best be accepted as a secondary application of *exousia*. First, such an interpretation provides not a reason for (“for this reason”), but a negation of the preceding argument on the need of women to show their submission to man in the worship service by covering their heads. Second, it ignores the connection, assumed in verses 5-6, between the use of the head cover in the church and its cultural meaning. Therefore, it is preferable to interpret the *exousia* over the head as being primarily a head covering which was seen as the sign of a woman’s submis-

sion to man's headship, and secondarily, a sign which gives to a woman the authority or right to participate in the worship service. Bruce K. Waltke puts it this way: "By wearing a covering she preserves the order of creation while exercising her . . . spiritual right."⁶⁰

Respect for the Angels. An additional reason given by Paul why a woman ought to have a sign of her being under man's authority, is "because of the angels" (v. 10). The latter phrase has been interpreted in two main ways: (1) the woman ought to have a sign of a man's authority on her head so that the angels who are present at church gatherings will not be sexually aroused by women; (2) the woman ought to have a sign of man's authority out of respect for the angels who are the guardians of the "creation order."

The first interpretation, though rooted in ancient Jewish speculations about the "sons of God" of Genesis 6:2 who were supposed to have been evil angels who took to themselves the daughters of men, must be regarded as an odious fantasy, foreign to Biblical thought. Christian women need not fear sexual assault by evil angels. Christ has defeated Satan and his host and the angels present at the gathering of God's people are obedient to God (Heb 12:22; Rev 5:11).

The second interpretation deserves acceptance because Scripture speaks of the angels as the witnesses not only of the creation of this world (Job 38:7), but also of the activities of God's people (1 Cor 4:8-9; 1 Tim 5:21; Heb 1:14). The angels are seen as the custodians of God's created order. Consequently, what Paul is saying is that a woman must cover her head not only out of respect for the headship of man, but also out of respect for the angels who are the guardians of God's order and discipline.⁶¹

Subordinate but Equal. Aware of the possibility that his argument could be misconstrued to mean that women are inferior to men, Paul quickly adds in verses 11 and 12 a clarifying statement on the equality and natural interdependence of man and woman: "Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God" (1 Cor 11:11-12).

The opening word "nevertheless" (*plen*) indicates Paul's concern to set the record straight. "In spite of what I have just said, I want you to know," Paul seems to be saying, "that in the Lord man and woman are interdependent and equal." One senses how the apostle is fighting on two fronts. On one side he had to put the liberated Corinthian women in their place by telling them to respect the headship of man in the church service by covering their heads. On the other side he had to prevent men from considering and treating women as inferior by reminding men of their derivation from women and their mutual

dependence in the Lord. This passage provides a fine example of how Paul respected and applied the Biblical principle of equality in being and submission in function, at a time when the role distinctions between men and women were being challenged. The existence of a similar situation in our time makes Paul's approach particularly relevant to us today.

Nature and Church Custom. In his closing remarks (vv. 13-16) Paul returns to his central teaching by adding two final reasons for the veil: the order of nature (vv. 13-15) and the prevailing custom of the congregations. Paul appeals to the good judgment of the Corinthians ("Judge for yourselves"), on the assumption that they will agree with him that it is not "proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered" (v. 13). To help them formulate the right judgment, Paul appeals to nature: "Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her pride? For her hair is given to her for a covering" (vv. 14-15).

"Nature" (*phusis*) here apparently refers both to God's revelation in the world (Rom 1:20) and in one's heart (Rom 2:15). On the basis of natural revelation and their own consciences, the Corinthians can conclude for themselves that short hair is honorable for men but long hair is honorable for women. In giving long hair to woman as a covering, nature hints that she should not uncover her head.

As a final argument against anyone wishing to be contentious, Paul states categorically: "we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God" (v. 16). This final appeal to his own authority and to the authority of the existing practice in the churches of God is intended to make it clear that the practice of women covering their heads during worship service, was not open to debate.

Overall Significance. In spite of all the difficulties in its interpretation, 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 provides one of the clearest statements on the fundamental significance of the role differences which must exist between men and women, not only in the home but also in the church. The lengthy discussion about head covering can mislead a person to think that in this passage Paul is majoring in minors, that is, he deals with incidental and culturally conditioned matters such as hair length and head covering.

The truth of the matter, however, is that the lengthy discussion on head coverings is only secondary and subservient to the fundamental principle of the headship of man ("the head of the woman is man" v.3, NIV) and of the submission with equality of the woman (vv. 5-12) which must be respected not only in the home but also in the church. This principle was being

challenged by emancipated Corinthian women who had concluded that their new position in Christ (1 Cor 4:6-9), granted them freedom to stop wearing a sign of submission to their husbands, especially at times of prayer and charismatic expression in the church service. To counteract this trend, which would have resulted in the violation of creational role distinctions, Paul emphasizes at length the importance of respecting the custom of head covering as a way of honoring the creation order. James Hurley succinctly puts it, “If the leadership of the congregation was divinely placed in the hands of men, a rejection of sexual differentiation was a rejection of the divine pattern.”⁶²

The concern of Paul, however, is not to legislate on hair styles or head coverings. In fact, no specific guidelines are given on the length of hair or type of head coverings. Rather, the concern of Paul, as stated by F. W. Grosheide, is “to teach that women are wrong if they in any respect neglect their difference from men, a difference which remains also in the church.”⁶³

What is the relevance for today of Paul’s instruction on head coverings? Paul urges respect for a custom such as hair length and head covering because in his time these fittingly expressed sexual differentiation and role distinctions. Applied to our culture, this means that if certain styles of hair and clothing are distinctively male or female, their gender association must be respected in order to maintain the clear distinction between the sexes enjoined in Scripture. This principle is particularly relevant to our time when some promote the blurring of sexual differentiations (unisex), while others are adopting the dress and sometimes the behavior of the opposite sex.

CONCLUSION

We asked at the beginning of this chapter, Is the principle of male headship in the home and in the church derived legitimately from the Scriptures or illegitimately from men’s efforts to dominate women? Our examination of Ephesians 5:21-33 and 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 has shown that the male headship roles in marriage and in the church stand or fall together. We have reached this conclusion first by ascertaining the meaning of “head,” and then by examining Paul’s application of the principle of male headship in marriage (Eph 5:21-33) and in the church (1 Cor 11:2-16).

We have seen that Paul uses the term “head” with the meaning, not of “source, origin,” but of “authority, head over.” The headship of man in marriage is established and clarified by Paul in Ephesians 5:21-33, not on the basis of cultural customs, but of theological reasons. By utilizing the model

of Christ and the church, Paul effectively clarifies the meaning of the husband's headship as loving and sacrificial leadership and the meaning of the wife's submission as willing response to a caring husband.

In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 the headship of man and the submission of women in the church are grounded by Paul on the creational distinctions between man and woman, distinctions which must be respected within the church.

How is the principle of headship and submission to be applied in the context of church office? What roles are women to fulfill in the church? To these important questions we will now address ourselves in the following chapter.

ENDNOTES

1. Roberta Hestenes mentions briefly the reinterpretation of the "proponents of the partnership paradigm" in her article, "Women in Leadership: Finding Ways to Serve the Church," *Christianity Today* (October 3, 1986): 8-I.

2. Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation* (Waco, Texas, 1975), p. 100.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

4. Philip Barton Payne, "Response to Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen Chapter 'What Does *Kephale* mean in the New Testament?'" in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1986), pp.118-132; Richard and Joyce Boldrey, *Chauvinist or Feminist? Paul's View of Women* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1976), p. 34; Margaret Howe, *Women and Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982), p. 60; F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (London, 1971), p. 248; Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty (n. 2), pp. 30-31, 100.

5. Stephen Bedale, "The Meaning of *Kephale* in the Pauline Epistles," *Journal of Theological Studies* 5 (1954): 211-215.

6. See above n. 4.

7. Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen, "What Does *Kephale* Mean in the New Testament?" in *Women, Authority and the Bible* (n. 4), pp. 106-109; also by the same authors, "Does Male Dominance Tarnish Our Translations?" *Christianity Today* (October 1979): 23-29; "The 'Head' of the Epistles," *Christianity Today* (February 20, 1981): 20-23.

8. Wayne Grudem, "Does *Kephale* ('head') Mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples," appendix 1, in George W. Knight III, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Chicago, 1985), pp. 49-80.

9. Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen, "Does Male Dominance Tarnish Our Translations?" *Christianity Today* (October 5, 1979): 23, 25; Stephen Bedale (n. 5), p. 211.

10. H. G. Liddell and Robert Scott, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., with Supplement (Oxford, 1968), vol. 1, p. 944.

11. Stephen Bedale (n. 5), p. 212.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Stephen Bedale (n. 5), p. 213.

14. Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen, "What Does *Kephale* Mean in the New Testament?" (n. 4), pp. 105-106.

15. For the listing and quotation of each passage, see Wayne Grudem (n. 8), pp. 72-76.

16. Wayne Grudem (n. 8), p. 62.

17. Plutarch, *Table-Talk* 692, D, 11.

18. Philo, *Life of Moses* 2, 82.

19. Philo, *Life of Moses* 2, 30. For other examples see Wayne Grudem (n. 8), pp. 73-74.

20. Stephen Bedale speaks of a "virtual equation of *kephale* with *arche*" without giving one text to prove it (n. 5), p. 213.

21. Wayne Grudem (n. 8), p. 56.

22. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. and eds. William F. Arndt and F. Wilber Gingrich (Chicago, 1979), s. v. "*kephale*," p. 430.

23. Heinrich Schlier, "*Kephale*," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974), vol. 3, p. 675.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 679.

25. Wayne Grudem (n. 8), p. 67.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 68. Grudem questions the meaning of “source” in the two instances given by Liddell-Scott (Herodotus 4, 91 and *Orphic Fragments* 21a). See his reasoning on pp. 57-61.

27. Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen, “Does Male Dominance Tarnish Our Translations?” (n. 7), p. 23.

28. Philo, *On Rewards and Punishments* 1, 25; cf. *Moses* 2,30; 2, 82; *On Dreams* 2, 207.

29. Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 2, 1, 3. For other examples from Plutarch and other authors, see Wayne Grudem (n. 8), pp. 72-78.

30. Ruth A. Tucker, “Response to Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen’s article ‘What Does *Kephale* Mean in the New Testament?’” in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1986), p. 117.

31. James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981), p. 166.

32. Stephen Bedale (n. 5), p. 214 (emphasis supplied).

33. See, for example, Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1985), pp. 153-162; Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty (n. 2), p. 30; J. Sampley, *And the Two Shall Become One Flesh* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 116-117; Marcus Barth, *Ephesians: 4-6*, The Anchor Bible (New York, 1974), pp. 609-610.

34. For a general discussion of the use of the term, see Gerhard Delling, “*Hypotasso*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Hergard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974), vol. 8, pp. 41-46.

35. James B. Hurley (n. 31), p. 142.

36. *Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice*, A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church —Missouri Synod, September 1985, p. 31.

37. Elisabeth Elliot, “Why I Oppose the Ordination of Women,” *Christianity Today* 19 (June 6, 1975): 14.

38. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, California, 1948), vol. 1, p. 307-308.

39. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, California, 1958), p. 59.

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40. Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1979), p. 261.
41. Gilbert Bilezikian (n.33), pp. 153-162; cf. Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty (n. 2), p. 30.
42. See, for example, Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty (n. 2), p. 110.
43. Walter Kaiser, "Paul, Women, and the Church," *Worldwide Challenge* (September 1976): 12.
44. George W. Knight III (n. 8), p. 21.
45. For discussion and documentation on cutting the hair of an adulteress, see James B. Hurley (n. 31), pp. 169-171. F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1983), p. 254; Leonard Swindler, *Women in Judaism: The Status of Women in Formative Judaism* (Metuchen, New Jersey, 1976), pp. 121-122.
46. See C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York, 1968), p. 251.
47. Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1980), p. 171.
48. Fritz Zerbst, *The Office of Woman in the Church* (St. Louis, Missouri, 1955), p. 40.
49. Ralph H. Alexander, "An Exegetical Presentation on 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and 1 Timothy 2:8-15," Paper presented at the Seminar on Women in Ministry, Western Baptist Seminary, November 1976, pp. 5-6.
50. Fritz Zerbst (n. 48), p. 33.
51. James B. Hurley (n. 31), pp. 168-171; also Mary J. Evans, *Women in the Bible* (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1983), pp. 87-91.
52. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 3, 11, 6, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1960), p. 81; emphasis supplied.
53. Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia, 1975), p. 185.
54. M. D. Hooker, "Authority on Her Head: An Examination of 1 Corinthians 11:10," *New Testament Studies* 10 (1963-64): 413.
55. Tertullian, *De Corona* 4, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1973), vol. 3, p. 95.

56. Albrecht Oepke, “*Katakalupto*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974), vol. 3, p. 562.

57. F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1953), p. 256.

58. *bid.*

59. See, Susan T. Foh (n. 40), p. 113; F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible (Greenwood, North Carolina, 1976), p. 106; M. D. Hooker (n. 53), p. 413; Leroy Birney, *The Role of Women in the New Testament Church* (Pinner, England, 1971), p. 9.

60. Bruce K. Waltke, “1 Corinthians 11:2-16: An Interpretation,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 (January-March 1978): 53.

61. Among those who support this view are Bruce K. Wartke (n. 60), p. 54; James Moffatt, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (London, 1947), p. 152; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Missoula, Montana, 1974), p. 204; Fritz Zerbst (n. 48), p. 43.

62. James B. Hurley (n. 31), p. 181.

63. F. W. Grosheide (n. 57), p. 262.

Chapter 6

WOMEN

AND

CHURCH OFFICE

How does the headship-subordination principle, examined in our previous chapter, relate to the role of women in the church? Does this principle allow women to function as pastors or elders of the congregation? These questions receive only a limited treatment in the New Testament, presumably because only in a few instances did the question arise about the role women should fill in Christian congregations. The two main passages which relate to these questions are 1 Timothy 2:9-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36. In view of their fundamental importance, much investigation has been conducted recently into their meaning and relevance for today.

Objectives. This chapter represents a fresh attempt to reexamine the meaning and contemporary relevance of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 in the light of contemporary research. No attempt will be made to interact directly with all the current literature, although those familiar with it will recognize my responses to major positions.

The specific aim is to ascertain the teaching of these two crucial texts within the context of Paul's thought and of the customs of his day. This study will form the basis for considering the relevance of these passages for our contemporary situation. Obviously the conclusions will not please everyone. The most that can be hoped is that most readers will recognize the effort not to violate the integrity and authority of these two passages of Scripture.

PART I

1 TIMOTHY 2:9-15: WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP

IN THE CHURCH

1. Importance and Applicability of the Passage

Importance of Passage. In the contemporary debate over the role of women in the church, one passage has polarized interpreters more than any others. This passage is 1 Timothy 2:11-15, which says: “Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.”

The significance of this passage lies in the fact that it addresses specifically the question of the role of women within the church. Thus, it is not surprising that this passage has been examined at great length by evangelicals who oppose or limit¹ or support the full participation of women in the ministry of the church.² Usually, the view taken by an author on this passage reflects his or her views on the role of women in the church and vice versa.

The Purpose of 1 Timothy. Before examining the specific instructions given by Paul in this passage, it is appropriate to consider whether such instructions were intended exclusively for the local situation existing at Ephesus or inclusively for the church at large. To answer this question, let us look first of all at the overall purpose of the epistle.

It is generally agreed that 1 Timothy was written to counter the sinister influence of certain false teachers upon the church of Ephesus. The exact nature of the erroneous teaching is not defined by Paul, but apparently it included speculations about “genealogies” (1:4), prohibition of marriage and abstention from certain foods (4:3). The result of such a teaching was that some members had “wandered away into vain discussion” (1:6).

Concerned over the disruptive influence of these false teachings in the life of the church, Paul wrote to Timothy, his delegated representative, giving him instructions on how to order and direct the life of a Christian congregation: “I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (3:14-15).

The precise wording used here by Paul indicates that he considered his instructions to be normative beyond the local situation of the Ephesus church. The impersonal verb *dei* (“one ought”) generally emphasizes a strong necessity, usually deriving from a divinely established moral obligation.³ Similarly the present infinitive form *anastrephesthai* (“to behave”), which takes no person or number, suggests a general rather than a restricted application.

James Hurley rightly points out that “Paul did not say, ‘Timothy, here is how you personally ought to behave.’ He deliberately said that he wished Timothy to know ‘how one ought to conduct himself in God’s household.’”⁴ Paul’s use of this generic language indicates a general application of the instructions contained in 1 Timothy. This conclusion is also supported by the fact that Paul’s explicit purpose is to give advice on how to order and direct not merely the church at Ephesus, but “the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (3:15). The implication is clear. Whatever is said about church order in the epistle applies to the universal church.

Only Local Applicability? In spite of the obviously general stated purpose, numerous recent writers have argued that the instructions given in 1 Timothy, especially those regarding women, ought to be understood as relevant only to that particular time and occasion. David Scholer, for example, concludes: “Therefore, 1 Timothy should be understood as an occasional ad hoc letter directed specifically toward enabling Timothy and the church to avoid and combat the false teachers and teaching in Ephesus. This false teaching appealed strongly to women and led them so astray that traditional values of marriage and the home were seriously violated. . . . *1 Timothy 2:9-15 should be understood as a unified paragraph on the place of women in the church in Ephesus.* It provided instructions for and was limited to a particular situation of false teaching.”⁵

The efforts expended to detect local circumstances behind Paul’s instructions, especially regarding the proper demeanor of Christian women in the worship service, are motivated by the assumption that if the presence of local circumstances can be demonstrated, then the instructions in question are not universally applicable. This assumption is obviously faulty. The fact that a particular teaching was occasioned by local circumstances does not *per se* negate the normative nature of such a teaching. Paul’s teaching that “a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (Gal 2:16) is not regarded as lacking universal validity because it was occasioned by a specific Judaizing heresy which attracted the Galatians. The general applicability of virtually *any* Biblical command could be negated simply by arguing that there are possible local circumstances behind it.

Four Helpful Criteria. To determine the extent of applicability of a Biblical teaching or command, four main criteria are helpful:⁶

(1) Are the circumstances which occasioned the instruction apt to recur? In the case of the passage in question, we may ask, Is there a temptation for some “emancipated” women today, as in Paul’s time, to forsake “domestic roles such as raising children in order to assume such prominent roles in congregational life as teaching”?⁷

(2) Is the basis for a command or teaching a local, temporary situation or a general principle? In the case of 1 Timothy 2:11-15, did Paul base his command on the local problems caused by emancipated women or on the order of creation?

(3) Is the same teaching or command given in other situations? If so, one can safely infer that such a teaching is meant to have a broader application. In the case of 1 Timothy 2:11-15, similar instruction can be found in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 and 14:34-35.

(4) Does the author indicate a *general* or *limited* applicability of his teaching? In the passage in question Paul does not restrict the prohibition of exercising improper roles in the church only to certain libertarian women, but to women in general. As Susan T. Foh observes: “There is no mention of false teaching, no word of correction in 1 Timothy 2:9-15. Paul says that women should not teach or exercise authority over men, period. There are no conditions attached which would allow exceptions to Paul’s command.”⁸

General Applicability. Even a cursory reading of 1 Timothy suffices to see that the instructions given by Paul were meant not merely for the local church at Ephesus, but for the Christian church at large. While the epistle was occasioned by the disruptive influence of certain false teachers (1:3-6; 6:3-5), Paul’s concern is not to launch a detailed rebuttal of their false teaching, but rather to explain to the congregation, its leaders, and to Timothy himself, how Christians ought to live godly lives in the face of unhealthy teachings and a depraved pagan environment.

The general applicability of 1 Timothy is evident especially in the nature of the subjects discussed. The opening chapter discusses the perverted use of the law by false teachers, the proper use of the law to develop character, the work of Christ and the challenge to Timothy to exercise competent leadership. The second deals with prayers for rulers and worship procedures for men and women. The third and fourth chapters discuss the qualifications for church leaders and practical suggestions for a more earnest ministry. The fifth and sixth chapters explain how Timothy should function in relation to old and young members, widows, elected elders, false teachers, and worldly riches.

The topics discussed are not culturally relative, although they are addressed within the context of the culture of Paul's time. Any attempt to reduce the instructions of 1 Timothy to local and temporary applicability cannot be legitimately supported from the intent of the letter itself.

2. Modesty and Submissiveness

Prayer and Modesty. The first part of 1 Timothy 2 deals with prayer and modesty. After urging that prayers be made “for all men,” especially “for kings and all who are in high positions” (2:1-2), Paul turns to discuss how “men should pray,” namely, by “lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling” (2:8). This comment reminds us of Psalm 24:3-4 where David affirms that only “he who has clean hands and a pure heart” shall stand in the holy place. Paul was concerned that men would not mar their prayers by “anger and quarreling.”

Paul then expresses his concern for women, saying: “I desire . . . also that women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearl or costly attire but by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion” (2:8-10).

Paul's call for a high standard of modesty in dress and hair adornment is obviously not culturally relative. What may be culturally relative are some of the examples given: “braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire” (2:9). It is noteworthy that numerous Jewish and pagan texts also favor modesty and reject extravagant external adornment, arguing that the real adornment of a woman should be her inner beauty.⁹

Adornment and Insubordination. Ostentatious external adornment apparently expressed a woman's independence from her husband. David Scholer concludes his analysis of numerous texts regarding women's adornment and dress in the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures, by saying: “More important, in virtually all the Jewish and pagan texts, the rejection of external adornment was part of a woman's submission to her husband and a recognition of her place among men in general. Using external adornments such as pearls, gold jewelry, hair styling and expensive, provocative clothing indicated two undesirable characteristics—material extravagance and sexual infidelity.”¹⁰

The connection between a woman's modest adornment and her submission to her husband is also suggested by Peter's double exhortation that wives be submissive to their husbands and that they be modest in their adornment (1 Pet 3:1-4). Some argue that there is a progression of thought from Paul's concern for women's immodest dress (vv. 9-10), which expressed insubordi-

nation, to his injunction that women be submissive and silent in public worship (vv. 11-12). The conclusion drawn from this is that it was not women in general that Paul prohibited to teach in the church, but only those women in the church in Ephesus who were indecently dressed. As Philip Payne puts it, “For such indecently clad women to teach in the church would bring the gospel into contempt.”¹¹

This argument may be right in suggesting the existence of an underlying unity between Paul’s admonition against women’s immodest dress and their improper roles in the church. Presumably, both of them expressed insubordination. But the argument is wrong in maintaining that a “contributing factor to Paul’s restriction on women in the church in Ephesus was indecent dress.”¹² First, the problem appears to have been one of overdressing rather than of underdressing, as indicated by the emphasis upon not dressing lavishly (cf. 1 Pet 3:3-5). Second, the reason given by Paul for his prohibition of v. 12 is not indecent dress but the order of creation of Adam and Eve (v.13). Thus, the attempt to relativize Paul’s prohibition by appealing to the alleged indecent dress of the Ephesian women must be rejected as devoid of contextual support.

Quiet Learning. From modesty in dress, Paul proceeds to discuss in verses 11 and 12 the learning and teaching aspects of the lives of “women who profess to worship God” (2:10, NIV): “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent” (2:11-12, NIV). These two verses should be taken as a unit, because they form an inverted parallelism. What is stated positively in verse 11, is restated and amplified negatively in verse 12. Quiet learning is paralleled by the command not to teach, and the attitude of submission is paralleled by the command not to exercise authority.

The first injunction is significant because it contains Paul’s positive command (*manthaneto*—an imperative verb): “Let a woman learn.” This command shows that Paul assumed that women can and must learn the truths of the Gospel. His view of women, then, is not rabbinic but “quite radical for his time.”¹³

The manner in which women are to learn is qualified by two phrases: “in quietness (*hesychia*) and full submission (*hypotage*).” The word *hesychia* does not require total silence as the word *sigao* used in 1 Corinthians 14:34, but rather “quietness, peacefulness.”¹⁴ As James Hurley points out, “Paul is not just calling for ‘buttoned lips’ but for a quiet receptivity and a submission to authority in his description of the manner of women’s learning.”¹⁵

To appreciate the relevance of Paul's injunction it is important to remember that a New Testament church service was rather different from ours. The difference is well explained by N. J. Hommes: "The peculiar and most striking difference between the church services then and now lies in the fact that the sermon, the word spoken, was being discussed among the worshippers, and that there was more than one preacher in the service. We can see this clearly in 1 Corinthians 14:26ff. It is true that Paul is here bringing the order of the worship service in line with the charisma of prophecy, but such mutual discussion was, in apostolic time, always part of the worship service."¹⁶

Submissive Learning. Learning "in quietness" is recommended by Paul, presumably not only because much of the talking that went on in conjunction with the "discussion type" of worship service was not always conducive to effective learning, but also because some women through their speaking may have expressed insubordination to their husbands or to the officials of the church. The latter is suggested by the second qualifying phrase "with all submissiveness" (RSV). The concept of "submission" (*hypotasso*) recurs regularly in the discussion of women in relation to men (Eph 5:21-24; 1 Pet 3:1-5). "Submission" appears to be the pivotal concept that unites the learning of women in verse 11 with the issue of their teaching in verse 12.¹⁷

3. Teaching and Exercise of Authority

Authoritative Teaching. After calling for women to learn "in quietness and full submission," Paul moves to forbid the contrary: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent" (2:12, NIV). We noted earlier that this verse forms with the preceding one an inverted parallelism. Therefore, it is important to look at the two verses together, to grasp what Paul is emphasizing.

The thrust of the parallelism is well explained by James Hurley: "Verse 11 calls for quiet and submissive learning. Verse 12 forbids teaching or exercising authority over men. The two are visibly parallel. Quiet learning inversely parallels (verbal) teaching and full submission inversely parallels exercising authority. Both verses have the same situation in mind, one in which women are not to teach authoritatively but are to learn quietly. The closing remark of verse 12 makes this clear by summing up both verses with a single short statement: "she must be silent." We conclude, therefore, that Paul intended that women should not be authoritative teachers in the church."¹⁸

Local or Universal Prohibition? Before attempting to define what constitutes authoritative teaching, it is important to establish whether Paul's

prohibition is of a local or universal nature. Some writers argue that Paul's command is neither universal nor permanent (transtemporal), because he uses the first person present indicative active form of the verb: "*I do not permit....*" This form of the verb, according to Philip B. Payne, "is Paul's typical way of expressing his own personal opinion." To support this contention Payne appeals to the fact that the verb "to permit" (*epitrepo*) "in the NT only rarely occurs with reference to a continuing state" and that "Paul in 1 Tim 2:12 does not claim that this restriction on women is from the Lord or to be observed in all the churches."¹⁹

The argument that the first person present active indicative is generally used by Paul to express his own personal opinion rather than a universally valid principle cannot be supported. Though this form is relatively rare in Paul's writing, there are instances in which the apostle uses the first person singular indicative to communicate what he believed to be the will of God. For example, in Romans 12:1, Paul makes this appeal: "I urge you, brothers, . . . to offer your bodies as living sacrifices" (NIV; cf. 1 Cor 4:16; 11:2; 12:3; Gal 5:2,3; Eph 4:1; 1 Thess 4:1; 5:12,14). No one would interpret this exhortation as being Paul's personal, presumptive opinion merely because he uses the first person singular indicative without a universal qualifier.

The rare occurrence of the verb "to permit" (*epitrepo*) to express a continuing state, is *per se* irrelevant because the verb in itself has no temporal connotation. Similarly, the fact that Paul "does not claim that this restriction on women is from the Lord or to be observed in all the churches," does not negate its universal applicability. Paul had just established the ground of his authority in verse 7: "I was appointed a preacher and apostle."

Only rarely does Paul clarify whether his instruction is personal advice or a command from the Lord. This clarification is usually given only in a few uncertain situations, as with regard to Paul's counsel to the married and unmarried (1 Cor 7:6, 10, 12, 25, 40). When in these instances Paul expresses his own personal view, he explicitly says: "I say, not the Lord" (1 Cor 7:12; cf. vv. 6, 40). Thus, the absence of any qualifier in the prohibition of 1 Timothy 2:12, suggests that Paul had no doubt as to the normative nature of his instructions. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the similar instruction given in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is followed by Paul's statement: "What I am writing to you is a command of the Lord" (1 Cor 14:37).

Female False Teachers? What is the meaning of Paul's injunction: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man" (2:12)? Obviously Paul's intent here is not to prohibit all forms of women's teaching and speaking in the church. We noted in chapter 5 that in 1 Corinthians 11:5

Paul assumes that some women were praying and prophesying along with men in the worship service. Moreover, Paul explicitly enjoins older women “to teach what is good and so train the young women” (Titus 2:3-4).

Some authors argue that Paul’s injunction is only “directed against women involved in false teaching who have abused the proper exercise of authority in the church (not denied by Paul elsewhere to women) by usurpation and domination of the male leaders and teachers in the church at Ephesus.”²⁰ This conclusion rests largely on two faulty assumptions: (1) Paul’s injunction was occasioned by and directed (*exclusively*) to “the false teaching plaguing the church in Ephesus.”²¹ (2) The verb *authentēin* usually translated “to have authority over” seems “rather clearly to carry the negative sense of ‘domineer’ or ‘usurp authority.’”²² Thus, Paul is only forbidding teaching to women who were false teachers and who were usurping the authority of male leaders. Had the women been orthodox teachers and respectful of church leaders, Paul would have had no objection to their teaching.

The first assumption is discredited by the fact that, as we have shown earlier, though the writing of 1 Timothy was occasioned by the disruptive influence of certain false teachers (1:3-6; 6:3-5), Paul chose to counteract such an influence not by addressing specifically the false teachers, but rather by offering guidelines on how Christians should live in the world and in the church in the face of unhealthy teachings and a depraved pagan environment.

If Paul intended to prohibit only the teaching done by certain female false teachers, he would have surely alluded to it, as he does refer to young widows who got “into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. . . . saying things they ought not to” (5:13, NIV). Moreover, the reason given by Paul for his prohibition is not the sinister effect of certain women’s false teaching, but the priority of the creation of Adam and the deception of Eve, both of which are unrelated to the problem of false teaching.

“Authority over” or “Domineer”? The second assumption that the verb *authentēo* should be translated “to domineer, to usurp authority,” instead of “to have authority,” is faulty for two main reasons. First, the recent study by George Knight of all the major lexical occurrences of *authentēo* (published in *New Testament Studies*, January 1984), has shown that “the recognized meaning for the first century BC and AD documents . . . is ‘to have authority over.’ The nuance is positive, or at least neutral, but in any case there is no inherent negative overtone such as is suggested by the word ‘domineer.’”²³

Second, the meaning “to have authority over” fits better in the text with the verb “to teach” (*didasko*) with which it is joined, since the latter has no

negative implications. Moreover, we have seen that authority and teaching in verse 12 are parallel to subordination and quietness in verse 11. This suggests that the converse of *authenteo* is to be found in the phrase “full submission.” The concept of “submission,” as we have seen from our study of Ephesians 5, does not carry with it the meaning of “cringing servility under a domineering person but of a willing submission to a recognized authority.”²⁴ What Paul disallows, therefore, is not the abuse or usurpation of authority, but simply the exercise of authority by women over men in the church.

Uneducated Women? Some maintain that the reason Paul prohibited women to teach and to exercise authority over men in the church is because women were uneducated. Since this is no longer true today, then Paul’s prohibition is no longer relevant. If the lack of education had been the reason for Paul’s prohibition, then he would have forbidden both men and women to teach, if they were uneducated. Moreover, women as well as men could have been trained to become good teachers. Deaconesses and workers in apostolic times must have received some training.

The real situation in Ephesus may have been just the opposite. Some of the women may have been more educated than many of the men, and consequently they may have felt justified to act as the teachers and leaders of the congregation. Priscilla was well enough educated in the Christian faith to be able to instruct an intellectual like Apollos when he went to Ephesus (Acts 18:26). Paul, as we have seen in chapter 2, commends several women for their outstanding contribution to the life and growth of the church. All of this suggests that the reason for Paul’s injunction was not that women were uneducated.

The Nature of Teaching. What is the nature of the teaching forbidden to women? This question has been debated at great length. Some have assumed that Paul prohibits women from participating in any kind of teaching or speaking, including teaching in public schools and having a job in which a woman exercises authority over man. Such a view is obviously unwarranted because, as we have seen in chapter 2, in Paul’s ministry women prayed, prophesied and exercised a teaching ministry (1 Cor 11:5; Acts 18:26; Phil 4:3; Rom 16:12).

The nature of teaching forbidden to women in 1 Timothy 2:12 is undoubtedly the authoritative teaching restricted to the pastor or elder/overseer of the congregation. This conclusion is supported not only by the meaning of the inverted parallelism discussed earlier but also by the use of the verb “to teach” and the noun “teaching” in the pastoral epistles. The teaching ministry is presented, especially in the pastoral epistles, as a governing

function performed by Paul, Timothy or appointed elders/overseers of the congregation. Paul speaks of himself as “a teacher of the Gentiles” (1 Tim 2:7; cf. 2 Tim 1:11). He charges Timothy to “Command and teach” (1 Tim 4:11), “Take heed to yourself and to your teaching” (1 Tim 4:16), “teach and urge these duties” (1 Tim 6:2), “preach the word . . . in teaching” (2 Tim 4:2).

The restrictive meaning of the teaching ministry is especially evident in 2 Timothy 2:2 where Paul gives this solemn charge to Timothy: “what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” The “faithful men” are presumably the elder/overseers of the congregation. A qualification for such an office was “an apt teacher” (1 Tim 3:2). Paul urges that special recognition be given to “the elders who rule well . . . especially those who labor in preaching and teaching” (1 Tim 5:17).

The importance attached to sound teaching in 1 Timothy and the other pastoral epistles is illustrated by the fact that of the 21 occurrences of the word “teaching, doctrine” (*didaskalia*) in the New Testament, 15 appear in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.²⁵ The teaching by appointed church leaders was most important because it involved the careful transmission of the teachings of Jesus Christ (cf. Gal 1:12) and their significance for the life of the church. Before the existence and general availability of the writings of the New Testament, the teacher (pastor, elder, overseer) served the congregation as a kind of living Bible. He was the guardian of the body of teachings which had been received by the churches and to which they were to remain true (Rom 16:17; Eph 4:21; Col 2:7; 2 Thess 2:15).

In light of the restrictive use of the words “to teach” and “teaching” in the pastoral epistles, it is reasonable to conclude that the teaching forbidden to women is the authoritative teaching done by “leaders of the congregation”²⁶ such as Paul, Timothy, Titus, elder/overseers. “Although women are allowed an audible participation in the gatherings of the church, they are not to aspire to the role of leadership as superintendents of the local congregation.”²⁷ The teaching role of these leaders is emphasized especially in the pastoral epistles, where destructive and demonic teaching (1 Tim 4:1) necessitated leaders who would uphold “sound teaching” (2 Tim 4:3). Paul forbids women to teach as the leaders of the church because this would place them in a headship role of authority over men. This role is inappropriate for women, not because they are any less capable or competent than men, but because of the creational order for men and women established by God (1 Tim 2:13). These theological reasons given by Paul will now be examined.

4. Theological Reasons

Reason or Illustration? To justify his ruling about the exclusion of women from teaching (as leaders) and exercising authority over men in the church, Paul submits two reasons: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Tim 2:13-14). Before examining these two reasons, attention must be given to the conjunction “for” (*gar*).

Some argue that “for” is illustrative and not illative, that is to say, it is designed to introduce an example and not a reason for Paul’s ruling.²⁸ To defend this view they appeal to grammar and context. Grammatically, the illustrative use of *gar* (“for”) is a lexical possibility. Contextually, they see Paul’s reference to Eve as a historical example of what once happened when, in a situation similar to that at Ephesus, a deceived woman taught a man. Thus, Paul’s statement does not offer reasons for the general exclusion of women from teaching or exercising authority over men in the church, but merely a historical example relevant only to the local situation in the Ephesian church.

This interpretation of *gar* (“for”), as Douglas Moo has cogently shown, flounders both on grammar and context.²⁹ Grammatically, the “illustrative” use of *gar* (“for”) is rare. All the major lexicons and grammars give the causal meaning as the first and most common one. Contextually, the illustrative use of *gar* (“for”) fails to explain how, for example, the priority of Adam’s creation can illustrate what happens when women false teachers teach and exercise authority over men in the church. Reasons such as these indicate that the conjunction “for” is used to introduce not an illustration but a reason for the ruling of verses 11-12.

Priority of Adam’s Creation. The first reason given by Paul to justify his ruling is the priority of Adam’s creation: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Tim 2:13). The meaning of this statement is clearly expressed by Paul Jewett: “The plain meaning of Paul’s argument is that the subordination of woman to the man is an essential part of the hierarchy which God himself established to insure a proper order in the relationships of life.”³⁰

According to several writers, Paul’s argument from creation is faulty on two counts. First, it is based on the wrong creation account. Instead of using the creation account of Genesis 1 which accurately speaks of the simultaneous creation of man and woman, Paul made the unfortunate mistake to use the second, “poetic,” account of creation.³¹ Second, it attaches hierarchical significance to the fact that man was created before woman. “If beings created first are to have precedence, then the animals are clearly our

betters.”³² Paul allegedly fell back on his rabbinic eisegesis, which caused him to argue for a wrong doctrine from a wrong text.³³ Therefore, the argument from creation offers no valid support to Paul’s ruling in verses 11-12.

Authority of Scripture. The charges that have been leveled against Paul on this issue are not inconsequential. If Paul made a mistake in interpreting the meaning of Genesis for the role relations of men and women, he could have been equally in error in interpreting the meaning of the life and death of Christ, of the resurrection, of the Second Advent, or of the relation between faith and works in the process of salvation. Ultimately what is at stake is the authority of Scripture. If any part of the Scripture presents false teachings through faulty exegesis or reasoning, then its normative authority is discredited.

Paul stated very clearly his own understanding of the authority of his teaching and of those who would challenge it: “If any one thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized” (1 Cor 14:37-38). Strikingly, Paul made this claim in the very context of his teaching about the role of men and women in the church. Therefore, it behooves us to accept his interpretation of Scripture.

Priority of Creation and Subordination. Why does Paul appeal to the prior formation of Adam to justify his injunction that women should not be permitted “to teach or to have authority over men” (1 Tim 2:12)? Primarily because Paul saw in the priority of Adam’s creation the symbol of the leadership role God intended man to fulfill in the home and in the church.

From an empirical standpoint, it seems arbitrary and irrational that leadership should be assigned on the basis of priority of creation. From a Biblical standpoint, however, the arbitrariness and irrationality disappear because the priority of creation is seen not as an accident but as a divine design, intended to typify the leadership and headship role man was created to fulfill. The sanctification of the seventh day provides another example. From an empirical standpoint, it seems arbitrary that God should choose to bless and sanctify the seventh day instead of the first day or any other day. After all, the seven days, each consisting of the same 24 hours, seem identical to one another. From a Biblical standpoint, however, it is not arbitrary that God should choose the seventh day as a symbol of creation and sanctification (Gen 2:2-3; Ex 31:13,17; Ezek 20:20).

In the same way Paul sees the priority of Adam’s formation and the derivation of woman from man (1 Cor 11:8) as typifying the role distinctions between men and women. This typological understanding of the priority of

Adam's formation is reflected in the meaning both the Old and New Testaments attach to primogeniture (being firstborn). The firstborn son inherited not only a "double portion" of his father's goods, but also the responsibility of acting as the leader of worship upon his father's death.

Christ the "First-Born." The typological meaning of the firstborn is used by Paul also with reference to Christ in Colossians 1:15-18: "He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation; for in him all things were created. . . . He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent." The rich imagery used in this passage presents Christ as (1) the Image of God, (2) the Firstborn, (3) the Source of Creation, (4) the Head of the church. All of these are drawn together to establish the preeminent authority of Christ over everything.

It is noteworthy that the headship and authority of Christ are tied in with His being the "Firstborn." Our earlier study of Ephesians 5 has shown how Paul used the headship and authority of Christ as the model for the headship role a husband is to exercise for the sake of his wife. His use of the "firstborn" typology to express the headship and authority of Christ suggests that he may have attached the same meaning to Adam's being "first formed." In light of the Old Testament background, Paul may have seen in the priority of the formation of Adam a type of the headship role God called man to fulfill, and thus, a reason why men, rather than women, should exercise teaching leadership authority in the church.

Priority of Animals. The above observations help to show the weakness of the argument which claims that Paul's reasoning leads to the conclusion that animals should rule mankind by right of their temporal priority in creation. Proponents of this argument overlook the fact that no typological significance is attached in Scripture to the temporal priority of the animals. Moreover, in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 Paul clearly associates the priority of Adam's formation with Eve's derivation out of man. The animals were created before mankind, but mankind does not derive from animals.

The significance that Paul attaches to Adam's priority of formation is compatible with the central role of man in Genesis 2. We have shown in Chapter 3 that the leadership role of man is implied in Genesis 2, not merely by the priority of his creation, but also by the fact that God provided him with a garden, an occupation, and a wife to be "a helper fit for him" (v. 18). Moreover God called man *ha-'adam* ("the man," "the human"), the collective name of mankind, and charged him with the responsibility of naming first the animals and then the woman. Paul offers in 1 Timothy 2:13 an explicit

interpretation of these historical facts, applying them to the role of women in the worship service, which should be in accordance with the subordinate, helping role envisaged for them in creation.

The Deception of Eve. The second reason given by Paul to support his ruling is derived from the deception of Eve: “and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Tim 2:14). This argument is less developed by Paul, and it has produced many dangerous interpretations. Some have assumed that this verse teaches that women are not qualified to teach religious doctrine in the church, because they do not have the same critical acumen as men and thus they are more susceptible to external pressures.³⁴

This view is without warrant, because the text does not say that “the woman is deceivable,” but simply that “the woman was deceived.” If it were true that women are more susceptible to deception, it would ultimately make God responsible for having created women less perfect than men. If Paul believed that women are more prone to err than men, he would not have admonished them “to teach what is good” to children and other women (Titus 2:3-4; cf. 2 Tim 1:5; 3:15).

Typological Role of Eve. The best way to understand the statement “the woman was deceived” is to look at it not empirically, that is, by asking how Eve’s deception affects the subordination of women; but rather typologically, that is, by asking what Eve’s deception represents for Paul. Stephen B. Clark perceptively points out that we tend to think empirically, that is, in terms of observable causes, while Bible writers are “more inclined to think typologically,”³⁵ that is, in terms of the symbolic meaning of an event. “Typological thinking,” explains Clark, “focuses on the concrete event—the ‘type’ which reveals the general purpose or intention of God. Empirical generalizations focus on verifiable facts and observed regularities.”³⁶

Typological thought assumes that if Adam was formed first, then Scripture must be indicating something about the role of man. Similarly, if the woman was deceived and not man, then Scripture must be indicating something about the role of women. As Adam is a “type” man (Rom 5:12, 18), so Eve is a “type” woman, and her being deceived points to what women should do or not do.

How could Paul view Eve’s deception as a type of woman’s submission to man? The text does not tell us. We can presume that Paul understood Eve’s deception to be the result of her attempt to assert her independence from man. The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* supports this interpretation: “The apostle’s second argument for the submissiveness of women is that

when Eve tried to assert leadership she was beguiled.”³⁷ What happened to Eve at that most historic and significant occasion becomes then a type of what can happen when the order of creation is reversed. “In verses 13-14, then,” as Douglas Moo observes, “Paul substantiates his teaching in verses 11-12 by arguing that the created order establishes a relationship of subordination of woman to man, which order, if bypassed, leads to disaster.”³⁸

Subordination and the Fall. Some contend that the argument from the deception of the woman is untenable because it bases the subordination of the woman to man on the results of the Fall. If Paul’s ruling about the subordination of women in the church is based on the “curses” which resulted from the Fall, then such ruling has been reversed by the work of Christ.³⁹

The weakness of this reasoning is twofold. First, it ignores the fact that Paul’s primary appeal is to the priority of Adam’s formation. Second, it fails to distinguish between the cause of the Fall and the results of the Fall. Eve’s deception was the cause of the Fall but it occurred before the human race faced the judgment of God and began suffering its consequences. Paul does not ground the subordination of women on the Fall, but on creation. The point of his argument is that “Adam was formed first” and “the woman was deceived.” (vv. 13-14). These two events, which occurred before the human race faced the judgment of God, typify for Paul the headship role of man and the subordinate role of women.

Saved through Childbirth? To counteract any possible misunderstanding derived from his negative statements in verses 11-14, Paul concludes his argument with a positive statement: “Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty” (v. 15). This verse is clearly connected with the preceding by the preposition *de* (“yet”) and forms the climactic conclusion to the whole argument introduced in verse 9 with the phrase “likewise women.” Therefore, an understanding of this closing statement can further clarify the meaning of the whole passage.

The interpretation of this verse poses some linguistic problems. The major one has to do with the verb *sothesetai*, which can mean either “she will be saved” or “she will be kept safe through childbirth.” The second option has been adopted by the New International Version.⁴⁰ According to this translation what Paul is saying is that woman will survive childbirth if she is pious. This interpretation is not only irrelevant to the context but also empirically untrue. Godly Christian women have died bearing children.

The first translation is in harmony with the usage of the verb “to save” in Paul’s writings where it virtually always refers to salvation from sin. The question is, in what sense will a woman be saved through childbirth? Some believe that it means that Christian women will be saved through good works, figuratively represented by childbearing.⁴¹ This would be a flat contradiction of Paul’s view of salvation by faith in Christ.

Others believe that it means that Christian women will be saved through *the* childbirth, that is, the coming of the Messiah.⁴² This interpretation finds support especially in the presence of the article “*the* childbirth” (*tes teknogonia*), which could suggest a particular childbirth, namely, that of Christ. Such a view, however, is discredited first of all by the most likely lexical meaning of *teknogonia* (“childbearing” or “child-rearing”) which denotes the *woman’s* role in giving birth, not the birth as such (cf. 1 Tim 5:14). Second, this interpretation does not fit the context. How can Mary’s role in the birth of Jesus be the means of the salvation of women?

Faithfulness to Proper Role. The interpretation which best fits the vocabulary and the contextual location of verse 15—the concluding statement to the whole discussion on the role of women in the church—is the following: Women will be saved, not by aspiring to the leadership role of teacher-superintendent of the local congregation, but through faithfulness to their maternal and domestic roles, providing they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with modesty.⁴³

This interpretation admirably suits the immediate context of verses 9-14, where the concern of Paul is to emphasize the proper sphere of women’s activities. It also finds support in the larger context of the pastoral epistles where a recurring motif is the need for Christian women to devote themselves to their maternal and domestic roles (1 Tim 5:9-14; Titus 2:3-5).

This admonition was apparently needed to counteract the sinister influence of false teachers, who counseled women to abstain from marriage (1 Tim 4:3) and to seek fulfilment outside the home (1 Tim 5:13-15), by assuming leadership roles in the church (1 Tim 2:12). To counteract this teaching, Paul urges Christian women to maintain their modesty” (*sophrosyne*)—a term he uses twice (vv. 9, 15), at the beginning and at the end of his admonition. Christian women were to show their modesty and propriety by dressing sensibly, by learning submissively, by refraining from aspiring to the role of teacher (leader) of the congregation, and by fulfilling their maternal-domestic roles.

Salvation through Childbearing? Our interpretation poses a problem: Did Paul mean in verse 15 that all women should get married and bear

children in order to be saved? Obviously not. We know from 1 Corinthians 7 that Paul considered *both* celibacy and marriage a divine calling. Moreover, this view would reduce salvation to a human relationship and biological process, rather than to a divine gift of grace (Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16). Therefore, it is more likely that Paul mentions childbearing as a typical, but not exclusive, aspect of a woman's role. This is supported by 1 Timothy 5:14 where Paul expresses the wish that younger widows "marry" and "bear children" (*teknogonein*). It is obvious that Paul did not expect *all* young women to marry. Rather, he expected them to maintain their proper domestic roles.

To remove any possibility of attributing meritorious value to childbearing, Paul adds the essential Christian virtues women must maintain: "faith and love and holiness, with modesty" (v. 15). Verse 15 ends by emphasizing "modesty," the very quality mentioned at the beginning of the passage (v. 9). This quality is emphasized by Paul because it expresses the chief virtue of a Christian woman, manifested not in aspiring to be the teacher-leader of the congregation, but in maintaining a submissive and domestic role, which is in accordance with the role for women established by God at creation.

In its immediate and larger context, then, 1 Timothy 2:15 helps to clarify why Paul forbids women "to teach or to have authority over men" in the church, namely, because he sees such a role as a violation of the proper domestic and subordinate role God has established for women at creation. By maintaining this proper role in faith, love and holiness, women, like men, become recipients of the gift of eternal life.

Contemporary Relevance. How relevant for us today is Paul's teaching about the role of women in the home and in the church? Some argue that it is totally irrelevant because today many married women find their fulfilment not in rearing a family, but in pursuing a professional career. They argue that had Paul lived in our age, he would have taken a much different stand. Consequently, to be faithful to the "central thrust" or "greater vision" of Paul, we must reject his restrictions and allow women to function as leaders not only in the secular world, but also in the church where they ought to be ordained as pastors/elders of the congregation. This reasoning is unacceptable for three main reasons.

First, Paul's conviction on the role of women in the church and in the home derives not from cultural perceptions, but from his understanding of the special role God has called women to fulfill. Rearing a family and being subordinate were for Paul central elements of the Biblical definition of womanhood and of her fulfilment of God's calling to mankind. Therefore, if Paul lived today he would still admonish women to be true to their divinely established roles.

A second reason why Paul's teachings on the role of women are relevant today is because in some ways the contemporary emancipation of women may be strikingly similar to that of his time.⁴⁴ If, as numerous writers argue, Paul's opponents in the pastoral epistles included "women [who] were in the forefront of the libertarian trend,"⁴⁵ as evidenced by their extravagant dress, the "forsaking of domestic roles such as raising children in order to assume such a prominent role in congregational life—as teaching,"⁴⁶ then Paul was addressing a situation rather similar to the one existing today.

The existence of a "women's liberation" movement in early Christianity is implied not only by Paul's strictness (1 Tim 2:11-12; 5:13; 2 Tim 3:6; 1 Cor 11:5-10; 14:34), but also by such post-New Testament documents as the apocryphal *Acts of Paul* (about A.D. 185). In the latter, Paul commissions a woman, Thecla, to be a preacher and teacher of the word of God: "Go and teach the word of God." Thecla obeyed by going away to Iconium. There she "went into the house of Onesiphorus . . . and taught the oracles of God."⁴⁷

The attempt of this apocryphal document to present Paul, not as forbidding, but as commissioning a woman to be an official teacher of the Word of God in the church, offers an additional indication of the possible existence of a feminist movement already in Paul's time.⁴⁸ If such a movement existed at that time, then Paul's instruction on the role of women in the church would be particularly relevant to our time, when a feminist movement within the church is gaining strength.

The Witness of the Text. A third reason for accepting Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 as relevant for today is the fact that the text contains no cultural elements that should be modified in the light of our new historical situation. If Paul had said "I do not permit a woman to teach as the leader of the church or to have authority over man because women are uneducated and culturally unacceptable as leaders in the church," then there would be a legitimate reason for rejecting his injunction as culturally relative.

Paul, however, grounds his ruling not on cultural factors, but on the events of the opening chapters of Genesis. He makes no reference whatsoever to cultural factors such as lack of education and any possible cultural offense which might result if women were allowed to teach as the leaders of the congregation. His argument precludes the introduction of "new cultural factors" which would cause him to take a different stand today on the role of women in the church.

Conclusion. The conclusion of our examination of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 is that the intent of this passage, in the light of its immediate and wider context of the pastoral epistles, is not to prohibit women from participating in the

general teaching ministry of the church (“they [women] are to teach what is good”—Titus 2:3), but rather to restrain women from aspiring to the restricted teaching role of the leader of the congregation. The reason for Paul’s ruling is that for a woman to exercise such a leadership role is incompatible with the subordinate role which God at the beginning assigned to women in the home and in the church. Essentially the same view is expressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36, a passage which we shall now examine.

PART II

1 CORINTHIANS 14:33b-36

WOMEN SPEAKING IN THE CHURCH

1. Content and Interpretations of the Passage

The Injunction. In 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 Paul gives a brief instruction regarding the role of women in church, somewhat similar to the advice found in 1 Timothy 2:9-15. The passage reads as follows: “As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached?” (1 Cor 14:33b-36).

This statement occurs in the context of the discussion of how to maintain order in the worship assemblies. Beginning with verse 26 Paul gives specific instructions on how speaking in tongues and prophesying should be regulated in the church, so that good order might prevail. In this context Paul gives his instruction regarding the silence of women in the assembly. This passage has been the subject of considerable controversy, especially because it appears to stand in stark contrast to 1 Corinthians 11:5 where, as we have seen, Paul assumes that women will pray and prophesy in the church.

Four Interpretations. Four main interpretations have been proposed to resolve the apparent contradiction between 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 14:34. One view maintains that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is a post-Pauline interpolation.⁴⁹ There is no textual evidence for such a view, though a few manuscripts tend to edit the text by placing the passage after verse 40.⁵⁰ Except for the difficulty of the text, there is no reason to view it as an interpolation.

A second view holds that Paul was simply inconsistent in his application of the Gospel.⁵¹ It is hard to believe that a man of Paul’s caliber would not have

recognized his inconsistency on a practical matter, within the space of three chapters. Such a view undermines confidence in the inspiration of Scripture.

A third view assumes that Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 did not give permission for women to pray or prophesy publicly but only privately. Consequently, in 1 Corinthians 14 we have “an absolute prohibition against women’s speaking in the services.”⁵² The weakness of this view is that there is little warrant for believing that the praying and prophesying mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11:5 was to be done privately alone at home. Paul saw prophecy as a gift for public use.⁵³ Moreover, it is hard to believe that Paul would prohibit women from praying with their heads uncovered in the privacy of their homes. By the same token, it is hardly conceivable that Paul would forbid a man to pray with his head covered when alone outdoors in the cold weather.

A fourth view maintains that chapter 14 does not contradict chapter 11, but only restricts certain forms of talking on the part of women, such as wives asking questions publicly of their husbands, or women engaging in a disorderly form of speech.⁵⁴ A basic weakness of this view is that it ignores the fact that Paul instructs women to be silent in the church not because they are disorderly, but because they are women.

If the problem were disorderly speech, it is difficult to see why Paul would single out women (or wives) when in the immediate context he speaks of the confusion created by people in general who were speaking simultaneously in tongues or as prophets. If the problem had been one of disorder, as with tongues or prophecy, then Paul would have simply prescribed order (cf. vv. 27, 29, 31), not the silence of women. Surely not all the people behaving in a disorderly way were women.

Second, Paul says that the same rule is followed in all the churches of the saints. It is unlikely that the problem of noisy women had arisen in all the churches. Finally, Paul clearly says that “it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church” (v. 35). What is shameful is not her disorderly speech but her “speaking” as a woman. Thus the reason for the injunction must be sought not in some kind of disorderly speech, but in the type of speaking that would have been inappropriate for a woman in the assembly.

2. Prohibition of Authoritative Speaking

The Key Phrase. The sentence which may provide the key to understand the meaning of the injunction is the phrase “For they are not permitted to speak, *but should be subordinate*, as even the law says” (1 Cor 14:34). The phrase “should be subordinate” is often overlooked in determining the

meaning of the passage, yet it contains an important qualification. The strong contrast implied by the preposition “but” (*alla*), suggests that the speaking that Paul has in mind is that which involves not being subordinate. Women are forbidden a specific type of speech, namely, that which constituted some sort of exercise of authority and was therefore inconsistent with the subordinate role which Paul believed women should fulfill in the church. The speech then denied to women is a speech that is inappropriate to their position as women or wives.

What kind of speaking by women in the church represented for Paul a violation of the principle of women’s submission to men? Three major views have been expressed.

(1) Teaching. Some maintain that Paul must be referring to teaching because “teaching is by nature an exercise of authority and would violate the principle of submission of women to men.”⁵⁵ This view is plausible because, as George W. Knight explains, “the correlation of speaking and silence found here is paralleled in 1 Timothy 2:11-14, where what is prohibited is women teaching men. Such an understanding seems most appropriate for 1 Corinthians 14.”⁵⁶ On the other hand, it must be admitted that there is nothing specific in the context of 1 Corinthians 14:34 which indicates that Paul is referring exclusively to teaching.

(2) Evaluation of Prophets. On the basis of a rather convincing structural analysis of 1 Corinthians 14:29-36, both James Hurley and Wayne Grudem conclude that what Paul prohibited is the participation of women in the evaluation of the prophets.⁵⁷ The specific issue addressed in verses 29 to 33a is the regulation of the speaking of the prophets. The number of speakers is restricted to two or three and the words of the prophets are to be “weighed” (literally, “judged,” or “assessed,” *diakrino*) to ensure conformity to apostolic teaching.

The following three verses 33b to 36 are seen as an additional instruction regarding the evaluation by women of the message of the prophet. In light of this, what Paul would be saying is “Let the women keep silent in the churches *during the evaluation of prophecies.*” The reason why women would be prohibited to publicly evaluate the message of a prophet is because this would be seen as exercising a leadership role inappropriate for women.

(3) Words Spoken. A slight variation of this view is offered by Walter L. Liefeld who feels that the “judging” need not be restricted to the message of prophets, but could refer to the words spoken in general by any leader of the congregation. He finds support for this interpretation in Paul’s reference to the “law:” “as even the law says” (v. 34). He suggests that an example of

such a “law” could be Numbers 12:1-15 where Miriam and Aaron complained against Moses.

Liefeld draws the following conclusion from this example: “Miriam was a prophetess (like Deborah, Judges 4:4, and Huldah, 2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:22), but when she countered the authority of Moses, she transgressed. She was a leader (Mic 6:4) but should not have “judged” the prophet Moses (Deut 18:15). So, Paul’s argument might run, women in the church can prophesy, but should not judge the words of others. They should be “in submission” just as Miriam should have been to the leadership of Moses. This fits well but does not require that the limitation placed on women in chapter 14 was with regard to the “judging” of the prophets.”⁵⁸

Authoritative Speaking. All the above attempts to define the nature of the speaking prohibited to women in 1 Corinthians 14:34 in terms of official teaching, evaluation of the prophets or of the words spoken by others, appear to contain an element of truth. The notion that some kind of “judging” may be involved is suggested by the immediate context which speaks about weighing the words of prophets (v. 29). On the other hand, the lack of an explicit connection between the regulation about prophets (vv. 29-33a) and that about women (vv. 33b-36) suggests that the speaking prohibited to women includes any form of speech inappropriate to the subordinate role of women.

The key phrase that qualifies the kind of speaking by women Paul had in mind, is “but should be subordinate” (v. 34). This phrase suggests that the speech denied to women is a kind of speech that was seen as inappropriate to them as women or wives. Such speech could include women speaking up in the church as authoritative teachers of the congregation, or as judges of the words spoken by prophets, elders or even by their own husbands. It could also include any form of questioning that was seen as challenging the leadership of the church. In the light of these observations, it is preferable to understand Paul’s prohibition in broader terms, that is, inclusive of any form of speaking by women that was seen as reflecting lack of subordination to their husband and/or church leaders.

Speech and Authority. To appreciate the significance of Paul’s ruling, it is important to note that in most cultures, including the Jewish culture of Paul’s time, people were expected to speak in a manner appropriate to their position and status. For example, as Stephen B. Clark points out, “a trained disciple in first century Palestine would be very reluctant to voice an opinion in the presence of his rabbi or any other rabbi; he would even be reluctant to intervene in a discussion when his rabbi was present.”⁵⁹ I discovered to my

surprise that the same custom still held true in most of the classes I took at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. Questions were to be asked not publicly in the class but privately to the teacher after class. Refraining from asking questions in class was seen as a sign of respect for the authority of the teacher.

Disciples, wives and children were expected to hold their speech in a public gathering where the teachers or the heads of the households were discussing issues of concern to the community. These men represented in public the concerns of their household members to whom they would later explain or expand any question discussed.⁶⁰ Presumably this is why Paul urges women to ask their questions not publicly in the assembly, but privately to their husbands at home (v. 35). By so doing they were showing respect for the headship role of their husbands. On the contrary, if a woman insisted on presenting her own viewpoint, irrespective of the presence of her husband or church leaders, that, according to Paul, was “shameful” (v. 35), because it violated the “law” (v. 34) regarding the subordination of women.

3. Basis and Scope of Paul’s Ruling

Cultural or Biblical Law? To validate the authority of his ruling, Paul appeals to “the law:” “For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says” (v. 34). To which “law” is Paul referring? Some argue that Paul is referring to cultural “Jewish and Gentile laws that restricted the public participation of women.”⁶¹ This view is discredited by the fact that the term “law” (*nomos*) is never used in Paul’s writings with reference to cultural customs. Moreover, as we have seen in our analysis of 1 Timothy 2:13 and 1 Corinthians 11:8-9, Paul grounds his rulings regarding women not on cultural customs, but on Biblical revelation.

The problem is to figure out which Old Testament “law” Paul had in mind. Obviously he could not be thinking of an Old Testament law requiring women to be silent at all times in worship, because such a law does not exist. The Old Testament shows the opposite to be true (Ex 15:20-21; 2 Sam 6:15, 19; Ps 148:12). The “law” Paul had in mind is most likely the Old Testament principle of headship and subordination which we discussed in Chapter 1.

Some commentators think that Paul was thinking of Genesis 3:16 (“Your husband . . . shall rule over you”) when he spoke of the “law.”⁶² This is most unlikely because the New Testament never appeals to the “curses” of the Fall as a basis for Christian conduct or teaching. We have seen that in those other passages where Paul gives instructions on the roles of women, he consistently appeals to the relation of Adam and Eve *before* and not after the Fall, that is, to Genesis 2 and not Genesis 3 (cf. 1 Tim 2:13; 1 Cor 11:8-9).

Headship-Submission Principle. Since the law to which Paul appeals in the parallel or analogous passages (1 Cor 11:8-9; 1 Tim 2:13) is the order of creation of Genesis 2, we can safely presume that the latter is also what Paul has in view in his reference to the “law” in 1 Corinthians 14:34. This means that Paul’s appeal to “the law” need not have any particular text in mind. It is sufficient for him to remind women of the headship-subordination principle that God had established in the Old Testament, a principle still applicable to the participation of women in the worship service (1 Cor 11:5).

At this point it is necessary to distinguish between a permanent Biblical principle and its cultural, time-bound application. Refraining from asking questions in the assembly was the customary way for women to show subordination to their husbands and/or church leaders. Thus, “not asking questions in the assembly” was a *custom* subservient to the *principle* “[women] should be subordinate” (1 Cor 14:34). While the principle is permanent, its application is culturally conditioned. Yet in every culture the principle is to be expressed in the home and in the church through appropriate customs.

This interpretation is consistent with Paul’s concern to maintain an authority structure in the home and in the church, where men are called to exercise responsible and sacrificial leadership, and women to respond supportively. We have seen in the course of our study that Paul repeatedly emphasizes the importance of respecting the headship-subordination principle: “the head of a woman is her husband” (1 Cor 11:3); “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord” (Eph 5:22; cf. Col 3:18); “Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men” (1 Tim 2:11-12); “train the young women . . . to be submissive to their husbands” (Titus 2:4-5).

Harmony Between 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 14:34. In the light of the headship-subordination principle, it is understandable why Paul would deny to women an authoritative speech function in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-34. To allow the latter would have undermined the above principle. On the other hand, Paul readily allowed women to pray and prophesy in 1 Corinthians 11:5, because these activities did not involve the assumption of a position of authority over men.

Prophesying at Corinth was apparently understood in the broad sense of communicating to the congregation a message of exhortation from God. This ministry did not involve assuming the leadership role of the church for at least two reasons. First, Paul suggests that the prophetic ministry of “upbuilding and encouragement and consolation” (1 Cor 14:3) was open to all: “For you can all prophesy one by one” (1 Cor 14:31). Second, each member of the

congregation could question and challenge the speech of the prophets: “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said” (1 Cor 14:29).

The implication of the Greek word *diakrino*, here translated “weigh what is said,” is that members were to listen critically, sifting the good from the bad. It is hard to imagine that an Old Testament prophet like Isaiah would have invited the people to critically evaluate his message and to accept only what they viewed as sound. This suggests, as Wayne A. Grudem notes, “that prophets at Corinth were not thought by Paul to speak with a divine authority of actual words.”⁶³

This conclusion is supported by verse 36: “What! Did the word of God originate from you, or are you the only ones it has reached?” This statement implies that the word of God had come forth from Paul and the other apostles; thus even prophets in the local churches were to be subject to apostolic directives. In the light of this observation there is no contradiction between the prophetic speaking of women in 1 Corinthians 11:5 and the prohibition of their speaking authoritatively in 1 Corinthians 14:34, since the former did not involve the latter.

Wives or Women? Is Paul’s directive in 1 Corinthians 14:34 intended for all women or only for wives? Verse 35 refers explicitly to wives: “If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home.” This statement has led some to conclude that Paul’s ruling applies exclusively to wives and not inclusively to all women.⁶⁴ In our discussion of 1 Corinthians 11:3 we have shown that for Paul the husband-wife relationship is the paradigm for the man-woman relationship in general. Married women, which made up the majority of women in the congregation, served as a model for women in general. Stephen B. Clark illustrates this point with a fitting analogy: “If Paul had forbidden children to speak in public as an expression of their subordination to their parents, no one would hesitate to apply the rule to orphans as well as to children with parents. The parent-child relationship would be the normal case, but the rule would also apply to children with surrogate parents. Similarly, unmarried women would be expected to adhere to a rule for married women.”⁶⁵

Women and Spiritual Gifts. Note should be taken of the fact that Paul’s ruling concerning women in the church in 1 Corinthians 14 is given in the context of a chapter dealing with spiritual gifts. Apparently some people claimed then, as now, that if a person has received a spiritual gift, then he or she can freely use it in the church without restrictions. A question often asked is, who has the right to deny to a woman the opportunity of serving as a pastor/teacher of a congregation if the Holy Spirit has given her such a gift?

In this chapter on spiritual gifts, Paul shows, first of all, that an unrestricted use of gifts results in confusion and disorder. The latter is contrary to God's will, "for God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (1 Cor 14:33). Second, the apostle refutes the apparent contention that unless women are allowed to speak as the authoritative leaders of the congregation, then the church may be opposing God and His Spirit. Paul responds that such an exercise of that spiritual gift is contrary to God's law, that is, to the headship-subordination principle which is grounded in the order of creation. Therefore, spiritual gifts are given to be used, not contrary to, but in harmony with the revealed will of God. In other places Paul explains how women can use their spiritual gifts with propriety by praying and prophesying in the church (1 Cor 11:5) and by teaching women and children (Titus 2:3-5; 1 Tim 5:14).

No Independent Norms. Paul closes his instructions about the "speaking" of women in the church, saying: "What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached?" (1 Cor 14:36). These words are directed not merely to women but to both men and women, as the masculine plural form of *monous* ("only ones") indicates. In this closing statement Paul challenges the right of the Corinthian church to establish norms for church worship which are contrary to the ones he has laid down, namely, that women should, in a qualified sense, keep silent in the churches.

Paul's direct challenge ("What! Did the word of God originate with you?") suggests that the Corinthian church had adopted the practice of allowing women to speak and teach authoritatively as the leaders of the congregation. The apostle challenges their course of action by reminding them that they were not the source and definition of Christian principles and practices. On the contrary, they should conform to what was done "in all the churches of the saints" (v.33).

To strengthen the authority of his instructions given in the whole chapter, Paul appeals to any one who regards himself as "a prophet, or spiritual" to acknowledge that what he has written "is a command of the Lord" (v. 37). This forceful statement makes it clear that Paul viewed the teachings of the whole chapter, including those concerning women, as applying not only to the local situation of the Corinthian church but to Christian churches in general. This means that Paul's teachings on the role of women in the church are to be accepted as an integral part of God's revelation found in Scripture.

CONCLUSION

We asked at the beginning of this chapter: How does the principle of headship and subordination relate to the role of women in the church? Our examination of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 has shown that the application of this principle in the church requires that women not be appointed “to teach” (1 Tim 2:12) or “to speak” (1 Cor 14:34) authoritatively as the leader of the congregation. We have found that this Pauline instruction derives, not from the cultural conventions of his time which restricted the participation of women in public gatherings, but rather from Paul’s understanding of the distinctive roles for men and women which God established at creation.

Paul felt that the creational pattern of male headship and female subordination in the home and in the church, requires that women should not exercise spiritual oversight for the flock. He grounded his view on the relationship of man and woman *before*, and *not after*, the results of the Fall. He did not appeal to local or cultural factors such as the disorderly conduct of some women, their relative lack of education or the negative impact on outsiders of the appointment of women as leaders in the church. The nature of Paul’s arguments leaves no room to make his instructions of only local and time-bound application.

The exclusion of women from the teaching and leadership office in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 must not be construed to mean that Paul excludes women from active participation in the ministry of the church. We have seen in Chapter 2 that Paul commends a significant number of women for working hard with him in the missionary outreach of the church. However, women ministered in the church, not as appointive leaders, but in supportive roles such as “fellow-workers,” deaconesses, and prophets who edified and encouraged the congregation.

To better appreciate why only certain men and no women were appointed in the apostolic church to serve as pastors/elders/overseers of the congregation, we shall consider in the next chapter the New Testament understanding of the role of the pastor.

ENDNOTES

1. Some of the studies which view 1 Timothy 2:9-15 as limiting or prohibiting the full participation of women in the ministry of the church, are: George W. Knight III, "Authenteo in Reference to Women in 1 Timothy 2:12," *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984): 143-157; Douglas J. Moo, "The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15: A Rejoinder," *Trinity Journal* 2 (1981): 198-222; Carroll D. Osburn, "Authenteo (1 Timothy 2:12)," *Restoration Quarterly* 25 (1983): 1-12; A. J. Panning, "Authentein—A Word Study," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 78 (1981): 185-191; B. W. Powers, "Women in the Church: The Application of 1 Timothy 2:8-15," *Interchange* 17 (1975): 55-59; Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1979), pp. 122-128; James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981), pp. 193-228.

2. Some of the studies which view 1 Timothy 2:9-15 as supporting the full participation of women in the ministry of the church, are: J. J. Davis, "Ordination of Women Reconsidered: Discussion of 1 Timothy 2:8-15," *Presbyterian Communique* 12 (November/December 1979): 1-15; N. J. Hommes, "Let Women Be Silent in the Church: A Message Concerning the Worship Service and the Decorum to Be Observed by Women," *Calvin Theological Journal* 4 (1969): 5-22; Catherine C. Kroeger, "Ancient Heresies and a Strange Greek Verb," *Reformed Journal* 29 (March 1979): 12-15; "1 Timothy 2:12—A Classicist's View," in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1986), pp. 225-244; Philip B. Payne, "Libertarian Women in Ephesus: A Response to Douglas J. Moo's Article: '1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance,'" *Trinity Journal* 2 (1981): 169-197; David M. Scholer, "Exegesis: 1 Timothy 2:8-15," *Daughters of Sarah* 1 (May 1975): 7-8; also "1 Timothy 2:9-15 and the Place of Women in the Church's Ministry" in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, Illinois 1986), pp. 193-224; Aida D. B. Spencer, "Eve at Ephesus (Should Women Be Ordained As Pastors According to the First Letter to Timothy 2:11-15?)," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 17 (1974): 215-222.

3. See, for example, Rom 1:27; 1 Cor 15:25, 53; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Thess 4:1; 1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 2:6, 24; Titus 1:7, 11).

4. James B. Hurley (n. 1), p. 196.

5. David M. Scholer, "1 Timothy 2:9-15 and the Place of Women in the Church's Ministry" (n. 2), pp. 200, 218. The same view is strongly defended by Philip B. Payne (n. 2), pp. 190-194; Catherine C. Kroeger, "1 Timothy 2:12 — A Classicist's View," (n. 2), pp. 225-244.

6. I am indebted for some of the criteria to Douglas J. Moo, "The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15: A Rejoinder" (n. 1), pp. 220-221.

7. Carroll D. Osburn (n. 1), p. 11.

8. Susan T. Foh (n. 1), p. 123.

9. For an extensive documentation of this point, see David M. Scholer, "Women's Adornment: Some Historical and Hermeneutical Observations on the New Testament Passages," *Daughters of Sarah* 6, (January/February 1980):3-6.

10. David M. Scholer, "1 Timothy 2:9-15 and the Place of Women in the Church's Ministry" (n. 2), pp. 201-202; see also n. 9.

11. Philip B. Payne (n. 2), p. 191; see also David M. Scholer, "1 Timothy 2:9-15 and the Place of Women in the Church's Ministry," (n. 2), p. 202.

12. Philip B. Payne (n. 2), p. 192.

13. Aida Spencer, "Eve at Ephesus," *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 17 (1974): 217.

14. Philip B. Payne offers very compelling reasons for translating *hesychia* as "quiet" and not "silence" (n. 2), pp. 169-170.

15. James B. Hurley (n. 1), p. 200.

16. N. J. Hommes, "Let Women Be Silent in Church," *Calvin Theological Journal* 4 (April 1969): 7.

17. Douglas J. Moo sees in verses 11 and 12 a chiastic structure (inverted parallelism) with the word "submission" (*hypotage*) functioning as the pivotal point of the verses ("1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance," *Trinity Journal* 1 [1980]: 64).

18. James B. Hurley (n. 1), p. 201.

19. Philip B. Payne (n. 2), p. 172; also G. Osborne, "Hermeneutics and Women in the Church," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20 (1977): 347.

20. David M. Scholer (n. 10), p. 205; also Grant Osborne (n. 18), p. 346; Richard and Joice Boldrey, *Chauvinist or Feminist? Paul's View of Women* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1976), p. 62; Philip B. Payne (n. 2), pp. 173-175; Catherine C. Kroeger (n. 2), pp. 225-232.

21. David M. Scholer (n. 10), p. 203.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 205; the same view is defended by Philip B. Payne (n. 2), p. 175. A similar conclusion is reached by Catherine C. Kroeger who interprets 1 Timothy 2:12 as follows: "I do not allow a woman to teach nor to represent herself as the originator or source of man" ("1 Timothy 2:12 — A Classicist's View" [n. 2], p. 232).

23. George W. Knight III, "Authenteo in Reference to Women in 1 Timothy 2:12," *New Testament Studies* 30 (January 1984): 152. The same view is expressed by Fritz Zerbst, *The Office of Woman in the Church* (St. Louis, Missouri, 1953), p. 53 (Zerbst gives an extensive list of other authors who hold the same view); J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (London, 1963), p. 68; James B. Hurley (n. 1), p. 202; Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1980), pp. 197-198.

24. George W. Knight III (n. 23), p. 152.

25. See 1 Tim 4:6, 13, 16; 2 Tim 3:14-17; 4:1-4; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 7.

26. Karl H. Rengstorf, "Didasko," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974), vol. 2, p. 147; also Douglas J. Moo, "1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance" (n. 1), pp. 65-66; "The Interpretation of Timothy 2:11-15: A Rejoinder" (n. 1), pp. 200-202; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon* (Minneapolis, 1937), p. 564; David P. Scaer, "May Women Be Ordained as Pastors?" *The Springfielder* 36-2 (September, 1972): 104; Susan T. Foh (n. 1), p. 125.

27. J. Keir Howard, "Neither Male nor Female: An Examination of the Status of Women in the New Testament," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 55, 1 (January, 1983): 41.

28. Aida Spencer, (n. 2), p. 219; Philip B. Payne (n. 2), pp. 175-177.

29. Douglas J. Moo provides a most compelling critical refutation of this interpretation in ("The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15: A Rejoinder," *Trinity Journal* 2 (1981): 202-204.

30. Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1975), p. 57.

31. Virginia Mollenkott, *Women, Men and the Bible* (Nashville, 1977), p. 99; Arlene Swidler, *Woman in a Man's Church* (New York, 1972), pp. 34-35; Karl Schelkle, *The Spirit and the Bride* (Collegetown, Minnesota, 1979), p. 90.

32. Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation* (Waco, Texas, 1974), p. 28; see also Paul K. Jewett (30), pp. 126-127; Karen Hoover, "Creative Tension in 1 Timothy 2:11-15," *Brethren Life* 22 (1977): 164; Margaret Howe, *Women and Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982), pp. 46-47.

33. Elizabeth Fiorenza, in *The Liberating Word: A Guide to Nonsexist Interpretation of Scripture*, ed. Letty Russel (Philadelphia, 1976), p. 49.

34. Paul K. Jewett (n. 30), p. 61; Francis Cleary, "Women in the New Testament," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 10 (1980): 81; Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: an Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1957), p. 77; H. P. Liddon, *Explanatory Analysis of St. Paul's First Epistle to Timothy* (Minneapolis, 1978), p. 19.

35. Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1980), p. 204.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D. C., 1957), vol. 7, p. 296; see also George W. Knight III, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Chicago, 1985), p. 32.

38. Douglas J. Moo (n. 17), p. 70.

39. See, for example, Ida Ramig, *Exclusion of Women from the Priesthood: Divine Law or Sex Discrimination?* (Metuchen, 1976), pp. 111-116; A. M. McGrath, O. P., *What a Modern Catholic Believes about Women* (Chicago, 1972), pp. 36-37.

40. This translation has been adopted also by Moffat and NASB.

41. See C. Spicq, *Les Épîtres Pastorales* (Paris, 1969), p. 380.

42. Philip B. Payne (n. 2), p.; Aida Spencer (n. 2), pp. 219-220; H. P. Liddon (n. 34), pp. 38, 39; Walter Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh, 1924), p. 33; Pace Don Williams, *The Apostle Paul and Women in the Church* (Van Nuys, California, 1977), p. 113.

43. This view is expressed by Douglas J. Moo (n. 17), pp. 71-72; Robert Falconer, "1 Timothy 2:14-15. Interpretative Notes," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 66 (1941): 376-378; J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (London, 1963), p. 69; C. Spicq (n. 41), pp. 382-383; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan 1975), p. 309.

44. For information on the improved social status of women in the Roman world in New Testament times, see Mary Lefkowitz and Maureen Fant, *Women in Greece and Rome* (Toronto, 1977); J. P. V. D. Balsolon, *Roman Women* (London, 1962).

45. Philip B. Payne (n. 2), p. 190; see also David M. Scholer (n. 10), pp. 195-205; Catherine Clark Kroeger (n. 22), pp. 226-232.

46. Carroll D. Osborn (n. 1), p. 11.

47. *Acts of Paul* 41, 42, in *New Testament Apocrypha*, eds. Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Philadelphia, 1965), vol. 2, p. 364; Tertullian challenges the use that some made of Thecla's example to defend the right of women to teach and to baptize, by pointing out that the presbyter who fabricated the story was convicted and removed from office (*On Baptism* 17).

48. The suggestion is made by Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles, Hermeneia* (Philadelphia, 1972), p. 48.

49. See, William O. Walker, Jr., "The 'Theology of Women's Place and the 'Paulinist' Tradition," *Semeia* 28 (1983): 101-112; E. Schweizer, "The Service of Worship: An Exposition of 1 Corinthians 14," *Interpretation* 13 (1959): 402f.; Arnold Bittlinger, *Gifts and Graces: A Commentary on 1 Corinthians 12-14* (London, 1967), p. 110f.; Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians, Hermeneia* (Philadelphia, 1975), p. 246.

50. For a discussion see Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Washington, D. C., 1982), p. 241.

51. Paul K. Jewett (n. 30), p. 115; Hans Conzelman (n. 49), p. 246.

52. F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1983), p. 342; cf. George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974), p. 528.

53. For a discussion of prophecy as a gift for public use, see Wayne A. Grudem (n. 50), p. 181.

54. Among those who believe that the issue is disorderly speech are R. Banks, "Paul and Women's Liberation," *Interchange* 18 (1976): 94; Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty (n. 32), pp. 68-69; D. Pape, *In Search of God's Ideal Woman* (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1975), p. 138.

55. L. Birney, *The Role of Women in the New Testament Church* (Pinner, 1971), p. 15.

56. George W. Knight III (n. 37), pp. 24-35.

57. James B. Hurley (n. 1), pp. 188-193; Wayne A. Grudem (n. 50), pp. 249-255.

58. Walter L. Liefeld, "Women, Submission and Ministry in 1 Corinthians," π in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1986), p. 150.

59. Stephen B. Clark (n. 35), p. 187.

60. See discussion in Stephen B. Clark (n. 35), pp. 186-187.

61. See Walter L. Liefeld (n. 58), p. 149.

62. See C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London, 1968), p. 330; Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (London, 1958), p. 201.

63. Wayne A. Grudem (n. 50), p. 73. See Grudem's analysis of the prophetic speech at Corinth on pp. 58-73.

64. See, for example, E. Earle Ellis, "The Silenced Wives of Corinth," in *New Testament Textual Criticism*, eds. Eldon Jay Epp and Gordon D. Fee (Oxford, 1981), p. 217; Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1985), p. 149.

65. Stephen B. Clark (n. 35), p. 187.

Chapter 7

THE ROLE OF THE PASTOR

Are women any less capable than men of piety, zeal, learning, leadership, counseling, preaching or whatever it takes to serve as the pastor or elder of a congregation? If not, why should women not be appointed to serve as pastors or elders? These questions have elicited the deepest concerns of evangelical feminists. Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty ask: “Ordination is relevant to women who feel called to the official ministry, and many women in all branches of the church do feel this call of God upon their lives. Can the church continue to deny them the opportunity to respond to this call?”¹

These are serious questions that demand our attention. The answers are largely determined by one’s understanding of the nature of the church and of the role of the pastor. If the church is viewed as being primarily a religious institution which provides religious services to society, then its leaders will be seen as administrators chosen on the basis of competence. This understanding of the nature of the church would demand that women be given equal access to the pastoral office in accordance with the equal employment opportunities that govern all service institutions.

On the other hand, if the church is a spiritual family of believers united to God and to one another by a common bond of faith, then the pastor is a spiritual father of the “household of God” (1 Tim 3:15; cf. 1 Cor 4:15) and the shepherd of the flock (1 Pet 5:2). This understanding of the church, as an extended family of believers, has important implications for the role of women within the church.

Objectives. This chapter aims at defining the New Testament understanding of the nature of the church and of the role of the pastor within it, in order to determine if women can legitimately fulfill such a role. For the sake of clarity this chapter is divided in two parts: the first examines the role of the pastor as representative of the congregation; the second considers his role as a representative of Christ. Special attention will be given in the second part of the chapter to the implications of the male imagery of God for the appointment of women as pastors/elders in the church.

PART I

THE PASTOR AS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CONGREGATION

1. Models of Pastoral Roles

The understanding of the nature of the pastor's role within the church determines to a large extent one's position on whether or not a woman should serve as pastor/elder of the congregation. Four main models of pastoral roles are generally held among Christians and each of them has quite different implications.

Sacramental Role. A first pastoral model may be called the *sacramental role*. According to this model, which is held by the Eastern Orthodox, the Roman Catholic and to a lesser degree the Anglican church, the pastor is seen primarily as a priest (*sacerdos*) whose central function in the worship service is to preside at the eucharistic (Lord's Supper) celebration. This view developed early in the history of Christianity as the Lord's Supper came to be understood as being essentially a sacramental reenactment of the atoning death of Christ. This development led to the view that the person presiding at the eucharistic sacrifice functioned as a priest, acting on behalf of not only the congregation, but of the very person of Christ.

This is the line of reasoning present in the Vatican II declaration, *Inter Insigniores*, which argues that at the consecration of the eucharist the priest acts "*in persona Christi*, taking the role of Christ to the point of being his very image."² Since the priest becomes the very image of Jesus Christ to the congregation, then it is only fitting that he should be a man and not a woman, for Jesus was a man and not a woman. According to these church traditions women cannot be ordained as priests because by their very nature they are incapable of receiving the "indelible character," that is, the permanent divine grace conferred through the sacrament of ordination.

This sacramental view of the priesthood founders on three counts. First, the New Testament makes it unequivocally clear that there is no longer a special class of priests as was in Old Testament times. Christ has fulfilled and done away with the Old Testament priesthood (Heb 5:4-6; 7:27; 9:24-28; 10:9-14). By His sacrificial death Christ has opened to all direct access to God's throne of grace (Rom 5:2; Eph 3:12; Heb 10:19-22). Baptized and believing Christians need no human mediator because they are all "a holy priesthood" capable of offering "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:5).

Second, the Lord's Supper is never regarded in the New Testament as a sacrifice in itself or as a reenactment of Christ's atoning death. It is simply presented as a memorial of Christ's sacrificial death (1 Cor 11:26). No special class of priests is needed to preside over its celebration. Lastly, if the priest represents the person of Christ and not His masculinity, then the resemblance between Christ and the priest need not be sexual but spiritual and consequently women could represent equally well the person of Christ to the congregation.

Functional Role. A second pastoral model may be called the *functional role*. In this model the pastor is seen primarily as an administrator of an institution known as the church. His appointment to the pastoral office is determined by his functional effectiveness and capacity for leadership. Churches that view themselves as religious institutions that provide religious and social services to the community, are naturally apt to ordain women as pastors. They see their pastor not as the "head" or "shepherd" of the congregation, but as an effective and functional administrator. Since women can manage businesses and institutions as effectively as can men, their appointment to the pastoral office is seen as a matter of necessity in order to bring the administration of the church in line with the equal employment opportunities of secular institutions.

The problem with this functional model is that it reduces the church from a community of believers to a service institution and the pastor from a spiritual "head" and "shepherd" of the flock to an administrator or policy setter. Administrative competence can undoubtedly enhance the leadership role of a pastor, but, as we shall see, it is not the fundamental Biblical criterion for ordaining a person as pastor.

The church is meant to be not merely a functional organization but a community of believers, the family of God. Its pastors are not merely officials recruited without regard to sexual distinctions as in secular institutions. Instead, they are shepherds of the flock, appointed to represent Christ to the

people and the people to Christ. The pastor, however, represents Christ not sacramentally but functionally, that is, not by becoming the “very image” of Christ to the congregation, but by representing the shepherding role of Christ, the chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4). This double representative role requires, as we shall see, that the person appointed to serve as pastor be a man with specific spiritual and moral qualities.

Charismatic Role. A third pastoral model may be called the *charismatic role*. In this model any person can be ordained as pastor if he or she demonstrates having received from God some specific charisma, that is, spiritual gift, such as prophecy, healing, faith, wisdom, tongues, or preaching. In many ways the charismatic pastoral role is a spiritual version of the functional pastoral role described above. The main difference between the two is that the competency required in the charismatic model is spiritual rather than practical. Pentecostal and Holiness churches that emphasize the charismatic role of the pastor have been ordaining women as pastors since the 1890’s, obviously because for them the main prerequisite for ordination to the ministry is the possession of some charisma.

There is no question that ordination to the office of pastor/elder is not a right to be asked or fought for but a matter of divine grace (1 Tim 4:14). One of God’s gifts to the church is the *charisma* of spiritual leadership: “And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers” (Eph 4:11; cf. 1 Cor 12:28-30). However, a person who has received a gift for spiritual leadership is not automatically a candidate for ordination to the ministry. Paul explains, for example, that a man aspiring to serve as an overseer/elder in the church “must be well thought of by outsiders” and by church members (1 Tim 3:6-7). This means that a man must prove himself before he can be considered by the church to serve as pastor/elder.

Moreover, the stated requirements for such an office are the evidence of moral integrity and exemplary leadership in the home (1 Tim 3:2-5; Titus 1:6-9). No reference is made to the presence of specific spiritual gifts. This does not mean that spiritual gifts are irrelevant, but rather that they are secondary to those qualities that would allow a man to exercise the same kind of leadership in the church that he exercises in the home.

The Scriptures nowhere indicate that the gifts of the spirit are “for men only.” We have seen, for example, that both the Old and the New Testaments speak of women ministering as prophets (Judges 4:4; Acts 21:9; 1 Cor 11:5), a ministry which is mentioned by Paul before that of evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28-30). It is difficult, however, to imagine that

the Holy Spirit would normally call a woman to serve as a pastor when, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the same Spirit inspired Paul to instruct the church not to allow women to serve as representative and authoritative leaders of the church (1 Tim 2:12; 1 Cor 14:34).

If, as we have seen repeatedly in the course of this study, God has established functional role differences for men and women to fulfill in the home and in the church, then it is inconceivable that the same God would normally call men or women to serve in roles which are contrary to His creational order.

Paul devotes several chapters of his letter to the Corinthian church—a church that resisted the idea of hierarchy—to explain that the church, like the human body, needs different functioning units, persons with different gifts, each of which is essential to the proper functioning of the body. In fact, Paul emphasizes that “the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable. . . . God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another” (1 Cor 12:22, 24-25).

Representative Role. A fourth pastoral model may be called the *representative role*. This model differs significantly from those described above. In this model the pastor fulfills a dual representative function. On the one hand he functions as the representative head of his members, and on the other hand, he serves as Christ’s representative to his members. This role of a pastor in the “household of God” (1 Tim 3:15) is to a large extent similar to the role of a father in the home. Like a father he cares for his members personally, directing and correcting them as necessary. The primary requirements for this kind of pastoral leadership are those spiritual and natural qualities which lead the members to respect the pastor as their personal spiritual leader. Leadership skills and charisma are important but secondary requirements. What is essential are the qualities of moral and spiritual integrity which enable the pastor to serve as a worthy representative of God and of the members.

The early Christians, as we shall see, adopted the representative model of the pastor by appointing local elders to serve as the heads of their congregations. Women were not appointed as elders because this office involved oversight of the congregation, “the household of God” (1 Tim 3:15)—a role similar to that a father is called to fulfill in the home. To explore this reason more fully, consideration will now be given to the role of the pastor in the New Testament.

2. The Origin of Elders/Pastors

Origin of Elders. During His ministry on earth Jesus did not establish a structure of church organization. He called, trained, appointed and commissioned twelve men to witness for Him to all nations (Mark 3:14; 16:15-16; Acts 1:8). It was after the resurrection and ascension that Christ's followers began to develop a form of church organization. The book of Acts gives indications of an emerging structure, built on the pattern of the synagogue. Initially, the church of Jerusalem must have been seen as one of the several hundred synagogues that existed in the city (see, e.g. Acts 6:9).

The minimum requirement for the existence of a synagogue was a group of ten men to constitute the board of elders.³ In most cases the elders of the synagogue were also the representative heads of their households. The twelve apostles appointed by Christ functioned as the original board of elders (Acts 1:20, Greek "*episkope*—oversight"). Peter and John designate themselves as elders (*presbyteros*—1 Pet 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1). The vacancy caused by the defection of Judas was filled by the election of Matthias: "His office ("oversight"—*episkope*) let another take" (Acts 1:20). The apostles, as the elders of the first congregation, supervised the worship and instruction of the members, exercised discipline and administered the distribution of alms.

The dispersion of the Jerusalem church, caused by "a great persecution" (Acts 8:1), resulted in the establishment of daughter churches in Palestine/Syria. The eldership model of the Jerusalem church was soon adopted by the new churches, as indicated by the fact that Paul and Barnabas appointed "elders" (*presbyteroi*) in every church they founded, committing them to the Lord (Acts 14:23). The language of Acts suggests that the elders (*presbyteroi*) could also be called overseers or bishops (*episkopoi*—Acts 20:17, 28). The same interchangeable use of the two terms occurs in Titus 1:5-7.

It appears that initially the term "elder" designated the *status* and the term "bishop/overseer" characterized the *responsibility* of the elders, namely, to supervise and shepherd the congregation (1 Pet 5:1-4).⁴ By the beginning of the second century, however, the term "bishop" came to be applied to the sole leader of the congregation (monarchical bishop) who took precedence over the presbyters and deacons. Initially, however, the terms "elders" and "bishops" were modest words, used to describe the representative and supervising function of what today we call the pastor. Other terms were presumably also used since other passages in the New Testament refer simply to "those who are over you in the Lord" (1 Thess 5:12) or "your leaders" (Heb 13:7).

The Use of the Term “Pastor.” The term “pastors” (*poimen*) which means “shepherds,” is used only once in the New Testament, namely, in the list of offices given in Ephesians 4:11: “And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.” The absence of the article in Greek before “teachers,” suggests that “pastor-teacher is a single office embodying a twofold function: that of shepherding or overseeing the flock, and of teaching.”⁵

The limited use of the term “shepherd/pastor” indicates that it was not a well-established title for the leaders of the congregation who were better known as elders, overseers or simply as leaders. Such leaders, however, were clearly seen as “shepherds,” as indicated by the metaphorical use of the verb *poimainein* “to shepherd the flock” to describe the work of the elders (1 Pet 5:2; Acts 20:28; John 21:16).⁶

What all of this means is that in the New Testament the local elders/leaders functioned as the pastors of the congregation. The term “pastor” may be seen as descriptive of the shepherding function of the elders. Thus, the New Testament role of the local “elder/overseer” corresponds essentially to the role of today’s pastor. In view of this fact the present policy of the Seventh-day Adventist church to allow for the ordination of women as local elders but not as pastors is based on an artificial distinction between the two offices, a distinction which does not exist in the New Testament.

The only legitimate distinction that can be made in the New Testament is between the “local elders” and what could be called the “elders at large” such as the apostles, Timothy, and Titus. Both of them, however, then as now, functioned as “shepherds/pastors” of the congregations. This means that the prerequisites for the appointment of local elders and pastors are essentially the same because both fulfill the same representative shepherding function.

Plurality of Elders. Another important element, often ignored, is that in the New Testament each church had several elders. This is indicated by the fact that they are always referred to in the plural in relation to any particular church. Paul and Barnabas “appointed elders” in every church they founded in Asia (Acts 14:23). The elders of the Jerusalem church are always referred to in the plural (Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 5, 22, 23; 16:4; 21:18). Paul called the “elders” of the church at Ephesus to come to him (Acts 20:17). Titus is to “appoint elders in every town” (Titus 1:5). The sick person is to “call for the elders of the church” (James 5:14). As in the Jewish synagogue so in Christian churches one of the elders was apparently appointed to serve as a presiding elder. James served in such a role in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13-21), Timothy in the church of Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3) and Titus in Crete (Titus 1:5).

The specific number of elders appointed in every church is never mentioned. We can presume that the number was determined by the size of the congregation and the number of men who were suitably qualified (see 1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). The qualifications suggest, as we shall see, that the elders were mostly fathers who had proven their moral integrity and spiritual leadership in their own household. This indicates that the church was seen as an extended family where some of the qualified heads of households were appointed to serve as heads of the larger family of believers, “the household of God” (1 Tim 3:15).

Extended Family. A major factor which contributed to viewing the church as an extended family is the fact that by accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior, believers “receive adoption as sons” (Gal 4:5). As adopted children they can call God “Abba! Father!” (Gal 4:6) and relate to one another as “brother and sister” (James 2:14-15; 1 Cor 8:11; 1 Thess 4:6; Rom 12:1). Within this spiritual family Christ Himself is called “the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29).

The pastor/elder functions as a spiritual father within the church family because of his role in bringing new converts into the church and nurturing them subsequently. For example, Paul refers to the Corinthian believers as his children and to himself as their father: “I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. . . . For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (1 Cor 4:14, 16; cf. Eph 5:1; Gal 3:26). Furthermore, church members are referred to as “beloved children” (Eph 5:1), “sons and daughters” (2 Cor 6:18), “brethren” (1 Cor 1:10, 11, 26; 2:1), “sisters” (Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 7:15), all terms indicative of a family relationship.

This understanding of the church as an extended family of believers, led by elders who functioned as spiritual fathers and shepherds explains why women were not appointed as elders/pastors, namely because their role was seen as being that of mothers and not fathers. This point will be further clarified below.

3. Functions and Qualifications of Elders

Shepherding the Flock. The main function of the elders was that of shepherding the flock. The flock is to be directed and protected so that it may be nourished and grow. Paul charged the elders of Ephesus to remember their important shepherding calling: “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son” (Acts 20:28).

The task of shepherding the flock included guiding and directing the congregation ordering its worship services, correcting abuses, refuting errors, and regulating the relationship of its members. Preaching and teaching were also among the main functions of the elders (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 3:2). This is indicated by Paul's instruction: "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching" (1 Tim 5:17). The manner in which this pastoral responsibility was to be exercised is described in 1 Peter 5:1-4: "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory."

Respect for the Elders. In view of the important role the elders fulfilled as representative fathers and shepherds of the flock, members are admonished to respect and obey them. Peter, for example, immediately after describing how elders should exercise their leadership, goes on to indicate the respect elders should receive: "Likewise you that are younger be subject to the elders" (1 Pet 5:5). Similarly Paul urges the Thessalonians "to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work" (1 Thess 5:12-13).

A similar admonition is given in the book of Hebrews: "Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account" (Heb 13:17). Here submission is enjoined to the leaders of the church (elders/pastors) because of the solemn responsibility entrusted to them to be accountable for the spiritual welfare of the congregation.

Qualifications of Elders. The qualifications of elders/pastors are directly related to the functions they are called to fulfill within the church. A list of the main qualifications is given by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:1-7: "The saying is sure: If anyone aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil; moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

This and similar descriptions (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-3; Acts 20:28-30) indicate that any potential elder/overseer/pastor of the church must have moral integrity, ability in management, knowledge of the Word of God, aptitude to teach and a genuine pastoral concern. Particular emphasis is placed upon the Christian character of the elder, exemplified by his temperate life-style, loyalty to his wife, and leadership in the home. Possession of these qualifications must be recognizable *before* a man can be appointed as leader of the congregation.

4. The Appointment of Elders

Restricted to Men. Four main lines of evidence indicate that in the New Testament the appointment of elders was restricted to men:

(1) *Male Elders.* The initial group of elders, as we have noted, were the apostles themselves, who were all men. When the Gospel proclamation reached beyond Jerusalem, the same pattern was followed to appoint male elders in each congregation. The reason is that Christian elders, as in the Jewish synagogue, were seen as the spiritual fathers of an extended family.

Jerome D. Quinn observes: “The extended family of the ancient world is presumed and proposed as the model and parable of a church that is bound in faith and loyalty to the living Father who has bestowed life on those who are now his sons and daughters. In that family some of the sons are presbyter-bishops and so “householders” (*oikonomoi*, cf. Titus 1:7), men who visibly represent and answer to the Father. The tried virtues of Christian family life are the criteria proposed for choosing these men to share in Pauline ministry (Titus 1:6). A father who has not presided well over his own household ought not to preside over a church (1 Tim 3:4-5).”⁷

(2) *Specification of “Man.”* In the descriptions of qualifications of an elder in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-7, specific reference is made to “man—*aner*” as distinct from “woman.” The importance of this fact is brought out by B. W. Powers: “An elder is to be a “one-woman man,” that is, a person who is loyal to a wife and does not become involved with other women; but the point is also made that he is to be a *man*. This is further reinforced by the fact that an elder is required to be able to manage his own household well as a qualification for the role of ruling as an elder. This could never be said of a woman.”⁸

(3) *Structure of Passage.* This conclusion is further supported by the structure of the passage in 1 Timothy where the qualifications for the office of elder (3:1-7) are given immediately after the prohibition of women teaching as leaders in the church (2:11-15). The collocation of this prohibi-

tion immediately before the qualifications for eldership, suggests that the two are closely related. Having explained why women should not serve as teaching-leaders of the congregation, Paul then proceeds immediately to spell out what kind of men are suitable for such an office. The connection between the two has been recognized by some scholars.⁹

(4) *Authority Role.* The discussion of the role of women in the New Testament indicates that they could not have exercised the role of elders/pastors, because the two roles were viewed as mutually exclusive. A woman, as we have seen in chapter 6, was not to teach as the leader in the church or to exercise authority over men (1 Tim 2:12; 1 Cor 14:34), whereas the function of the elder was to exercise fatherly authority within the congregation (1 Tim 5:17; 3:4-5) over both men and women.

Appointment of Elders. The process followed by the apostolic church to elect and ordain their church leaders is not clearly explained in the New Testament. Three major factors seem to have contributed to their election: qualifications, calling, and recognition by the church and/or church leaders. In addition to the qualifications for the office of elder discussed above, there was required a recognition on the part of the church that the person aspiring to serve as elder had been called by God. The church recognized that the Holy Spirit had called Barnabas and Saul for their particular work (Acts 13:2). Paul seems to refer to the recognition by the church of Timothy's calling when he speaks of "the prophetic utterances which pointed to you" (1 Tim 1:18). It is also reasonable to assume that the person aspiring to the office of overseer (1 Tim 3:1) could testify that he believed himself to be called of God to serve in such a role.

The qualifications and the calling were to be recognized presumably both by the congregation (Acts 13:3; 1 Tim 3:7; 5:22) and by church leaders (Acts 14:23; 1 Tim 5:22; Titus 1:5). This recognition resulted in a special appointment to the office of elder through the rite of laying on of hands. The performance of this rite is suggested by Paul's admonition to Timothy not to neglect the gift which he had received "when the council of elders laid their hands upon [him]" (1 Tim 4:14; cf. 2 Tim 1:6). An additional indication is provided by Paul's advice to Timothy: "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands" (1 Tim 5:22). Since his advice is given in the context of the treatment of elders (vv. 17-19), it undoubtedly refers to their official appointment to the office of elder.

In the light of the foregoing considerations we may say that in the New Testament, the act of laying on of hands, which became known as the rite of ordination, represents the church's recognition of qualifications and divine

calling of the man being officially appointed to serve as shepherd and father of the spiritual family of believers (1 Pet 5:2-4; Acts 20:28). The notion of ordination as a sacramental act which conveys the “indelible character” of the priesthood is foreign to the New Testament. Instead, the essential function of the ceremony is to invest a person, who had proven his moral and spiritual worthiness, with the right to serve officially as a representative spiritual father and shepherd of the congregation, “the household of God” (1 Tim 3:15).

5. The Appointment of Women as Elders/Pastors?

Women as Spiritual Fathers? Can a woman be officially appointed by the church through the laying on of hands to serve as a representative spiritual father and shepherd of the congregation? The answer of the New Testament is NO. The reason is not because women are any less capable than men of piety, zeal, learning, leadership, preaching or whatever it takes to serve as pastor, but simply because such a role is perceived in the New Testament as being that of a spiritual father and not of a spiritual mother. In Chapters 5 and 6 we have shown that the New Testament emphasizes the importance of respecting the functional role distinctions of men and women established by God at creation. These role distinctions, we have noted, do not imply superiority or inferiority, but rather reflect a divine design and concern for well-ordered and harmonious relations within the home and the church.

Men and women were created *not superior and inferior*, but rather *different from and complementary to* one another. What God made woman to be and what He intends her to do, makes her different from but not inferior to man. This difference is reflected in the different roles men and women are called to fulfill in life. The woman is to be wife and mother while the man is to be husband and father. As father, man is called to be a caring head and guardian of the home, a divinely established role in the natural family which must be reflected in the church, because the church is, as we have shown, the extended family of God. This means that to appoint a woman to serve as elder/pastor would be analogous to assigning her the role of fatherhood in the family.

The Larger Question. The question of women’s ordination must be seen as part of the larger question of the distinctive and different roles men and women are called to fulfill in the home and in the church. David Scaer emphasizes the need to consider the wider scope of the problem: “The problem of women pastors cannot be handled in isolation, but must be viewed in conjunction with the other sexual misunderstandings of which it is both a part and a result. Only citing the simple prohibition against the women pastors, without viewing the wider horizon of which the prohibition is a part, leaves unsolved the real and basic problem of understanding the divinely established relationship of male and female.”¹⁰

The elder/pastor serves as the shepherd of the flock, the father of the extended family of believers, which is the church. Such a representative role implies a spiritual authority which by divine appointment belongs to man and not to woman. Essentially this is the theological reason given by Paul in those crucial passages (1 Tim 2:11-15; 1 Cor 11:3-15; 14:33-36) where he explains why women are not to serve as representative leaders of the church, namely, because they “should be subordinate” (1 Cor 14:34).

We have shown in Chapter 5 that the Pauline (Biblical) understanding of subordination is not demeaning but elevating. It signifies not servile dependence, but willing and loving response to the caring leadership of a husband (Eph 5:26-29). It is patterned after the subordination of the church to Christ. Some reject the analogy between the Christ-church model and the husband-wife model because, to quote Rosemary Reuther, it is a “hierarchical, dominance-submission model of marriage.”¹¹ What she fails to realize is that in the Christ-church model, the husband too is called to be subordinate, first to Christ and then to his wife by loving and caring for her sacrificially. The Biblical (Christological) model calls for a male-female partnership under the Lordship of Christ and the loving, sacrificial leadership of man.

The Danger of the Partnership Paradigm. The Biblical model of different and yet complementary roles of men and women in the home and in the church may well be a scandal to liberal and evangelical feminists bent on promoting the egalitarian, partnership paradigm. Nonetheless, Christians committed to the authority and wisdom of the Scriptures, cannot ignore or reject a most fundamental Biblical principle. To encourage the blurring or elimination of role distinctions God assigned to men and women in the home and in the church means not only to act contrary to His creational design, but also to accelerate the breakdown of the family and church structure.

Donald G. Bloesch, a well-known evangelical theologian inclined toward the ordination of women, acknowledges: “It cannot be denied that the women’s liberation movement, for all its solid gains, has done much to blur the distinctions between the sexes and that many women who have entered the ministry appear committed to the eradication of these distinctions.”¹² This trend, as Bloesch observes, “is in no small way responsible for accelerating divorce and the breakdown of the family.”¹³ Feminist ideologies are generally opposed to the sanctity of the family and to the worthiness of the call to motherhood. The reason is because such ideologies, as Michael Novak keenly observes, “thrive best where individuals stand innocent of the concrete demands of loyalty, responsibility, and common sense into which family life densely thrusts them.”¹⁴

To realize freedom from the constraints of motherhood, many evangelical feminists, like their liberal counterparts, denigrate the role of woman as homemaker and advocate abortion on demand. Donald Bloesch warns that “The fact that some clergywomen today in the mainline Protestant denominations are championing the cause of lesbianism (and a few are even practicing a lesbian life-style) should give the church pause in its rush to promote women’s liberation [and ordination].”¹⁵

An indication of the promotion of lesbianism as a legitimate “Christian life-style” is provided by the consultation on lesbian theology at the 1986 joint annual meeting of the prestigious American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature, held in Atlanta, November 22-25. Several papers were presented designed to articulate a theological rationale for the legitimacy of a lesbian life-style. In view of this alarming trend, today more than ever before, Christians are called to uphold the sexual role distinctions divinely ordained for men and women to fulfill in the home and in the church. The preservation of such distinctions provides a most needed bastion of common sense and an inoculation against all sort of nonsense ideologies which are intent on perverting and destroying God’s design for the harmonious relations of men and women in the home and in the church.

6. Practical Considerations

The first and fundamental reason for restricting the role of elder/pastor to men is theological and not biological or cultural. Our preceding discussion has shown that, from a Biblical perspective a woman cannot assume the representative role of spiritual father/shepherd of a congregation because that is a male and not a female role. The Scriptures give no right to blur or eliminate male and female role distinctions in either the home or the church. In addition, we believe that practical considerations support the Biblical instructions. These we shall now consider, though briefly, because they constitute secondary reasons.

Marriage and Pastoral Vows. Many of the women who seek ordination are married or planning to marry a man in another profession. This situation may invite tension in the church and discord in the home. In the home a woman pastor may find it difficult, if not impossible, to honor her marriage vows to serve her husband as wife and mother while the church demands so much of her time and attention. In the church, members may question the quality of pastoral care they receive from a female pastor who first must honor her commitment to nurture her own family.

In her book *Women and Church Leadership*, Margaret Howe, a supporter of women’s ordination, shares some of the responses she received from

a questionnaire she sent out to a number of woman pastors. One of the respondents, who was contemplating marriage, wrote: "I wonder how I can marry and maintain my current 60-64-hour week at my career."¹⁶ Another wrote: "We are ready to start our family, and I have had some anxieties about the congregation's reactions. It's really none of their business, but that's easier to say than feel."¹⁷ Still another, "There seem to be more crucifixion than resurrection experiences. I don't know if I can sustain this."¹⁸

Being a wife, mother and pastor at the same time raises many questions. How can she handle pregnancy and subsequent child care over an extended period of time? Should the church look for a substitute pastor while its female pastor is homebound? What model of parenthood does a woman project when she leaves her children in a day-care center in order to minister to her members? Should not her first obligation be to minister to her immediate family members? What if her husband is transferred to work in another part of the country? Should she let her husband go on his own? Would not this be a violation of her marriage vows to remain with him as long as both shall live?

Role Reversals. Another important consideration is the negative impact of the headship role of a female pastor both in her own family and on the families of the congregations. As Bishop Kirk points out, if the headship of the man in the congregation is rejected, his headship in the family will be gravely imperilled.¹⁹ The headship of a husband in his own family can hardly remain unaffected if his own wife serves as the head of the congregation to which he belongs. What impact will this role reversal have also on the families of the congregations? Will not this tempt at least some of the congregation to arrogate to themselves a position of headship in the family similar to the headship over her husband exercised in the church by their female pastor?

Even more crucial is the impact of the role modeling of a female pastor especially upon the children of divided families who have either no father or a non-Christian father. To these children the pastor becomes a father figure and sometimes the only positive male role model in their lives. A female pastor would deprive these children of an appropriate father role model.

Single Woman Pastor. The problem of role modeling for a woman pastor becomes even more critical when she is young and single. Male elders who are her seniors will have great difficulty to accept a single young lady in her twenties as their spiritual father and shepherd of the congregation. A male elder of a small Seventh-day Adventist church of about ninety members, where a young lady just out of seminary had been ordained as local elder, told me: "Our church has become a women's club. The few male members of our

church now seldom attend because with a female elder preaching most of the time, they feel out of place in church.”

Women also may have difficulty accepting a young female pastor as their spiritual shepherd. Two of the respondents to the questionnaire Margaret Howe sent out to female pastors offer an example: “One respondent reported that a woman in her congregation ‘said that it made her physically ill to see and hear a woman in the pulpit’! Another commented, ‘I also work with youth, and I find that many of the mothers wanted a ‘good-looking male’ minister for their kids.’”²⁰ Howe continues citing examples of members who could not bring themselves to give to their female pastor her correct title.

It must be most painful for a young female pastor to feel unaccepted as pastor by some of the members of the congregation she is endeavoring to minister to. If she lacks the support of a family, she may find it hard, if not impossible, to bear such a heavy burden in addition to her loneliness and vulnerability as a young female. This explains the reason for the Biblical instruction that an elder must be a mature man who manages well his own household (1 Tim 3:4).

Ministry of Women Today. The intent of the foregoing considerations is not to restrict women or to deny them opportunities to minister within the church, but rather to encourage respect for the different but complementary roles God has called men and women to fulfill in the home and in the church. God has given to women unique and invaluable gifts and ministries which are essential to the healthy growth of both the private family and the church family. The church that restricts the role of women to cleaning and cooking greatly impoverishes its own spiritual life by depriving itself of the warmth and love that only women can give.

The question ought not to be: *Is it legitimate to ordain women to the ministry?*, but rather: *To which ministry is it legitimate to appoint women?* In the concluding chapter I shall point out that there is an urgent need to open up new forms of ministry to professionally trained women who are willing to serve not only in the traditional roles of Bible Instructors, choir directors, children’s Sabbath School teachers, and deaconesses, but also in new roles such as health educators, pastoral counselors, instructors of new converts, and directors of family services. Such ministries are urgently needed in view of the growing number of broken homes, single parents, alienated and abused children, elderly members and drug-addicted young people.

The recognition of the Biblical validity and necessity of the ministry of women must not obscure the equally important Biblical truth of the role

distinctions of men and women in the home and in the church. Such distinctions call for men to serve as heads of the family and for some of them to serve as representative heads of the extended family, the church.

The church must be structured in a way that supports the structure of the family and the family must be structured in a way that supports the pattern of church order. To appoint a woman to serve as the representative spiritual father and shepherd of a congregation would be analogous to assigning her the role of fatherhood in a family. Both instances represent a violation of God's design for the well-functioning of our homes and churches.

PART II

THE PASTOR AS REPRESENTATIVE OF CHRIST

1. The Symbolic Role of the Pastor

Christ's Representative. The pastor serves not only as representative of the congregation, but also as Christ's representative to the congregation. In the Old Testament the priests functioned as the typological representatives of the redemptive ministry of Christ. The book of Hebrews explains at great length the typological correspondence between the ministry of the priests in the earthly sanctuary and that of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 8, 9, 10). By offering His own blood once, for ever and for all, Christ fulfilled and terminated the typological sacrificial ministry of Old Testament priests which pointed to His redemptive ministry (Heb 9:11-14; 10:1-14). Yet there is still a ministry of intercession and reconciliation which Christ, the heavenly High Priest, continues to perform on behalf of believers (Heb 7:25). The pastor, in a similar and yet different way from the Old Testament priests, serves as Christ's representative to the church.

The Protestant understanding of the representative role of the pastor differs from the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox view. According to the latter, the priest does not merely represent, but actually "presents the priesthood of Jesus Christ to the rest of the community"²¹ by reenacting through the eucharistic celebration the very sacrifice offered by Christ on the Cross. According to the Protestant tradition, however, the pastor *does not present* the priesthood and the sacrifice of Christ to the congregation, but rather *represents* Christ by serving symbolically as Christ's ambassador and shepherd to the congregation.

We have shown earlier that the sacramental view of the priest is devoid

of Biblical support. The role of the leader of the congregation (elder/overseer/pastor) is seen in the New Testament as being not a personification of Christ's priesthood and sacrifice, but a representation of Christ, the true Father, Shepherd, and Head of the church.

Indications of Representative Role. The representative role of the pastor is suggested, first of all, by Christ's calling, training, and commissioning of the twelve apostles to be His "witnesses" (Acts 1:8; Matt 28:18-20; Mark 3:14). As Christ is "the apostle and high priest of our confession" (Heb 3:1), that is, the one sent to represent the Father, so pastors are sent (*apostello*) to represent the Father and the Son to believers and unbelievers: "As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18).

Paul underscores the representative commission given to church leaders when he writes: "And he [God] has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:19-20, NIV). There is no question in Paul's mind that he was Christ's ambassador to believers and unbelievers. To the Galatians he wrote: "You welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself" (Gal 4:14).

Representative Shepherd. While every believer is Christ's ambassador and belongs to the "royal priesthood" (1 Pet 2:9; Ex 19:6; Deut 26:19), the pastor fulfills in a special sense the role of Christ's representative, as the under-shepherd of Christ's flock. Christ describes Himself as "the good shepherd" and His mission as gathering the sheep that are not of His fold, so that "there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (John 10:11, 14-16). To accomplish this mission, Christ commissioned Peter (and in a sense all those who function in the same role as church leaders) to feed the lambs and the sheep (John 21:15-17).

Christ's commission to His disciples to be the under-shepherds of His flock represents the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies regarding the future appointment of faithful shepherds: "I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, says the Lord" (Jer 23:4). "And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer 3:15; cf. Ezek 34:1-31).

The promise of true shepherds who would come to faithfully tend God's flock (not as hirelings—John 10:13) is fulfilled through the ministry of the apostles, elders, and overseers who serve as shepherds of Christ's flock (Acts 20:17, 28). Peter clearly describes the function of elders as shepherds of

God's flock, representing the chief Shepherd: "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet 5:1-4).

Heavenly Worship. In the worship service the pastor acts as representative not only of the congregation but also of Christ. As believers we hear the word, we are baptized and participate in the Lord's Supper, not

in an abstract, impersonal way, but rather in a personal way as the pastor ministers to us in Christ's name. The vision of the heavenly worship in Revelation 4 and 5 reflects the inner reality of the worship of the church. In that vision the central position is occupied by the Father and the Lamb who are surrounded by twenty-four elders, representing the twelve patriarchs of ancient Israel and the twelve apostles of the new Israel. This imagery implies that the pastor, as the leader of the worshiping community on earth, fulfills a representative role similar to that of the twenty-four elders in the heavenly worship.

The unique symbolic role a pastor is called to fulfill as representative of the heavenly Father, Shepherd, High Priest, and Head of the church cannot legitimately be fulfilled by a woman pastor, because her Scriptural role is not that of a father, shepherd, priest or head of the church. We have seen that these functional roles are associated in the Scriptures with the distinctive roles God has assigned men to fulfill. To appoint women to serve as elders/pastors means not only to violate a divine design, but also to adulterate the pastor's symbolic representation of God.

Danger of Changing Symbols. C. S. Lewis rightly warns that "We have no authority to take the living and seminal figures which God has painted on the canvas of our nature and shift them about as if they were mere geometrical figures."²² The sexual role distinctions, Lewis notes, go beyond physical appearance. They serve "to symbolize the hidden things of God."²³ Lewis warns that when we are in the church, "we are dealing with male and female not merely as facts of nature but as the live and awful shadows of realities utterly beyond our control and largely beyond our direct knowledge"²⁴

What this means is that the male role of father in the home and of the pastor as spiritual father in the household of faith (1 Cor 4:15) points to a much greater reality, "largely beyond our direct knowledge," namely, to that of the heavenly Father, the original and ultimate "Father" of the home, the church,

and the human family. Paul clearly expresses this connection in Ephesians 3:14-15: "For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom all fatherhood (*patria*) in heaven and on earth derives its name" (NIV, margin). The text suggests that all earthly fathers, whether biological fathers in the home or spiritual fathers in the church, reflect the image of the heavenly "Father," albeit in a human, creaturely way.

It is in no way derogatory to the female sex to affirm that an elder/pastor exercises fatherhood and not motherhood for God's family, because as E. L. Mascall observes, "his office is a participation in God's own relationship to his people and God is our Father in heaven and not our Mother."²⁵ The female sex has its own distinctive dignity and function, but it can hardly represent the Fatherhood of God to His people, a theme which is dominant in both the Old and the New Testaments. The reason is quite simple. The sexual and symbolic role of a woman is that of mother and not of father. To change the nature of the symbol means to distort the apprehension of the reality to which the symbol points. To put it simply, a woman who stands for motherhood cannot appropriately represent the Fatherhood of God in the home or in the extended family of faith, the church. To appreciate this point more fully, we need to consider the implications of the male imagery of God for the symbolic role of the pastor.

2. Male Imagery of the Godhead

Male Imagery. It is an accepted fact that God has revealed Himself in the Scriptures and through Jesus Christ predominantly in male terms and imagery. Obviously God transcends human sexual distinctions, yet He has chosen to reveal Himself predominantly and unmistakably through male terms and imagery.

God has revealed Himself as *Father* and not as *Mother*. He sent His *Son* and not His *Daughter*. Jesus spoke of the *Fatherhood* and not of the *Motherhood* of God. He appointed twelve *men* and not twelve *women* to act as His representatives. We pray "*Our Father*" and not "*Our Mother*" who art in heaven. Christ is the *new Adam* and not the *new Eve*. He is the *Bridegroom* and not the *Bride* of the Church.

To these can be added other Biblical expressions which depict Christ as Lord (Acts 2:36; Phil 2:11), Head (Eph 5:23), King (Luke 19:38), Lamb (Rev 5:12), Judge (Rev 19:11), Servant (Luke 22:27), all of which are unmistakably masculine. The reason why God has chosen this predominantly male imagery to reveal Himself is presumably because, as discussed earlier, the male role within the family and the church best represents the role that God Himself sustains toward us. We found a fitting example in Ephesians 3:14-

15 where Paul indicates that all forms of human fatherhood derive from and reflect the Fatherhood of God.

Resymbolizations of Godhead. Both liberal and evangelical feminists have long recognized the enormous significance of the correlation between the male imagery of the Godhead and the male role of the pastor/elder in the church, the latter being a reflection of the former. To them this correlation rightly constitutes a formidable stumbling block to the ordination of women. Consequently, with unshaken determination they are clamoring for a resymbolization of the Godhead, based on impersonal or feminine categories. This is seen as the first indispensable step to clear the path for a female priesthood.

To bring about a resymbolization of the Godhead, feminist theologians are employing several methods. Some are proposing dropping the personal terms for God, adopting instead nonpersonal or suprapersonal ones, such as “Fire, Light, Almighty, Divine Providence, Heavenly Parent, Cosmic Benefactor, Source of Sustenance.” Others advocate using terms denoting actions, such as “Savior, Creator, Comforter.” Others recommend addressing God as “Mother” or “Father-Mother,” and Christ as “Daughter” or “Son-Daughter.”²⁶

A growing number of feminists are urging that Christ be no longer thought of as “Son of the Father,” but rather as “Child of God.”²⁷ Moreover, as noted by Donald Bloesch, “They object to calling Christ ‘Lord’ and ‘Master,’ since these terms reflect a patriarchal vision. They offer instead the alternatives ‘Companion’ and ‘Friend,’ which denote a relationship of mutual fellowship and equality rather than superordination and subordination.”²⁸

Depersonalization of God. The results of the resymbolizations of God are, unintentionally perhaps, leading in two directions. On the one hand, God is reduced to an impersonal abstraction, light-years removed in transcendence. On the other hand, God is made into an androgynous Being with male-female characteristics: God/Goddess, Creator/Creatrix, Father/Mother. The latter augurs a return to fertility worship. The ultimate results of such efforts is not merely switching labels on the same product, but rather introducing new labels for an entirely different product.

Feminists who advocate changing the personal names of God from Father, King, and Lord, to impersonal abstractions as “Womb of Being,” “Immanent Mother,” “Life Force,” “Divine Generatrix,” or “Ground of Being,” are ending up with a God who is a far cry from the Biblical, personal God. To characterize God with nonpersonal, abstract terms means not only to deny the personal aspect of the three members of the Trinity, but also to

destroy the basis for a meaningful, personal relationship between God and human beings.

Martin Buber points out that “The great achievement of Israel is not to have taught the one true God, who is the only God, the source and end of all that is; it is to have shown that it was possible *in reality* to speak to Him, to say, “Thou” to Him, to stand upright before His face. . . . It was Israel who first understood and—much more—lived life as a dialogue between man and God.”²⁹

Ultimately, the tendency of feminist theologians to reduce God to impersonal abstractions leads to a depersonalized image of God to whom it is impossible to pray personally. As Deborah Belonic states it, “To exchange a personal God for imagery of *qualities* of God leads to inadequate conceptions of God and depersonalization of both God and humanity.”³⁰

In a discouraging report of the Evangelical Women’s Caucus which met in Saratoga Springs, New York (June 1980), Deborah Barackman complains about “the cavalier way the revealed names of God were treated in the desire to eliminate gender-specific language. There seemed little awareness that excision of titles such as “Father,” “Son,” and “King” does violence to his personal, Trinitarian, authoritative, and majestic nature. Though God “is spirit and not a man,” to shift gender titles also confuses the relationships in such overarching scriptural metaphors as Israel as God’s wife.”³¹

Feminization of God. Equally dangerous is the effort of some feminist theologians to make God into a female deity or to exalt Mary to a creative and redemptive role. Elizabeth Stanton, an early feminist (1895), argues that “the first step in the elevation of woman to her true position is . . . the recognition by the rising generation of an ideal Heavenly Mother, to whom their prayers should be addressed, as well as to a Father.”³² To achieve this objective Durwood Foster believe that Christians can receive much help from Eastern thought, specifically “from the mood and intuition of Sri Aurobindo Ghose in his meditation on God as the Mother.” He continues saying, “It is still an open question as to whether the figure of Mary may not have a more exalted role in the Christian vision—not only as co-redemptrix but also as co-creatrix.”³³

This unbiblical and heretical exaltation of Mary as co-redeemer and co-creator is developed more fully by Mary Daly in her book *Beyond God the Father*. She views Mary’s virginity as the symbol of woman’s completeness and autonomy from man and favors Mary over Jesus as the redemptive symbol for women.³⁴ The desire to promote the sexual equality of women and their ordination to the priesthood leads Mary Daly to deny the deity of Christ

and to offer a female counterpart in the person of Mary, both of which are heresy. Susan Foh correctly observes that authors such as Mary Daly (Stanton, Foster, Reuther, Soelle) “began with the presupposition that the Bible is an important but not the final authority and that women must be made equal to men in every respect, no matter what.”³⁵

An Androgynous God? Equally alarming is the effort to make God into an androgynous Being, consisting of a male and a female counterpart or half male and half female (Father-Mother). This view is totally foreign to the revelation that God has given of Himself in Scripture. Elaine Pagel correctly points out that “Unlike many of his contemporaries among the deities of the ancient Near East, the God of Israel shares his power with no female divinity, nor is he the divine Husband or Lover of any. He scarcely can be characterized in any but masculine epithets: King, Lord, Master, Judge, and Father.”³⁶

Biblical faith envisions God not as the Mother Goddess of mythological religion or the Earth Mother of animistic cults but as the Sovereign Lord and Almighty Father who admits of no female counterpart. “The Judeo-Christian tradition,” writes James R. Edwards, “knows nothing of an androgynous Godhead; that is, God does not need a female counterpart to complete his identity. When a female counterpart is present, fertility worship, or neo-Baalism, lurks beneath”³⁷

3. God as Father and Son

God the Father. In Scripture God is presented not only in male imagery, but also female. In a few Biblical passages, for example, God is pictured in maternal terms.³⁸ Perhaps the most moving passage of all is found in Isaiah 49:15: “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you” (cf. Matt 23:37). The fact that in Scripture “God is like a father who pities his children (Ps 103:13) and a mother who cannot forget her sucking child (Is 49:15)”³⁹ has led some to conclude that God can be appropriately addressed as Father and/or Mother.⁴⁰

Paul Jewett is right in emphasizing that both paternal and maternal references to God are analogical in character, but is wrong in concluding that “both analogies are equally revelatory” of the inner being of God.⁴¹ There is a difference between God’s saying, “I am a father to Israel” (Jer 31:9) or Christ’s saying, “call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven” (Matt 23:9) and God’s saying, “I will cry out like a woman in travail” (Is 42:14) or “Can a woman forget her sucking child? . . . yet I will not forget you” (Is 49:15). The first set of statements describes the *person of*

God (God is our Father) while the second set of statements makes a comparison based on an *action of God* (God is like a crying or compassionate woman). The former identifies the person of God, the latter compares an action of God to an action performed by mothers.

God is the Father. The term “Father” is used in Scripture not only in a “figurative” sense to describe what God is like, but also in a “literal” sense to describe what God really is. As Hendrikus Berkhof points out, “God is not ‘as it were’ a Father; he is the Father from whom all fatherhood on earth is derived.”⁴²

Similarly Karl Barth observes: “No human father, but God alone, is properly, truly and primarily Father. No human father is the creator of his child, the controller of its destiny, or its savior from sin, guilt and death. No human father is by his word the source of its temporal and eternal life. In this proper, true and primary sense God—and He alone—is Father.”⁴³

The self-revelation of God as Father stands out especially in the teaching of Jesus. Joachim Jeremias, in his massive study of the Aramaic “Abba” (“Father”) used consistently by Christ, shows that in the extensive Jewish literature there is no evidence of the term “Father” being used by itself by an individual to address God.⁴⁴ In startling contrast to the prevailing custom of avoiding whenever possible the name of God out of reverence, Jesus not only called God “Father” but “Abba” (Mark 14:36), an Aramaic diminutive equivalent to our “daddy.” Such a familiarity with the Almighty and Holy One was sacrilegious for the Jews. “Jesus, however, not only addressed God with the warmth and security of a child addressing its father, but he taught his disciples to do the same (Gal 4:6).”⁴⁵

Implications of God’s Fatherhood. Why has God revealed Himself, especially through Jesus Christ, as our Father and not as our Mother? Some feminist theologians believe that the answer is to be found in the patriarchal culture of the time where the father was the head and ruler of the household. God, they say, adopted this culturally accepted analogy to reveal Himself. Since we no longer subscribe to such a patriarchal social structure and worldview, they claim that the analogy of God as “Mother” would be equally appropriate today.

This reasoning is not correct because although God has used the patriarchal imagery of a Father to reveal Himself, He transcends this imagery radically. As Karl Barth aptly puts it, “when Scripture calls God our Father, it adopts an analogy only to transcend it at once.”⁴⁶ Jesus’ revelation of God as “Abba” was not only counter-cultural, but also determinative for His self-

understanding as the Son of God and for the self-understanding of His followers as sons and daughters of God.

God has used the language of fatherhood to reveal Himself because such language contains an abiding truth about Himself which cannot lightly be dismissed. *Fatherhood preserves the Biblical principle of headship and subordination.* As our Father, God is the Creator and Controller of our lives and we are His subordinate children (James 1:17-18). If God were our Mother we would think of Her not as our Creator but as our Generatrix, that is, not as the one who created us out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), but as the one who generated us out of Herself. This shows, as Kallistos Ware states it, that “if we were to substitute a Mother Goddess for God the Father, we would not simply be altering a piece of incidental imagery, but we would be replacing Christianity with a new kind of religion.”⁴⁷

It is important to remember that the symbol of the Fatherhood of God was not created by the prophets or apostles out of their patriarchal culture, but was revealed and given to us by God Himself. “God as Father is God’s own witness to himself, not a mere human witness to God.”⁴⁸

Headship Role. To appreciate the implication of the Fatherhood of God, it is important to note the difference between fatherhood and motherhood. In Scripture both are similar in terms of compassion for his/her child (Is 49:15; Ps 103:13). The only difference is to be seen, as Susan Foh points out, in “their relationship to one another. The father is the head of the household; consequently, his wife must submit herself to him and reverence him (Eph 5:22-24, 33). It is the husband’s headship and the wife’s submission that makes it necessary to address God as Father, not Mother.”⁴⁹

The same principle applies, as we have shown, to the headship role that a pastor/elder fulfills in the extended family of God, the church. If one erases the Biblical distinction between the roles men and women are called to fulfill in the home and in the church, as many feminist theologians are seeking to do, then there is no longer any reason for maintaining the Fatherhood of God.

Feminists have well understood the connection between the Fatherhood of God and the male headship role in the home and in the church. Consequently, it is not surprising that some of them are endeavoring to remove the Fatherhood of God, calling it a cultural vestige of a patriarchal age. To do so, however, means to reject not only the revelation which God has given of Himself, but also His creational design for harmonious human relationships.

God the Son. Why did God become a man rather than a woman? As in the case of the Fatherhood of God, some feminists seek to account for the maleness of Christ primarily on the basis of culturally conditioned reasons. Scanzoni and Hardesty, for example, argue: “Given the setting of patriarchal Judaism, Jesus had to be male . . . Jewish women were kept in subjection and sometimes even seclusion. A female Messiah would have had little scriptural knowledge (according to the Talmud, the Torah should rather be burned than transmitted to a woman), and would not have been allowed to teach publicly in the synagogue, or have been believed if she had. And with her monthly “uncleanness” making her ritually impure for a fourth of the time, a female Messiah would have taken at least an extra year to complete God’s mission.”⁵⁰

Paul Jewett expresses concisely the same view: “the incarnation in the form of male humanity, though historically and culturally necessary, was not *theologically* necessary.”⁵¹ Is this true? Was Christ’s incarnation as a man determined primarily by cultural necessities? Would a female Christ have equally fulfilled the role of the second Adam, the head of the redeemed humanity (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22,45)? Would a female Christ have equally fulfilled such male messianic typologies as a prophet-like-Moses (Deut 18:15,18), a King-like-David (2 Sam 7:12,16), an Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Is 9:6), a suffering servant (Is 53), and a heavenly Son of Man (Dan 7:13-14)? It is hard to see how a female Christ could have fulfilled these male messianic typologies and become the new Adam, head of the Redeemed humanity.

Reasons for the Maleness of Christ. The typological correspondence between Adam and Christ can help us understand a major theological reason for the maleness of the incarnate Christ. Both Adam and Christ stand in Scripture as representative of fallen and redeemed humanity respectively: “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Rom 5:19). “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Cor 15:49).

The reason why Adam rather than Eve functions as the head and representative of the human race is not because of any moral or spiritual superiority, but simply because, as we have seen, God, by creating man first, established him as the head of humanity (1 Tim 2:13; 1 Cor 11:8).

The reason why God chose the man and not the woman to function as the head of humanity, of the home, and of the church, is not given in the Scriptures. We have argued repeatedly that it is not a question of superiority or inferiority but of complementary functional roles men and women have

been equipped by God to fulfill. Man was created to serve as father and head of the family and woman was created to serve as mother and nurturer of the family.

Being made a representative of humanity, Adam became “a type (*typos*) of the one who was to come” (Rom 5:14). Since God has assigned this representative, headship role to the male, Christ had to become incarnate as a man to be able to function as the representative and the head of the church (Eph 5:23). The male headship of Christ in the church becomes in turn the model for the headship of the husband in the home and the headship of male pastor/elder in the church.

In a sense the incarnation of God as a man reveals the importance that God attaches to the creational role distinctions assigned to men and women. It is only by blurring or eliminating such distinctions that one can deny the necessity of the fatherhood of God and of the maleness of Christ.

Susan Foh expresses the same conviction very clearly: “Those who deny the theological necessity of God incarnate as a man also reject those passages which teach any differences between men and women as culturally determined. As in the case of the fatherhood of God, these theologians first eliminate the distinctions Scripture makes between men and women; then they say there is no ultimate reason Christ came to earth as a male. If one believes, “I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent” and its theological justification, “For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Tim 2:12-14), to be true, then there is one obvious reason why Christ could not have been a woman.”⁵²

In the light of the foregoing considerations we conclude that while God’s mode of personal existence transcends male and female categories, through Jesus Christ He has revealed Himself supremely as Father, and He chose to incarnate Himself as a man. The male category used by God to reveal Himself as Father and as a male person through the incarnation of His Son, has great significance because it expresses the role that He sustains toward His creatures: Creator, Sustainer, and Savior. This role is the foundational analogy which serves as a model for the role men are called to fulfill as fathers in the home and as pastors/elders in the household of God: “For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth derives its name” (Eph 3:14-15; NIV, margin).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that the New Testament envisions the church as an extended family of believers in which the elder/pastor serves in dual representative roles: on the one hand as representative of the church members to God and on the other hand as God's representative to the church members.

Women cannot legitimately serve in such dual representative roles, not because they are any less capable than men of piety, zeal, learning, leadership or other aptitudes required to serve as a pastor, but simply because such roles are perceived in Scripture as being those of a spiritual father and not of a spiritual mother. To blur or eliminate the role distinctions God assigned to men and women in the home and in the church, means not only to act contrary to His creational design, but also to accelerate the breakdown of the family and church structure.

The pastor fulfills a unique symbolic role in the church as representative of the heavenly Father, Shepherd, High Priest, and Head of the church. A woman pastor cannot appropriately fulfill such a symbolic role because her Scriptural role is not that of a father, shepherd, priest or head of the church. Thus, to ordain women to serve as pastors/elders means not only to violate a divine design, but also to adulterate the pastor's symbolic representation of God.

The efforts of liberal and evangelical feminists to clear the path for a female priesthood by revising the language of God through the introduction of impersonal or feminine names for God is a most dangerous trend which, if allowed to prevail, will result in a new religion widely at variance with the Christian faith.

God has revealed Himself supremely as Father through His Son, Jesus Christ, who became a man and not a woman. We have seen that God's choice of these male categories to reveal Himself is most important. It tells us something about the role which He sustains toward us His children, namely, the role of an almighty, just, compassionate and caring Father. This role of the Heavenly Father functions as the foundational model for all forms of human fatherhood (Eph 3:14-15), whether it be that of the husband in the home or of the pastor in the church.

Christian fulfillment in the home and in the church is to be found not by blurring, eliminating or reversing gender roles, but by willingly respecting the distinctive roles assigned by the Creator to men and women. Elisabeth Elliot's fitting expression of this conviction will serve as an apt conclusion to this chapter: "Supreme authority in both the Church and the home has been

divinely vested in the male as the representative of Christ, who is the Head of the Church. It is in willing and glad submission rather than grudging capitulation that the woman in the Church (whether married or single) and the wife in the home find their fulfillment.”⁵³

ENDNOTES

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2. *The Order of Priesthood: Nine Commentaries on the Vatican Decree Inter Insignores* (Huntington, Indiana, 1978), p. 12.

3. *Pirqe Aboth* 3, 7.

4. This view is expressed by Hermann W. Beyer, “*Episcopos*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974), vol. 2, pp. 616-617; see also Raymond Brown, *Priest and Bishop, Biblical Reflections* (New York, 1970), pp. 77-78.

5. George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974), p. 533.

6. Joachim Jeremias, “*Poimen*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1973), vol. 6, p. 498.

7. Jerome D. Quinn, “Ordination in the Pastoral Epistles,” *Communio* 8 (Winter 1981): 368.

8. B. W. Powers, “Patterns of New Testament Ministry—1. Elders,” *The Churchman* 87, 3 (Autumn 1973): 175; see also Ed Glasscock, “The Husband of One Wife’ Requirements,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140 (July-September 1983): 250.

9. See James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981), p. 229; Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1979), p. 128.

10. David P. Scaer, “C. S. Lewis on Women Priests,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 44, 1 (January 1980): 58.

11. Rosemary Reuther, “The Other Side of Marriage,” *A. D. Magazine* 8, 6 (June 1979): 8-9.

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 13. *Ibid.*
 14. Michael Novak, "Man and Woman He Made Them," *Communio* 8 (Spring 1981) 248.
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 16. E. Margaret Howe, *Women and Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982), p. 205.
 17. *Ibid.*
 18. *Ibid.*
 19. Bishop Kirk, *Beauty and Bands* (London, 1955), pp. 179, 186.
 20. E. Margaret Howe (n. 16), p. 201.
 21. Deborah Belonick, "The Spirit of the Female Priesthood," in *Women and the Priesthood*, ed. Thomas Hopko (New York, 1983), p. 166. The author emphasizes that to be ordained a priest "means, by the mystery of the Spirit, to bear the presence of, not to *represent*, the priesthood of Jesus Christ at the altar and in all the sacraments of the Church" (*Ibid.*).
 22. C. S. Lewis, "Priestesses in the Church," in *God in the Dock*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1970), p. 238.
 23. *Ibid.*
 24. Cited in W. Andrew Hoffercker and John Timmerman, "Watchmen in the City: C. S. Lewis's View of Male and Female," *The Cresset* 41, 4 (February, 1978): 18.
 25. E. L. Mascall, "Women and the Priesthood of the Church," in *Why Not? Priesthood and the Ministry of Women*, eds. Michael Bruce and G. E. Duffield (Appleford, England, 1972), pp. 111-112.
 26. For a discussion of the resymbolization of the Godhead, see, Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward the Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston, 1973), pp. 69-70; Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse, "An Examination of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood in Terms of the Symbolism of the Eucharist," in *Women and Orders*, ed. Robert J. Heyer (New York, 1974), pp. 20-25. Alla Bozart-Campbell, *Womanpriest: A Personal Odyssey* (New York, 1978), pp. 214 ff.; Rosemary Radford Reuther, *New Woman/New*

Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation (New York, 1975), p. 65; Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty (n. 1), p. 21. The United Church of Christ has published a booklet recommending the adoption of alternative impersonal names for God, instead of the traditional trinitarian language. See *Inclusive Language Guidelines for Use and Study in the United Church of Christ* (St. Louis, 1980). For an incisive critique of feminist attempts to revise the language about God, see Erik Routley, "Sexist Language: A View from a Distance," *Worship* 53 (January 1979): 2-11; Donald G. Bloesch (n. 12), pp. 61-83.

27. A task-force report to the National Council of Churches recommends that Christ be called not "Son of God" but "Child of God." The same report urges avoiding the use of personal pronouns when referring to God. See *Newsweek* 95, 25 (June 23, 1980): 87; *The Christian Century* 97, 23 (July 2-9, 1980) 696.

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30. Deborah Belonick (n. 21), p. 156.

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33. A. Durwood Foster, "God and Women: Some Theses on Theology, Ethics, and Women's Lib," *Religion in Life* 42, (1973): 56.

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35. Susan T. Foh (n. 9), p. 149.

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40. Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty (n. 1), p. 20; Virginia Mollenkott, "A Challenge to Male Interpretation: Women and the Bible," *The Sojourners* 5, 2 (February 1976): 23-25; Paul K. Jewett (n. 39), p. 41; also Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975), p. 167.
41. Paul K. Jewett (n. 39), p. 41.
42. Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, tr. Sierd Woudstra (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979), p. 69.
43. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: Index Volume with Aids for Preachers*, eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh, 1977), p. 495.
44. See discussion in Gottlob Schrenk, "Pater," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1967), vol. 5, p. 985.
45. James R. Edwards (n. 37), p. 29.
46. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I, 1 (Edinburgh, 1963), p. 447.
47. Kallistos Ware, "Man, Woman, and the Priesthood of Christ," in Peter Moore, ed., *Man, Woman, and Priesthood* (London, 1978), p. 84.
48. Donald G. Bloesch (n. 12), p. 77.
49. Susan T. Foh (n. 9), p. 153.

Chapter 8

RETROSPECT

AND

PROSPECT

The preceding chapters have surveyed the religious role of women in the Old and New Testaments. We shall now review some of the main conclusions reached and then consider their implications for the role of women in the church today. Thus, the chapter divides into two parts: retrospect and prospect.

PART I

RETROSPECT

The underlying assumption of much of the literature surveyed seems to be that the only way a woman can realistically minister within the church is by being officially ordained as elder or pastor. This mistaken, unbiblical assumption must be regarded as the bitter fruit of the medieval clericalization of the church, which has traditionally limited the ministry within the church almost exclusively to ordained priests.

To correct this reprehensible situation, it is necessary to recover the Biblical vision of the church as the “body of Christ,” consisting of different members, each fulfilling different but essential ministries (1 Cor 12:12-31; Eph 4:11-16). Our investigation has shown that while Scripture precludes the ordination of women to serve as priests in the Old Testament and as elders/pastors in the New Testament, it does provide ample support for their participation in the prophetic, liturgical, and social ministries of the church.

1. The Ministry of Women

Old Testament. We observed in Chapter 1 that women played a vital role in the private and public religious life of ancient Israel. As full members of the covenant community, women participated in the study and teaching of the law to their children, in offering prayers and vows to God, in ministering at the entrance of the sanctuary, in singing, and in the prophetic ministry of exhortation and guidance. The roles of Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah exemplify the important ministry that women fulfilled within the religious life of ancient Israel.

The religious roles of women, however, were different from those of men, since women were excluded from the priesthood. The reason for this exclusion was not, as is widely held, their frequent ritual impurity caused by their monthly menstrual flow. We have seen that the emission of semen defiled men with more frequency and with less predictability than the menstrual flow in women. Instead, the reason is to be found in the recognition of the headship role which man, as the “firstborn” of the human family, was appointed by God to fulfill in the home and in public worship. This principle is implied in the creation story of Genesis 2 and is upheld in both the Old and New Testaments.

New Testament. We noted in Chapter 2 that the apostolic church stands in marked contrast to the restrictions imposed on women by Jewish culture. Contrary to prevailing prejudices against them, Jesus admitted women into His fellowship and taught them the truths of God’s kingdom. On their part, women responded positively to Christ. A group of them ministered to Christ’s physical needs, and followed Him during much of His travels, even to the very place of His crucifixion. Their devotion to Christ was rewarded by the risen Lord who first appeared to them and commissioned them to break the news of His resurrection to the disciples.

In spite of His revolutionary treatment of women, Jesus did not choose women as apostles nor did He commission them to preach the gospel. We have shown that the reason for this omission was not a concession on the part of Christ to the social conventions of His time, but rather compliance with the role distinctions for men and women established at creation.

The apostolic church followed the pattern established by Christ by including women as integral members in the life and expanding mission of the church. Women served with distinction within the church by organizing charitable service for the needy, by sharing their faith with others, by working

as “fellow-workers” alongside the apostles and by sharing in the prophetic ministry of edification, encouragement and consolation. In spite of the various vital ministries women performed in the church, there are no indications in the New Testament that they were ever ordained to serve as elders/overseers/pastors.

2. The Ordination of Women

Why were women able to participate equally with men in various religious ministries and yet were excluded from the appointive roles of priest in the Old Testament and of elder/bishop/pastor in the New Testament? Our investigation has shown that the reasons were not sociocultural but rather theological. For the sake of clarity we shall briefly summarize seven main reasons that have emerged in the course of our study for the exclusion of women from the priesthood or pastoral office.

Order of Creation. A first and fundamental reason is suggested by the order and manner of the creation of Adam and Eve which in Scripture are seen as typifying the distinctive, but complementary roles God assigned to men and women. We observed in Chapter 3 that though man and woman are equally created in the image of God (Gen 1:27), they are sexually different: male and female. The equality and difference is clarified in Genesis 2 in terms of sameness and submission. Man and woman are essentially the same because they share the same human flesh and complement one another. Yet woman is functionally subordinated to man as indicated by the typological significance of the priority of Adam’s formation, the woman’s creation from and for man, the bearing by man of the name of mankind, and the naming by man of the animals and of the woman herself.

The headship role of man in the creation account of Genesis 2 is in no way intended to support a chauvinistic view of male superiority. Its intent is rather to explain that there is a basic difference between male and female which derives from the very order of creation. This difference is not merely sexual, but extends to the differing, though complementary, roles men and women are called to fulfill in the family and in the church. Thus the difference is functional, not ontological; that is, it is a matter of different roles and not of inferiority or superiority.

We have seen that Paul attaches fundamental importance to the order and manner of the creation of Adam and Eve, defending the functional submission of woman to the leadership of man both in the home and in the church (1 Tim 2:13; 1 Cor 11:8-9). He bases his instructions concerning the role of women in the church, not on the consequences of the Fall described in Genesis 3, but on the pre-Fall order of creation presented in Genesis 1 and 2.

Order of Redemption. A second reason for viewing the ordination of women as unbiblical is the implications of the order of redemption examined in Chapter 4. We observed that Christ's coming has greatly affected the social relationship of men and women, but has not changed or eliminated role differences between them. Jesus' teachings and attitude toward women brought about a significant change in their social status. This change made it possible for women to be treated with the same "brotherly love" as men and to participate actively in the life and mission of the church. There is no indication, however, that Jesus' elevation of the human dignity and worth of women was ever intended to pave the way for their ordination as pastors of the flock. Christ's exclusive choice of men as apostles indicates His respect for the role differences between men and women established at creation.

Like Christ, Paul was revolutionary in proclaiming the oneness and equality in Christ of all believers (Gal 3:28; Col 3:9-11; 1 Cor 12:12-13). Yet, like Christ, Paul did not eliminate the role distinctions of men and women established at creation. Our study of Galatians 3:28 has shown that Paul envisions all believers as being one in Christ, in whom all racial, social and gender distinctions no longer have any validity.

However, being one in Christ does not change a Jew into a Gentile or a man into a woman; rather it changes the way each of these relate to each other. Equality and oneness in Christ do not imply role-interchangeability, but rather mutual respect and support for the distinctive but complementary roles God has assigned to men and women. These roles are not nullified but clarified by Christ's redemption and thus they should be reflected in the church. The order of redemption does not nullify, but sanctifies the order of creation.

Headship and Submission. A third reason for excluding women from serving as elders/pastors is the principle of headship and submission which we examined in Chapter 5. Ephesians 5:21-33 and 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 show that the principle of male headship in the home and in the church derives, not from illegitimate male efforts to dominate women, but from a legitimate order established by God. We have reached this conclusion first by ascertaining the meaning of "head," and then by examining Paul's application of the principle of male headship in marriage (Eph 5:21-33) and in the church (1 Cor 11:2-16).

We have seen that Paul uses the term "head" with the meaning of "authority, head over" and not of "source, origin." In Ephesians 5:21-33 Paul affirms the headship of man in marriage by appealing not to cultural customs, but to the Christological model of the relationship between Christ and the

church. By utilizing this model, Paul effectively clarifies the meaning of the husband's headship as loving and sacrificial leadership and the meaning of the wife's submission as willing response to a caring husband. For Paul, headship and submission do not connote superiority or inferiority, but order-in-service. The authority to which a woman subordinates herself is not so much that of her husband as that of the divine order to which both are subject.

In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Paul grounds the headship of man and the submission of woman in the church on the creational distinctions between men and women, distinctions which must be respected within the church. These distinctions were being challenged by emancipated Corinthian women who had concluded that their new position in Christ (1 Cor 4:8-10) granted them freedom to stop wearing a sign of submission to their husbands (head covering), especially at times of prayer and charismatic expression in the church service. Paul counteracts this trend by emphasizing the importance of respecting a custom which in his time helped to maintain the creational role distinctions.

The headship between man and woman is correlated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 to the headship between God and Christ: "The head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor 11:3). The latter refutes the charge that submission means inferiority because in the Trinity there is a headship among equals. Christ's submission to the authority and headship of His Father did not stifle His personality, but was the secret of His wisdom, power, and success. Similarly, a woman who accepts the leadership of a mature and caring man in the family or in the church will not feel unfulfilled, but rather will find the needed protection and support to exercise her God-given ministries.

The Role of Women in the Church. A fourth reason why women should not be appointed to serve as elders/pastors is the clear Pauline instruction on the matter found in 1 Timothy 2:9-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36. Our examination of these two passages in Chapter 6 has shown that the application of the headship-submission principle in the church requires that women not be appointed "to teach" (1 Tim 2:12) or "to speak" (1 Cor 14:34) authoritatively as the leader of the congregation. We have found that this Pauline instruction derives, not from the cultural conventions of his time which restricted the participation of women in public gathering, but rather from Paul's understanding of the creational order of male headship and female submission.

For Paul this creational order requires that women not be appointed to serve as representative shepherds of the flock. His reasons are not the

women's relative lack of education or their disorderly conduct, but rather the need to respect the distinctive roles for men and women established by God at creation. The theological nature of Paul's arguments leaves no room to make his instructions of only local and time-bound application.

The exclusion of women from teaching or speaking as the leader of the church in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 must not be construed to mean that Paul prohibited women from actively participating in the public worship and mission of the church. On the contrary, we have seen in chapter 2 that Paul commends a significant number of women for their outstanding ministry in and for the church. For Paul (and for the rest of Scripture) the question is not, Should women be appointed to minister in the church?, but rather, To which ministry should women be appointed? The answer given by Paul and the rest of Scripture is: *women should be appointed to any and all ministries which do not violate the creational role distinctions for men and women.*

The Symbolic Role of the Pastor. A fifth reason why only some men and no women should be ordained to serve as elders or pastors is the dual representative role that a pastor fulfills in the church. We have shown in Chapter 7 that the New Testament envisions the church as an extended family of believers in which the elder/pastor represents both church members to God and God to church members.

Women cannot legitimately serve in such dual representative roles, not because they are any less capable than men of piety, zeal, learning, leadership or any other qualities needed to serve as a pastor, but simply because such roles are perceived in Scripture as being that of a spiritual father and not of a spiritual mother.

We have seen in Chapter 7 that a pastor fulfills a unique symbolic role in the church as representative of the heavenly Father, Shepherd, High Priest, and Head of the Church. A woman pastor cannot appropriately fulfill such a symbolic role because her Scriptural role is not that of a father, shepherd, priest or head of the church. Thus, to ordain women to serve as elders/pastors means not only to violate a divine design, but also to adulterate the pastor's symbolic representation of God.

Male Imagery of God. A sixth reason for viewing the ordination of women as unbiblical and unwise is the predominant male imagery used in Scripture to reveal God. Obviously, God transcends human sexual distinctions, yet He has chosen to reveal Himself in Scripture and through Jesus Christ in predominantly and unmistakably male terms and imagery.

We have seen in Chapter 7 that, contrary to the prevailing custom which out of reverence avoided mentioning the name of God, Jesus taught His disciples to address God not only “Father,” but also “Abba,” an Aramaic family term equivalent to our “daddy.” The reason why God revealed Himself, especially and consistently through Jesus Christ, as our Father and not as our Mother, is primarily because Fatherhood preserves the Biblical principle of headship and submission and thus best represents the role that God Himself sustains toward us His children, namely, the role of an almighty, just, and caring Father. This role functions as the foundational model for all forms of human fatherhood (Eph 3:14-15), whether it be that of the husband in the home or of the pastor in the church.

Feminist theologians have long recognized the enormous significance of the connection between the Fatherhood of God and the male headship role in the home and in the church. For them this connection rightly represents a formidable stumbling block to the ordination of women. Consequently, they have been actively engaged in revising the language of God through the introduction of impersonal or feminine names for God. However, to worship God as “Fire, Light, Divine Providence,” or as “Mother, Daughter, Father-Mother, Son-Daughter,” means not only to destroy the personal relationship provided by the revelation of God as our “Father,” but also to fabricate a God who is totally different from the One of Biblical revelation.

No Principle, Precept or Example. A seventh reason for objecting to women’s ordination is the fact that Scripture, the church’s guide, provides no general principles, no specific precepts, and no examples that can support such a practice.

All the Biblical examples of ordination involve males. Scripture’s specific instructions, as we have seen in Chapter 7, unmistakably require that the overseer, elder, or priest be not merely a person but a *man* (Greek-*aner*—1 Tim 3:2; cf. Titus 1:6; Ex 29:8,9). And as noted in the course of our investigation, the Bible’s general principles preclude the ordination of women to serve as elders or pastors. Thus, the absence of biblical examples, precepts and principles for women’s ordination, should warn the church from venturing into this uncharted terrain.

Those who favor women’s ordination argue that women are just as competent and capable as men in the ministry. Few will dispute this assertion. But the issue, as we have seen, is not one of abilities or training, but one of God’s will as revealed in Scripture. Sometimes a woman might fulfill certain “fatherly” roles better than a particular man fulfills them, yet this does not change the fact that God has called women to be mothers and men to be fathers.

The real issue is not whether women are equally capable as men, but whether God has called women to serve as pastors, that is, as indicated by the meaning of the word, shepherds of a spiritual flock. The answer of Scripture, according to our investigation, is No, because the pastor's role is perceived in the New Testament as being that of a spiritual father and not of a spiritual mother. This does not mean that the church does not need spiritual mothers. The contrary is true. As a home without a mother lacks that tender, loving care that only mothers can give, so a church without spiritual mothers lacks that warmth, care, and compassion that spiritual mothers can best give. The conclusion, then, is that men and women are equally called by God to minister in the home and in the church, but in different and yet complementary roles. We shall now consider some of the ministries women are uniquely qualified to fulfill within the church.

PART II

PROSPECT

1. Pastor's Headship Role

No Job Description. How should the principles delineated in the course of this study be applied to the concrete tasks men and women are to perform in the church? In seeking to formulate an answer note should be taken of the fact that the New Testament offers no detailed listing of what constitutes appropriate "men's work" or "women's work" within marriage or within the church. Instead, we have found that the New Testament emphasizes the importance of respecting the principle of male headship and female submission in the home and in the church. This principle is derived from the order and manner of the creation of man and woman which typify the distinctive and yet complementary roles God has assigned to men and women.

We have noted that the New Testament defines the headship-submission principle in terms of the relationship between Christ and the church. This model does not spell out the specific tasks that headship and submission entail. It only suggests that male headship entails sacrificial, caring leadership and female submission willing response. The specific tasks associated with each role in the home and in the church will vary in different cultures. Consequently, we must be wary of "canonizing" certain job descriptions as exclusively male or female when Scripture does not do so. The most we can attempt to do is to submit some general guidelines.

Exercise of Headship. Before considering the supportive roles of women in the church, brief attention should be given to what the headship role

of a pastor entails. We observed in Chapter 5 that the biblical understanding of headship is leadership for the sake of building up others and not for self-advancement. Christ defines leadership as willingness to serve others (Matt 20:27). This model of leadership as servanthood has profound implications for the role of a pastor. It means, for example, that a pastor best exercises his leadership authority by delegating authority and responsibilities to men and women willing and competent to serve in any needed area.

Pastoral headship modelled after Christ will take into account the abilities of those who are called with the pastor to minister to the different physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of the congregation. This means that if a pastor is fortunate enough to have on his staff women—whether employed by the church or on a voluntary basis—able and willing to serve as health educators, Bible instructors, family counselors, treasurers, and directors of the various departments of the church (choir, Sabbath school, personal ministries, youth, community services, deaconess work, church school boards), he will foster their full and free use of their gifts. This should be seen not as abdication of a pastor's responsibilities but an effective fulfillment of his headship role in the church. In the body of Christ, the head motivates and activates all the members of the body (Eph 4:16).

2. Application of Women's Passages

Two Extremes. There is considerable confusion about what women can and cannot do in the church. The confusion is largely the result of two extreme interpretations and applications of those biblical passages which refer to the role of women in the church (1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:33-36; 1 Tim 2:11-14). On the one hand, some churches interpret these passages in the most restrictive way, making them forbid more than what they actually do. The result, as Susan Foh brings out, is that "some denominations have no female directors of Christian education or choir directors; and some individuals maintain that women cannot teach in colleges or hold any position, ecclesiastical or secular, where men obey their orders. Most of these churches have not compared women's silence in the church with singing in the choir; if it is brought to their attention, they may forbid women to sing."¹

On the other hand, there are churches, as we have observed in the course of our study, which explain away these same passages as culturally conditioned and time-bound, thus appointing women to serve in any capacity within the church, including the office of priest, elder or pastor.

Balanced Application. What is needed is a balanced understanding and application of the relevant passages (1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:33-36; 1 Tim 2:11-14), in the context of the overall teaching of Scripture on the role of

women in the church. Our study has shown that the intent of these passages is not to exclude women from active participation in the public worship and mission of the church, but only from the representative and authoritative role of leader (elder/overseer/pastor) of the congregation. Paul derives this restriction, not from the cultural conventions of his time, but from the distinctive roles for men and women established by God at creation. This restriction must not obscure the fact that Paul commends a considerable number of women who “labored side by side with [him] in the gospel” (Phil 4:3; cf. Rom 16:1-6, 12).

As in the apostolic church, so today women are called to serve within the church in many supportive roles which do not violate the creational role distinction. These supportive roles are vital to the healthy growth of the church and to the successful fulfillment of its mission. The few examples we shall now consider should be seen as illustrative rather than exhaustive.

3. Women’s Supportive Roles

Bible Instructors. The primary mission of the church is to communicate the Gospel in order to bring men and women into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ (Mark 16:15-16). From the inception of Christianity countless women through the centuries have shared in the mission of the church by laboring side by side with pastors “in the gospel” (Phil 4:3; cf. Rom 16:12). Like Priscilla (Acts 18:26), they have expounded on a personal basis the truths of the Gospel to earnest people. Only the records of heaven will one day tell the whole story of what a contribution dedicated women have made to the church through their gospel ministry.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been especially blessed by women who have answered God’s call by devoting their lives to imparting the knowledge of Scripture to groups, families and single persons, both at home and overseas. These women were called “Bible workers” until 1942 and since then “Bible Instructors.”²

Much of the credit for the outstanding contribution that female Bible workers have made in the Adventist church goes to Ellen White, a woman who over a period of seventy years of prophetic ministry guided the growth, administration, and mission of the church. Her vision for the ministry of women as Bible workers was revolutionary. Repeatedly she challenged women to dedicate themselves to the gospel ministry, by teaching the truths of Scripture to women and in families where the visit of men could give the appearance of evil.

She writes, for example, “There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry. In many respects they would do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God. . . . In many respects a woman can impart knowledge to her sisters that a man cannot. The cause would suffer great loss without this kind of labor. . . .³ There are women who are especially adapted for the work of giving Bible readings, and they are very successful in presenting the Word of God in its simplicity to others. . . .⁴ Women also should be chosen who can present the truth in a clear, intelligent, straightforward manner.”⁵

Right to Be Paid. Ellen White not only inspired women to serve as Bible workers, but also championed their right to be paid out of the tithe like ministers: “The tithe should go to those who labor in word and doctrine, be they men or women. . . . This question is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled it.”⁶

Apparently this question was not easily settled in the mind of church administrators, since Ellen White renewed her plea years later.⁷ When her plea was unheeded, as in the case of some ministers’ wives who received nothing for their full time service as Bible workers, she made the following statement: “These women give their whole time, and we are told that they receive nothing for their labors because their husbands receive wages. . . I will feel it my duty to create a fund from my tithe money to pay these women who are accomplishing just as essential work as the ministers are doing.”⁸

The challenge, counsel and example given by Ellen White have resulted in hundreds of women who, like Mary Walsh, Louise Kleuser and Ellen Curran, have made and are making an outstanding contribution to the growth of the church at home and abroad. None of these women, including Ellen White herself, were ever ordained as pastors. In fact, though Ellen White championed the right of women gospel workers to be paid by the church, she never championed their right to be ordained as pastors.⁹

Urgent Need Today. In spite of the outstanding contribution that female Bible Instructors have made to the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist church, their number has decreased in recent years. Currently, they represent less than 10% of the ministerial personnel of most conferences.¹⁰ Some of the causes for this decrease are examined by Rosalie Lee in Chapter 9. This trend should be of concern to church administrators responsible for the hiring of ministerial personnel, for three reasons. First, most pastors welcome a woman assistant who can help them both in the visitation of church members and in the preparation of new converts for baptism.

Second, with the increasing number of divorces, women can minister better than men in homes with women as a single parent. Third, the recent trend in church growth through small-groups, workshops, and a seminar-type of evangelism, requires professionally trained women more than ever before. They can lead out in discussion groups, in developing ideas for personal, spiritual growth and problem solving, and in training lay persons on how to conduct a seminar or to share Bible truths with others. Women who serve in this capacity, such as Bible Instructors or Associates in Pastoral Care in the Seventh-day Adventist church, do not violate the male headship principle delineated above, since they serve in a supportive role and not as the representative head, the pastor of the church.

Counseling Ministry. Another vital supportive ministry which women can legitimately and effectively fulfill within the church may be called “counseling ministry.” The increasing numbers of divorced women, unwed mothers, abused children, drug-addicted teenagers, and emotionally distressed persons, are challenging the church to offer a healing ministry through competent counselors. In some cases a woman trained in counseling skills can offer such counseling ministry. There are cases, however, which require specialized help. In such instances, women who have been professionally trained both theologically and psychologically can offer an invaluable ministry to the hurting people within and without the church.

Already in her time, before the added social problems caused by the sexual and drug revolution of our generation, Ellen White deeply felt the need for trained women counselors. She wrote: “I have so longed for women who could be educated to help our sisters rise from their discouragement and feel that they could do a work for the Lord.”¹¹

Women have been especially gifted by God with a greater sensitivity to human pain. A hurting child will more readily call for mother than for father. Blessed is the church that can count upon the supportive counseling ministry of a competent and mature spiritual mother who has ears to listen and a heart to feel the hurt of its members, and who ministers to them the healing balm of the grace of Christ.

Teaching Ministry. One of the most important supportive ministries in which women have served and are serving with distinction in the Seventh-day Adventist church is the teaching ministry. This ministry assumes many forms, from teaching cradle roll Sabbath School classes in a small local church, to teaching graduate classes at the university. All forms of Christian teaching, whether done in Sabbath School classes or university classes, should be seen as part of the ministry of the church to restore the image of God in human beings.

Though women have served and are serving with distinction in the various phases of the teaching ministry of the Adventist Church, there is an urgent need today for some women to enter into a specialized teaching ministry within the church. Such widespread problems today as stress, marital tensions, chemical dependency, eating disorders, and neglected children, require the special teaching ministry of qualified women who can teach how to live a healthy, happy and balanced life by God's grace. Since only very few large churches can hire professionally trained Christian health educators, marriage counselors, or dietitians, in most cases churches must rely on the voluntary service of the local talent.

It may not appear prestigious for a competent and mature woman to visit and help a young mother who is having problems training her children, or relating to her husband, or cooking nutritious meals, or simply keeping her home in order. Yet this teaching ministry by dedicated Christian women is not only urgently needed, but is of as great a value in the sight of God as the delivery of a sermon.

Ellen White emphasizes the need for this kind of ministry: "We greatly need consecrated women who, as messengers of mercy, shall visit the mothers and the children in their homes, and help them in the everyday household duties, if need be, before beginning to talk to them regarding the truth for this time. You will find that by this method you will have souls as the result of your ministry."¹²

4. Women in the Worship Service

Lord's Supper and Baptism. The New Testament presents no detailed instructions regarding the conduct of public worship. We observed that the only information it provides is that women participated in the worship assembly by praying and prophesying (1 Cor 11:4-5; Acts 21:9), but were excluded from serving as the representative head teachers and leaders of the congregation (1 Tim 2:11-14; 1 Cor 14:33-36). The headship function of the pastoral office involves the shepherding of the flock through the proclamation of the Word ("preach the word"—2 Tim 4:2; cf. 1 Tim 5:17) and the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matt 28: 19-20; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24).

Most Christian churches have acted on the principle that the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper belong together and consequently, as a general rule, they should be performed only by an ordained elder or pastor.¹³ The Seventh-day Adventist Church has upheld the same view. Referring to the elders of the apostolic church, Ellen White writes: "Having received the

commission from God and having the approbation of the church, they went forth baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and administering the ordinances of the Lord's house."¹⁴

The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* clearly establishes that both baptism and "the communion services must always be conducted by an ordained minister or by the elder himself. Only ordained ministers or ordained elders holding office are qualified to do this."¹⁵ The reason for this policy, though not stated in the *Church Manual*, is that the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper are seen as pertaining to the distinctive functions of the elder/pastor's office.

Women and Church Ordinances. Should a woman administer the ordinance of baptism and of the Lord's Supper? Until recently the answer in the Seventh-day Adventist church has been No, because women could not be ordained as local elders or pastors. However, the situation has changed as a result of the action taken in 1975 by the General Conference Committee which allows local churches to ordain women as local elders. This action, which authorized women ordained as local elders to preside at the Lord's Supper celebration, has been interpreted as supporting also the performance of baptism. In actual fact only in a few instances have ordained women performed baptisms.

About a year and a half after the first such baptisms occurred, the North American Division Committee adopted a new policy which specifically excludes baptizing and solemnizing marriages from the category of "authorized ministerial functions" for women in pastoral positions.¹⁶ That same year (1985), the General Conference Annual Council voted to counsel the North American Division to await a process of study and review, scheduled to culminate at the 1990 General Conference Session, before introducing any significant changes in policies affecting ministerial functions which relate to women.¹⁷ This policy has been respected by Seventh-day Adventist churches, with the exception of isolated cases.¹⁸

In light of this investigation we must regretfully admit that the 1975 General Conference action to allow for the ordination of women as local elders—notwithstanding its well-meaning intent—represents a clear violation of the Biblical principle which permits the appointment to the eldership of a church only to some men and to no women. We have found that this principle is grounded not on cultural conventions but on the creational role distinctions for men and women. No church or Christian committed to the normative authority of Scripture has the right to blur, eliminate, or reverse such role distinctions. As no church has the right to ordain a woman to be a

father instead of a mother in a family, so she has no right to ordain a woman to be an elder, that is a spiritual father in the extended family of believers, the household of God (1 Tim 3:15).

Reasons for Hope. Three factors give the present writer reason to hope that the Seventh-day Adventist church will eventually rescind the action taken at the 1975 Spring Meeting of the General Conference Committee, pertaining to the ordination of women as local elders.

First, such an action was based on an inadequate understanding of crucial Biblical passages and principles. Recent studies produced since 1975 by such evangelical scholars as James B. Hurley, Wayne Grudem, Susan Foh, Stephen Clark and Douglas Moo, in addition to the present one, provide a basis for a fuller Biblical understanding of the role of women in the church.

Second, the Biblical Research Institute, upon request of the General Conference, has commissioned a number of Adventist scholars to prepare papers on crucial aspects of this subject. This new investigation promises to help the Adventist church come to a clearer understanding of the Scriptural principles that should determine the role of women in the church.

Third, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is deeply committed to the normative authority of Scripture for defining beliefs and practices. Contrary to some churches which interpret the creation story as a mythological or allegorical expression of a creative process which extended over millions of years, the Seventh-day Adventist Church accepts as factual the account of the six days of creation. The observance of the Sabbath commandment is seen as a perpetual memorial to the perfection of God's original creation which included the formation of man and woman as equal in being and subordinate in function.

Since the ordination of women rests largely on the so-called "partnership paradigm" or "role interchangeability model" which negates the creational role distinctions of men and women, it is hard for the present writer to imagine that the Seventh-day Adventist Church would knowingly abandon her fundamental commitment to the integrity of the order of creation.

The action taken in 1975 to allow local Adventist churches to ordain women as elders was influenced more by sociological than theological considerations, as indicated by the papers prepared for and published by the Biblical Research Institute under the title *Symposium on the Role of Women in the Church*. Only 15 of the 190 pages of this symposium are devoted to an analysis of the Pauline passages¹⁹ and of the 15 only 5 pages deal even summarily with 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-36.²⁰ The

new ongoing investigation promises to give greater attention to these crucial passages.

Scripture Reading, Praying, Singing. While Scripture excludes women from the office of elder/pastor which entails the responsibility for the proclamation of the Word and the administration of church ordinances, it does not exclude them from praying, reading, or singing in public worship. We have seen that Paul presumes that women participated in public worship by praying and offering prophetic exhortations (1 Cor 11:5). The reading of the Scriptures belongs to the priesthood of every believer, men and women.

If women could prophesy in public worship, they should also have been able to read the message of the prophets. Moreover, since believers are exhorted to “admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Col 3:16), we can presume that both men and women participated in the worship service not only by praying and reading but also by singing. It is important to remember that singing the psalms was a form of reading them in the apostolic church. Since praying, reading the Scriptures and singing belongs not to the office of the elder/pastor but to the priesthood of every believer, women can legitimately perform these activities in public worship.

Addressing the Congregation. Should a woman be allowed to preach or lecture to the congregation on a particular subject in which she is an expert? The answer to this question, on the basis of our interpretation of the Pauline passages, is Yes, as long as the preaching or speaking in question does not place the woman in the office of the pastor. We have shown that Paul does not forbid all speaking or teaching by women, but only such teaching that would place a woman in a position of leader-teacher of the congregation.

There are women in the church who through their fine education and rich spiritual experience have much to contribute to the upbuilding of the church. They should be encouraged on appropriate occasions to present a message of guidance, encouragement, and exhortation to the congregation. Care should be taken, however, not to give the impression that a woman who speaks on some occasions from the pulpit is functioning as the appointive and representative pastor of the congregation. If this should happen, then she would be assuming a role which, as we have shown, is not in harmony with Scripture.

Teaching Adult Sabbath School Class. The same principle applies to the question of whether a woman should teach a regular adult Sabbath School class which includes men. In this case the role of the teacher, whether male or female, should be seen not as that of an official pastor, but rather as that of a leader or coordinator of a study group where believers are engaged in a

mutual sharing and teaching (Col 3:16). Directing and participating in a Bible study group falls within the bounds of the priesthood of all believers.

The major difference between what the Sabbath School teacher does and what the pastor does is the authority behind it. The pastor stands before the congregation as the one ordained to serve as the representative head and shepherd of the congregation; the Sabbath School teacher stands before the class as the one elected to lead out in the study and discussion of the lesson. To argue that the teaching done by a Sabbath School teacher in a class is the same as the preaching done by a pastor from the pulpit fails to recognize that the pastor, as we observed in Chapter 7, speaks officially as the appointed representative of the church and of God to the church, while the Sabbath School teacher speaks unofficially as a believer to believers. On account of this difference a woman can legitimately serve as a Sabbath School teacher but not as a pastor.

5. Final Recommendations

The conclusion of this investigation is that Scripture provides ample examples and indications both for the participation of women in the various vital ministries of the church and for their exclusion from the appointive, representative role of elder/pastor. The reason for this exclusion is based not on cultural conventions but on the theological truth that at creation God assigned distinctive and yet complementary roles to men and women in their relation to each other. These roles are not nullified but clarified by Christ's redemption and thus they should be reflected in the home and in the church. In light of this conclusion, we wish to respectfully submit for consideration the following seven recommendations:

1) Moratorium on Ordination of Women Elders. The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists should suspend the present policy which allows for the ordination of women as local church elders. The longer the present policy is allowed to remain in effect, the more difficult it will be to rectify it. Some feel that it is already too late for the Adventist church to stop the practice.

(2) Training of Bible Instructors. The Religion Departments of Seventh-day Adventist Colleges should develop a program particularly suited for the training of women as Bible Instructors since there is a most urgent need today for their ministry.²¹ The primary objective of such a program should be to develop skills in imparting the knowledge of the Word of God to individuals or groups and in counseling persons with problems. Those women who wish to develop their Bible teaching and counseling skills

more fully by attending the Theological Seminary should be encouraged to do so. On its part the Seminary should develop a program that can adequately meet this very objective.

(3) Hiring of Bible Instructors. Seventh-day Adventist conference administrators should budget each year for the hiring of a representative number of women Bible Instructors. Their personal ministry of Bible teaching and counseling in homes can be a key factor in the growth and nurture of the church. If the present failure of conferences to hire a representative number of Bible Instructors persists, the result will be a greater push for women's ordination as the only way for them to enter into the professional ministry of the church.

(4) Recognition of Ministry of Women. The church must recognize and encourage the vital ministries which women are fulfilling in the church as Sabbath School teachers, deaconesses, treasurers, welfare and youth leaders, Bible Instructors, musicians, missionaries, health educators, and counselors. All too often these and other vital ministries women render to the church are taken for granted. The only ministry that seems to count at times is that of the pastor. This mistaken perception needs to be corrected by encouraging a greater recognition of and appreciation for the various and vital ministries of women within the church.

(5) Uphold Role Distinctions. The Seventh-day Adventist Church should be committed to upholding the creational role distinctions for men and women not only in the church and in the home, but also in the social order. Underlying the issue of the ordination of women are efforts to radically change the structure of male and female relationships in the home, the church, and society at large. Adventists as well as Christians in general must be aware of the greater implications of the issue discussed. Eliminating role distinctions in the church means encouraging a restructuring of family life and of society according to an unbiblical, humanistic model, since the church illuminates society with its moral influence and principles.

Stephen Clark emphasizes the wider implications of the ordination of women: "A given rule, like that for the ordination of women, is part of a wider pattern of interlocking elements that have to do with how marriages are contracted, how families are formed, how boys and girls are taught to be men and women, how careers are pursued, and many other things. Changing one element in the pattern, such as sex roles, affects other elements in an adverse way because of the interlocking relationship among the elements."²²

(6) Encourage Jobs that Affirm Role Distinctions. The Seventh-day Adventist Church should encourage its members to look for jobs that affirm their roles as men and women. The tendency of our technological society is to assign jobs according to functional specifications rather than according to gender distinctions. For example, if a woman has good physical strength, she can be hired to load and unload baggage in airports (a common sight in the USA) or to dump garbage containers in a garbage truck. While circumstances may sometimes force a woman to take a job that requires her to compete with men in physical strength, in principle Christian women should seek occupations that affirm their femininity and womanly roles. This does not mean that Christians should become heavily involved in promoting men-women differences in the job market, but rather to encourage in a quiet way (1 Thess 4:11) whatever appropriate role differences can be maintained within our indiscriminating technological society.

(7) Resist Secular Pressures. Seventh-day Adventists must retain their commitment to the normative authority of Scripture by resisting those secular pressures which tend to undermine and eliminate Biblical principles and structures, such as the role relationship between men and women. To do otherwise can only lead to a gradual erosion of confidence in the authority of Scripture and in the unique mission of the church.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed the findings of our study of the Biblical teachings on the role of women in the church and has considered the application of our conclusions to the present role of women, especially within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Seven specific recommendations have been submitted for consideration by Adventist scholars, administrators and church members. While the applications and recommendations were addressed to the specific concerns of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is our hope that Christians of other churches may find some of these applicable to their own communions.

The nature of the subject has required that considerable attention be given to the principle of headship-submission in the man/woman relationship. This important principle should not be seen as an end in itself, but rather as a divine plan designed to ensure unity in diversity: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Cor 12:12-13). The reason why God gave different gifts and

functions to men and women is not so that we may spend our time arguing about who is the greatest in the kingdom. Rather, the reason is that men and women, as joint heirs of the gift of eternal life, may use their different gifts to build up the body of Christ and bring human beings with their many differences into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

This book has been written with the fervent hope and prayer that a clearer understanding of the Biblical teachings on the distinctive and yet complementary roles God has assigned to men and women will help not only Seventh-day Adventists, but all Christians committed to the authority of the Word of God, to become effective workers in the service of Christ who calls Jews and Gentiles, slave and free, male and female to be one in His service.

ENDNOTES

1. Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1979), p. 247.

2. This clarification is found in a note on page 456 of *Evangelism* by Ellen G. White (Washington, D.C., 1946).

3. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 43a, 1898, (Manuscript Release #330).

4. Ellen G. White (n.2), p. 469.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 472.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 492-493.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 492.

8. Ellen G. White, Letter 137, 1898 (Manuscript Release #959), pp. 1-2.

9. For a penetrating analysis of those statements adduced by some to argue for Ellen White's endorsement of women's ordination, see William Fagal, "Ellen White and the Role of Women in the Church," in Chapter 10 of this book.

10. The 1985 statistical report of the Lake Union Conference, which includes Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois and Lake Region Conferences, lists only 32 Bible Instructors.

11. Ellen G. White (n. 2), p. 461.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 459.

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13. See L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974), p. 631.
 14. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C., 1945), p. 101.
 15. *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, issued by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Revised 1986, p. 59.
 16. *1985 Annual Meeting, Actions Pertaining to the North American Division* (Washington, D.C., October 13-17, 1985), p. 72.
 17. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
 18. One case involves two persons baptized on December 20, 1986 at the Loma Linda University Church, by Margaret Hempe, Associate of Pastoral Care. The report which appeared in *The Sun* (December 27) quotes the pastoral staff as saying that the act was not intended to be “a radical challenge” to the policy of the Adventist church. Whatever the intent may have been, the fact remains that the act does represent a clear violation of an existing policy in the Adventist church. See, Steve Cooper, “First Baptism Brings Fulfillment to Woman Pastor,” *The Sun* (December 27, 1986). Since then, several other women have baptized and solemnized marriages.
 19. *Symposium on the Role of Women in the Church*, distributed by the Biblical Research Institute Committee, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, D.C., 1984), pp. 97-106 and pp. 129-135.
 20. *Ibid.*, pp. 129-134.
 21. The program for Bible Instructors developed and offered at Atlantic Union College might serve as a model for other colleges.
 22. Stephen B. Clark, “Social Order and Women’s Ordination,” *America* 134, 2 (January 17, 1976): 33.

Chapter 9

HEADSHIP, SUBMISSION, AND EQUALITY IN SCRIPTURE

Recently the question of whether women should be ordained to serve in the church in the headship role of elders and pastors has been hotly debated in many Christian churches. Some churches, like the Lutheran church, have actually been split over this issue. At the root of the controversy is one's understanding of the biblical teaching regarding headship, submission, and equality in male-female relationships. This fact is clearly recognized by the special pro-ordination committee set up by the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary to supervise the production of the symposium, a collection of chapters by different authors, called *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*. In the introduction to the part of the book dealing with "Perceived Impediments to Women in Ministry," the committee lists as the first of four "serious obstacles" to the ordination of women "the concept of the headship of all males over all females."¹

The symposium, made up mostly of teachers at the Seminary, attempts to overcome this "serious obstacle" by arguing that the role distinctions of male headship and female submission derive from the Fall (Gen 3:16) and that they apply exclusively to the home. In the church, women can serve in the headship positions of elders and pastors. The methodology used to construct this position consists primarily of two strategies. First, the Genesis passages (Gen 1:26-31; 2:18-25; 3:1-24) are interpreted in isolation from the rest of Scripture as teaching "perfect egalitarianism," that is, full equality with no role distinctions between Adam and Eve. Second, the crucial Pauline passages, which interpret the Genesis passages as prohibiting women from serving in a headship role in the church (1 Tim 2:11-15; 1 Cor 11:3-12; 14:34-36), are interpreted as temporary restrictions which apply exclusively to the home, or perhaps to problematic women who caused disorder in the church.

An Overview of the Assumptions of the Symposium

The fundamental assumption of the symposium is that the role distinctions of male headship and female submission were not divinely ordained at creation but were introduced after the Fall and are limited to the governance of the home, not to the community of faith. Thus, Christians are called to return to the creation ideal of “perfect equality,” understood as obliteration of gender-based role distinctions.

Before we examine the specific arguments used to construct this position, some general observations are in order regarding *Women in Ministry*'s perception of the problem and the moral implications of the position adopted by the contributors to the symposium.

First, we have already noted that the symposium sets out to examine “perceived impediments to women in ministry,” among which it lists “the concept of the headship of all males over all females.” Yet I have never seen this concept expressed in the Seventh-day Adventist church. It is certainly not the view of opponents of women's ordination known to me. *Women in Ministry* offered no references to books by Adventist authors which set forth such a view. By framing the issue in this extreme way and arguing against it, the book imputes to its opponents a view which they do not hold while failing to deal adequately with the views they do hold.

Further, by listing this view of headship as a “perceived impediment to women in ministry,” the book implies that those who do not share its views are opposed to women in ministry. In fact, the opposite is true, as I shall observe in more detail below. The authors of the book you are now reading believe that there is a significant place for women in ministry and a genuine need for their services. They believe that respect for the biblical view of roles and headship in the home and church does not prevent women from ministering, but channels their ministry into the areas where it may be most effective.

To turn next to the moral implications, *Women in Ministry*'s assumption that male headship and female submission reflect “God's plan for fallen human beings rather than an original mandate for the sinless world”² implies that functional role distinctions are intrinsically evil. But we must ask, Is this true? The answer is, Absolutely not! The most compelling proof is the fact that functional role distinctions exist within the Trinity itself! The Bible tells us that “the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3) and that the Son Himself “will be subjected to him [the Father]” for all eternity (1 Cor 14:28). If there is nothing morally wrong with functional distinctions within the Trinity, why is it morally wrong for functional distinctions to exist within male-female relationships?

This leads us to another observation, examining the assumption that male headship entails superiority and female submission inferiority—a subtle and deceptive assumption that underlies the whole symposium. We ask, do functional male-female role distinctions imply superiority and inferiority? Absolutely not! This is true in the Trinity and is also true in male-female relationships. In the Trinity the headship of the Father does not make the Son inferior. Christ Himself affirmed, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). In human relationships, male headship does not make women inferior because of their submissive roles. We “are all one in Christ,” and consequently there is no male superiority or female inferiority (Gal 3:28-29).

The fact that I am a man called by God to serve as the head of my family does not make me superior to my wife. In a certain sense she is “the boss,” because she has constantly reminded me through the years of my God-given responsibility to serve as the spiritual head of our home. Functional role distinctions have nothing to do with superiority or inferiority but only with the different—and complementary—roles God has called men and women to fulfill in the home and in the church.

The Real Issue

The real issue in the debate over women’s ordination is not whether men were created superior and women inferior. No Adventist scholar opposed to women’s ordination holds such a view. Rather, the real issue is whether God created men and women equal in nature and worth yet different in function, with the man called to serve in the servant headship role and the woman in the submissive helper role.

It is most unfortunate that the symposium fails to address this fundamental crucial issue, choosing instead arguments about superiority and inferiority—arguments that are foreign to the Bible and to the whole question of women’s ordination.

Those of us who for biblical reasons oppose the ordination of women to the headship roles of elders and pastors are often thought to be trying to deprive women of the opportunity to minister in the church. Nothing could be further from the truth. We strongly believe that if ever there were a time when the ministry of women in the church was needed, it is today. The many broken homes, single parents, and abused children inside and outside the church call today more than ever for the ministry of women who have been trained theologically and psychologically to meet such situations.

Simply stated, the issue is not whether women should minister in the church. On this point we are all in full agreement. Rather the issue is, should women serve in the headship roles of elders and pastors? The answer of

Scripture is abundantly clear. In both the Old and New Testaments women were precluded from serving as priests, elders, and pastors, not because they were inferior or less capable than men, but because these offices entail the headship role of a spiritual father and not the supportive role of a spiritual mother. This does not mean that the church has no need of spiritual mothers. The contrary is true. As a home without a mother lacks the tender, loving care that only mothers can give, so a church without spiritual mothers lacks the warmth, care, and compassion that spiritual mothers can best give. Summing up, the biblical teaching is that men and women are equally called by God to minister in the home and in the church, but in different, complementary roles.

A Review of the Pivotal Chapter

This review focuses on the fundamental issue of “Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture,” which is examined in chapter 13 of *Women in Ministry*. The chapter’s author chairs the Old Testament department at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Over the years I have learned to respect him, not only for his outstanding scholarship but also for his commitment to the Lord. Though I must differ with what he has written in this chapter, I intend no negative reflection on his scholarship as a whole or on his personal character. In several of my books I have quoted extensively from his writings. My review here is limited to the chapter under consideration. It examines exclusively the chapter’s methodology and arguments, with no intent to question its author’s sincerity or integrity.

The *Women in Ministry* chapter offers a reinterpretation of the biblical data relating to the headship-submission pattern in attempting to provide a biblical justification for the ordination of women. This chapter is fundamental to the whole symposium. The author himself acknowledges that a definition of the biblical teaching on headship-submission is “foundational to determining whether or not women should be ordained as elders and pastors in the church.”³

In many ways the whole symposium *Women in Ministry* stands or falls on this chapter’s interpretation of the biblical teaching on headship and submission in male-female relationships, because the other nineteen chapters are built upon the premises laid down in chapter 13. If the conclusions of this chapter are found to be based on a misinterpretation of the biblical data, then much of the work set forth by the other contributors collapses for the lack of an adequate biblical foundation. In view of the foundational importance of this chapter, we must closely examine the methodology the author used to reach his conclusions.

The Chapter's Conclusions

It may be helpful at the outset to state the *Women in Ministry* chapter's conclusions. Fortunately, they are expressed with enviable clarity at the end. "Before the Fall there was full equality with no headship-submission in the relationship between Adam and Eve (Gen 2:24). But after the Fall, according to Genesis 3:16, the husband was given a servant headship role to preserve the harmony of the home, while at the same time the model of equal partnership was still set forth as the ideal. This post-Fall prescription of husband headship and wife submission was limited to the husband-wife relationship. In the divine revelation throughout the rest of the Old Testament and the New Testament witness, servant headship and voluntary submission on the part of husband and wife, respectively, are affirmed, but these are *never* broadened to the covenant community in such a way as to prohibit women from taking positions of leadership, including headship positions over men."⁴

Simply stated, our author believes the Bible to teach that before the Fall there was perfect equality with no functional distinctions between the man and the woman. The role distinctions of husband-headship and wife-submission originated as a result of the Fall (Gen 3:16), and they apply exclusively to the home. Consequently, in the church women can serve even in "headship positions over men" without violating a biblical principle.

Can these conclusions be drawn legitimately from the Bible? Are functional role distinctions between men and women a post-Fall phenomenon, applying exclusively to the home and not to the church? My study shows otherwise. Both male-female equality *and* role distinctions, properly defined, are part of God's creational design for the harmonious functioning of humanity. God created the man and the woman perfectly equal in their moral worth and spiritual status but clearly distinct in their biological and functional roles. In the partnership of these two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, God created man to function in the servant-headship role of husband and father, and woman to function in the submissive role of wife and mother. These distinctive roles apply equally to both the home and the church, because from a biblical perspective the church is an extended spiritual family, often referred to as "the household of God" (Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 4:17; Gal 6:10).

To determine which of the two paradigms rightly interprets the biblical data, we must begin our investigation with Genesis 1 to 3. The author acknowledges that these Bible chapters are foundational for defining the role relationships of men and women.⁵ The three passages of Genesis which are central for our understanding of the relationships between man and woman are

(1) Genesis 1:26-31, the creation of the human race; (2) Genesis 2:18-25, the creation of woman; and (3) Genesis 3:1-24, the story of the Fall and its consequences. Let us examine what each passage says.

PART I

GENESIS 1: MALE AND FEMALE

1. Equal, Yet Different Before the Fall

Genesis 1:26-31 contains three key statements: (1) God created mankind in His own image and likeness; (2) God created mankind as male and female; (3) God gave mankind dominion over all the living things with power to increase and multiply, that is, to become a race. These three statements embody two vital concepts, equality in being and differentiation in gender.

Equal Yet Different. Equality is suggested by the fact that both man and woman were created in the image of God. Genesis 1:26-27 says, “Then God said: ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” “Man” is mentioned twice here and refers inclusively to man and woman. This is indicated first by the Hebrew word for “man” (*’adam*) which can be translated as “mankind, humanity”: “Let us make mankind in our own image.” The second indication is the plural “them,” which points to “man” as being a plurality consisting of both man and woman. The fact that Genesis 1:26-27 moves back and forth three times between the singular “man” and the plural “them” clearly indicates that the term “man” is used collectively to refer to both man and woman.

Genesis 1:27 corroborates this conclusion. The statement, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him,” is clarified by the following statement, “male and female he created them.” From these data, our *Women in Ministry* chapter argues that “the equal pairing of male *and* female in parallel with *ha’adam* [man] in this verse [shows that] there is no hint of ontological or functional superiority-inferiority or headship-submission between male and female. . . . Both participate equally in the image of God.”⁶

The conclusion that the “pairing of male *and* female in parallel with *ha’adam* [man]” excludes any hint of a headship-submission distinction between male and female ignores two important considerations. First, equality must not obscure the sexual differentiation which is made unavoidably clear in this passage: “male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). The two sexes are part of God’s original purpose for the human race and both are good.

Both men and women are essential to the proper functioning of the human race. Denying or perverting sexual differentiation is a rejection of the order established at creation and is condemned in the Bible as “abomination” (Deut 22:5; Rom 1:26-27).

Genesis 1 does not say much about the roles of men and women. It simply affirms that man and woman are equally created in the image of God but are sexually different. The implications of the gender distinctions are explained subsequently in the Bible, beginning with Genesis 2.

The second important consideration is the fact God designated both the male and the female as “man—*ha’adam*.” We see this again in Genesis 5:2, where the word *man* denotes both male and female: “He created them male and female; at the time they were created, *he blessed them and called them ‘man.’*”

Paul’s Use of Genesis 1:26-27. Supporting the above conclusion is Paul’s use of the terms “image” and “glory” in 1 Corinthians 11:7 in his discussion of the manner in which men and women ought to participate in public worship.

Paul alludes to Genesis 1:26-27 when he writes, “For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man” (1 Cor 11:7). Paul is not implying that a woman reflects the image of God to a lesser degree than does man. The focus of his discussion is not the personal dignity or worth of men and women implied in Genesis 1:26-28, but rather the headship of man in marriage and worship implied in Genesis 2:18-23. Paul refers specifically to the man’s headship in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9. It is in this context that man images God and that woman does not. It is obvious that women bear God’s image in *other senses*, as Paul himself recognizes in Ephesians 4:24, where he speaks of all believers as being renewed according to God’s image in terms of “righteousness and holiness” (cf. Col 3:10).

Paul is careful in 1 Corinthians 11:7 not to say that the woman is man’s image. Rather he says that “woman is the glory of man.” The language of Genesis 1:26-27 in the Septuagint is “image” (*eikon*) and “likeness” (*homoïoma*) and not image and glory (*doxa*). Thus Paul’s use of the term “glory” is significant. To understand its meaning we must note that Paul uses “glory” in the context of the relation of man to God and of woman to man. Man images God and gives Him glory by being submissive to Him and by being a loving, self-sacrificing head (Eph 5:25-29). The wife is the glory of her husband in the way she honors his headship by her life and attitude. This meaning is well expressed in the Septuagint version of Proverbs 11:16, which says, “A gracious wife brings glory to her husband” (cf. Prov 12:4).

What is significant about Paul's use of "image" and "glory" is the fact that he interprets Genesis 1:26-27 in the light of Genesis 2 to explain why the woman is the glory of man, namely, because she was created from and for man and not vice versa (1 Cor 11:8-9). All of this shows that Paul understood the image of God in man and woman mentioned in Genesis 1:26-27, not in the light of the egalitarian model but in terms of the functional distinctions mentioned in Genesis 2:20-22.

In light of these considerations we conclude that Genesis 1:26-27 does affirm male-female equality, but that it also alludes to male headship by twice calling the human race, "man—*ha'adam*" rather than "woman." Furthermore, by differentiating between man as "the image and glory of God" and woman as the "glory of man," Paul shows that the equality between men and women implied by Genesis 1:26-27 does not negate their functional distinction implied in Genesis 2:18-23.

PART II

GENESIS 2: EQUALITY AND SUBMISSION

Genesis 2 expands on the creation of mankind covered in Genesis 1:26-31. While Genesis 1 affirms that God created mankind as male and female in His own image, Genesis 2 elaborates on how the two sexes were created and on the relationship between them. God first created man from the dust and breathed into him the breath of life (Gen 2:7). He stationed man in the Garden of Eden to develop it and guard it (Gen 2:15). He instructed man to eat of every tree except of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16-17).

God paraded the animals before Adam for him to name (Gen 2:19, 20). This task entailed more than slapping an arbitrary label on each beast. It required considering the characteristics of each animal so that its name was appropriate to its particular nature. From this exercise Adam discovered that there was no creature that shared *his* nature (Gen 2:20). God, who even before He brought the animals to Adam had evidently already planned to create a "helper fit for him" (v. 18), now proceeded to create the woman from Adam's rib (Gen 2:21-22). Adam greeted Eve with rhapsodic relief, acknowledging her as part of his own flesh and calling her "Wo man" because she was taken out of Man (Gen 2:23).

In her equality with himself, Adam perceived Eve not as a threat but as a partner capable of fulfilling his inner longing. God blessed the blissful union, saying, "Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). The creation account closes with a reminder of the perfection in which Adam and Eve first came together: "And

the man and his wife were both naked and they were not ashamed” (Gen 2:25). They felt no shame because they had nothing to hide. They lived together in perfect integrity and harmony.

Although the narrative focuses on the sameness of nature and the partnership between man and woman, within that equality and partnership there exists a clear sense of the woman’s submission to man. We use the term “submission” here not with negative connotations of oppression, denigration, or inferiority, but in the positive sense of depending upon another person for direction and protection and to ensure unity and harmony.

Four main elements of the narrative suggest a distinction between the headship role of man and the helper role of woman: (1) the priority of man’s creation (Gen 2:7, 22), (2) the manner of the woman’s creation out of man (Gen 2:21-22), (3) the woman’s having been created to be man’s “helper” (Gen 2:18-20), and (4) man’s naming of the woman both before and after the Fall (Gen 2:23; 3:20). Our *Women in Ministry* author examines each of these elements but contends that none of them support the headship-submission distinctions between the man and the woman. Is this right? Let us analyze the arguments.

1. The Priority of Man’s Creation

Man Created First. Does the fact that Adam was made first reflect God’s plan that man should serve in a leadership role in the home and the church? The answer offered in the chapter we are considering is No! It says, “A careful examination of the literary structure of Genesis reveals that such a conclusion does not follow.”⁷ It argues that the entire account of Genesis 2 “is cast in the form of an *inclusio* or ‘ring construction,’ in which the creation of man at the beginning of the narrative and that of woman at the end correspond to each other in importance. . . . The movement in Genesis 2, if anything, is not from superior to inferior, but from incompleteness to completeness. Woman is created as the climax, the culmination of the story. She is the crowning work of Creation.”⁸

The fundamental problem with this interpretation is that it ignores details of the narrative as well as the meaning the Bible itself attaches to the priority of Adam’s creation. To say, for example, that “the movement in Genesis 2, if anything, is not from superior to inferior, but from incompleteness to completeness,” ignores first of all that the point at issue in our discussions is not superiority versus inferiority (I know of no scholar today who argues that man was created superior to woman), but equality versus functional distinction. Superiority is a non-issue.

Further, role distinctions don't imply inferiority! There are three Beings in the Godhead who are equal in glory and in being but who differ in function. The Father leads, the Son submits to Him, and the Spirit submits to both. These role distinctions do not negate the fact that the three Persons are fully equal in divinity, power, and glory. The Son submits to the Father, but not because He is inferior, a kind of junior God. The ranking within the Trinity is part of the sublime "equal yet different" paradox that serves as a paradigm for male-female relationships.

The narrative does indeed suggest that the creation of woman is "the climax and culmination of the story" because in her, man found *at last* the "helper fit for him" (Gen 2:20). This is evident by Adam's explanation: "This *at last* is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Gen 2:23). The movement of the narrative is indeed "from incompleteness to completeness," but it is Adam who experiences the process of becoming complete as a result of Eve's creation, and not the other way around. But the woman's creation as the climax and culmination of the narrative does not necessarily imply that there are no functional distinctions between man and woman, for we have already noted that at least in the process of producing children there are very clear distinctions.

Paul's Interpretation of the Order of Creation. Paul's interpretation of the creation of man and woman is the most decisive line of evidence that discredits the attempt to deny headship significance in the priority of Adam's creation. It is unfortunate that our *Women in Ministry* author interprets the critical passages in Genesis 1 to 3 in isolation without taking into account the inspired commentary provided by Paul. Doing this is typical of higher criticism, but not of responsible Seventh-day Adventist scholarship nor of the author's work in other areas.

We should note that later in his chapter the author briefly discusses what Paul says about headship and submission, but he makes no attempt to explain Paul's appeal to the order of Eve's creation. Instead, he merely argues that such passages refer to the role of women in the home and not in the church. But even the editor of the symposium appears not to be persuaded. She observes, "The text [1 Tim 2:11] seems to be discussing attitudes in worship rather than marriage relationship."⁹

Paul appeals to the order of the creation of Adam and Eve to justify his injunction that a woman should not be permitted "to teach or have authority over a man" (1 Tim 2:12 NIV). He writes, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" (1 Tim 2:13-14 NIV). In the Greek, the order of Adam and Eve's creation is strongly marked by "*protos*, first" Adam and "*eita*, then" Eve.

The logic of this passage (1 Tim 2:13-14) and of the parallel one in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9, where Paul speaks of the manner of the woman's creation out of man and not vice versa, is abundantly clear. Paul saw in the priority of Adam's creation and in the manner of Eve's creation a clear indication of the headship role God intended man to exercise in the home and in the church. The fact that the woman was created after man, out of man, and as his helper, meant to Paul that God intends the woman to fulfill a submissive role in relation to man. In the church, this role is violated if a woman teaches in a headship position or exercises authority over a man.

By rooting the headship-submission principle in the order of creation rather than in the consequences of the Fall, Paul shows that he views such a principle as a creational design and not the product of the curse. Contrary to *Women in Ministry's* argument that headship and submission are the consequences of the Fall, Paul grounds such a principle in the pre-Fall order of creation described in Genesis 2.

The local circumstances of the Christian congregations in Ephesus and Corinth may have provided the *context* of Paul's injunction, but they do not provide the *reason*. Paul's reason is *creational, not cultural*. This is a most important consideration, one that makes Paul's injunction relevant for us today. It is unfortunate that pro-ordinationists choose to ignore the *creational reason* given by Paul for not permitting a woman to teach in the church as the head of the congregation.

The Meaning of "First-Born." To some it may appear arbitrary and irrational that headship should be assigned on the basis of priority of creation. From a biblical standpoint, however, the arbitrariness and irrationality disappear, because the priority of creation represents not an accident but a divine design, intended to typify the leadership role man was created to fulfill. This typological understanding is reflected in the meaning that both the Old and New Testaments attach to primogeniture (being the firstborn). The firstborn son inherited not only a "double portion" of his father's goods, but also the responsibility of acting as the leader of worship upon his father's death.

Paul uses the typological meaning of the firstborn also to refer to Christ in Colossians 1:15-18: "He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation; for in him all things were created. . . . He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent." The rich imagery of this passage presents Christ as (1) the Image of God, (2) the Firstborn, (3) the Source of Creation, (4) the Head of the church. All of these are drawn together to establish the preeminent authority of Christ over everything.

This use of the “firstborn” typology to express the headship and authority of Christ suggests that Paul attached the same meaning to Adam’s being “first formed.” In light of the Old Testament background, Paul saw in the priority of Adam’s formation a type of the headship God called man to fulfill, and thus, a reason why men, rather than women, should teach in a headship, authoritative position in the church.

2. The Manner of the Woman’s Creation out of Man

Genesis 2 suggests the principle of headship and submission not only by the order of creation of Adam and Eve, but also by the manner of their creation. God created man first and then made woman out of his rib (Gen 2:21-22). He did not make Adam and Eve from the ground at the same time and for one another without distinction. Neither did God create the woman first and then man *from* the woman and *for* the woman. God could just as easily have created the woman first and made man out of Eve’s rib, but He did not. Why? Most likely because that would have obscured the distinction between the male-headship and the female-submission roles that God wanted to make clear.

Our *Women in Ministry* author rejects the possibility that the woman’s derivation from Adam implies submission. He argues that “derivation does not imply submission. Adam also was ‘derived’ from the ground (v. 7), but certainly we are not to conclude that the ground was his superior. Again, woman is *not* Adam’s rib. The raw material, not woman, was taken out of man, just as the raw material of man was ‘taken’ (Gen 3:19, 23) out of the ground. . . . As the man was asleep while God created woman, man had no active part in the creation of woman that might allow him to claim to be her superior or head.”¹⁰

These arguments are based on invalid reasoning. First of all, they ignore the biblical distinction between Adam and the ground from which he was formed. The ground could never be Adam’s superior because it is inanimate matter given to man to cultivate. To compare Adam with the ground is worse than comparing apples with oranges, because there is no similarity of nature and function between the two.

Second, the fact that Adam was asleep when God created woman is irrelevant, because male headship is not based on Adam’s part in Eve’s creation but on God’s assigned roles revealed in the order and manner of the first couple’s creation.

Third, the different ways God created man and woman are closely related to the different tasks they are called to fulfill. This point is well expressed by Werner Neuer: “The man is formed from the soil, whose

cultivation is entrusted to him by God (Gen 2:15; 3:17), while the woman is created quite differently, out of man's rib, to be his helper. This is her God-given task in life (Gen 2:18). The appointed tasks of the sexes are as basically different as the ways in which they were created by God. Their different modes of creation are intimately related to their tasks in life. It is worth noting that Genesis 2 and 3 in their own language make clear the very different world-outlooks of the sexes. . . . While the man has an immediate relationship to the world of things, the woman is primarily directed to the world of persons (i.e., in the first instance to her husband)."¹¹

Lastly, the notion that "man had no active part in the creation of woman that might allow him to claim to be her superior or head" again reflects the subtle and deceptive assumption that headship implies superiority—a concept that is foreign to the Bible and to the issue of women's ordination.

Equality and Oneness. We cannot know all the reasons why God created the woman from Adam's body instead of making her as a separate creation from the dust like Adam. However, three possible reasons stand out. First, creating the woman from man's rib suggests the sameness of nature between man and woman. Adam could acknowledge that the woman was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (Gen 2:23). Her creation from his rib suggests 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."¹²

Second, the human race, including the first woman, derives from the same source, Adam, who is the head and representative of humanity (Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:22).

Third, woman's creation from man establishes the basis for the one-flesh principle in marriage (Gen 2:24; 1 Cor 7:4), a principle that rests on a real biological and historical foundation.

Paul's Interpretation of the Manner of Creation. The decisive line of evidence that undermines our author's interpretation of Genesis 2:21-22 is the inspired Scripture's own interpretation of the passage. In 1 Corinthians 11:8 Paul defends his call for women to respect the headship of man by appealing to the manner of the woman's creation: "For man was not made from woman, but woman from man." For Paul the *order* and *manner* of the creation of Adam and Eve are the theological foundation of the headship-submission principle. In biblical thought origin and authority are interrelated (see Col 1:15-18). A child must respect the authority of his parents because he derives from

them. In Adam's historical situation Eve derived from him in the sense that God formed her from his body. Thus, Adam was her "source" to whom she owed due respect.

This line of reasoning, though present in Hebrew thought, is not explicit in Genesis 2. What is explicit there is that God entrusted Adam with certain responsibilities. He named first the animals (Gen 2:19-20) and then the woman herself, both before and after the Fall (Gen 2:23; 3:20). By this act Adam exercised the leadership role assigned him by God. Man was also instructed by God regarding the forbidden tree and was apparently held responsible for passing on the information to his wife (Gen 2:16-17). After the Fall, God held man accountable for the original transgression (Gen 3:9). In light of these facts, Paul's terse remark that the woman was taken "out of" the man represents a faithful interpretation of Genesis 2 and a legitimate theological reason for the apostle to call upon women to respect the headship role of men.

3. The Woman Created to Be Man's "Helper"

Genesis 2 further suggests the principle of headship and submission by the central role of man in the account of the woman's creation. God created man first and provided him with a garden, an occupation, and finally a wife to be "a helper (*'ezer*) fit for him" (Gen 2:18). Though the word "helper" suggests the woman's supportive role, our author rejects this interpretation. Instead, he argues that the Hebrew word *'ezer* (helper) does not imply submission because "The Hebrew Bible most frequently employs *'ezer* to describe a superior helper—God Himself as the 'helper' of Israel. This is a relational term describing a beneficial relationship, but in itself does not specify position or rank, either superiority or inferiority."¹³

It is true that the word "helper" in itself, whether in Hebrew or in English, does not necessarily imply submission. But the meaning of a word cannot be determined without consideration of its context. In this case the word occurs within the phrase which says that God created woman to be a helper fit for man. "If one human being is created to be the helper of another human being," as George W. Knight rightly notes, "the one who receives such a helper has a certain authority over the helper."¹⁴ This does not mean that woman exists solely for the sake of helping man, but rather that she is a helper who corresponds to man because she is of the same nature.

The Old Testament does portray God as our Helper (Ps 10:14; 54:4; 22:11). This only serves to prove that the helper role is a glorious one, worthy even of God Himself. But this fact does not exclude submission, because the very nature of a helping role presupposes submission. Whenever God undertakes to help us, in a certain sense He subordinates Himself to us. But

this does not “undo” His deity in helping us. To help us Christ emptied Himself and assumed a servant role, but this did not make Him any less God. The difference, however, between the helping role of God or of Christ and that of the woman is that while God assumes the role of Helper to meet human needs, Eve was created specifically to function as a helper suitable for Adam.

Corresponding Helper. The author seeks support for his interpretation in the adjoining word *k^enegdo*, usually translated as “fit for him” or “suitable for him.” He writes: “The word *neged* conveys the idea of “in front of” or “counterpart,” and a literal translation of *k^enegdo* is thus ‘like his counterpart, corresponding to him.’ Used with ‘ezer [helper], the term indicates no less than equality: Eve is Adam’s ‘benefactor-helper,’ one who in position is ‘corresponding to him,’ ‘his counterpart, his complement.’”¹⁵

The attempt to transform the word *neged* which denotes “in front of” or “counterpart,” into a “benefactor-helper” role for Eve, is ingenious but is based on invalid reasoning. What Raymond Ortlund correctly observes in regard to alleged superiority applies also to the allegation of equality: “If *neged* means ‘superior to [or equal, in our case]’, then what are we to make of, say, Psalm 119:168? ‘All my ways are before (*neged*) you.’ Is the psalmist saying ‘All my ways are superior [or equal] to you Lord’? Not only is that an unbiblical notion, [but] the whole burden of Psalm 119 is the excellency and authority of the law over the psalmist. The *neged* element in *k^enegdo* merely conveys the idea of direct proximity or anteposition. The woman, therefore, is a helper corresponding to the man.”¹⁶

The woman’s creation *from* man and *for* him (“a helper fit for him,” Gen 2:18) suggests a functional dependency and submission. As Gerhard von Rad points out, Genesis describes the woman not in romantic terms as a companion to man, but in pragmatic terms as a “helper” to him.¹⁷ Bible writers speak of human relationships with a certain practicality.

Like many others, our author rejects the notion of a functional submission of woman to man in Genesis 2. He argues that in Eden before the Fall there was a perfect 50-50 partnership between husband and wife. He sees God as having introduced the notion of the headship of man and the submission of woman as part of the curse. This raises an important moral question to be examined later: Why would God establish role distinctions after the Fall if He knew such distinctions to be (as feminists claim) morally wrong? And, we might add, why did God assign the headship role to man rather than to the woman (Gen 3:16)?

This view, which finds no submission before the Fall, stems from a negative evaluation of all forms of submission and especially that of woman

to man. This conviction has led our author and others to interpret all the Scriptural references to submission as reflecting the post-Fall condition. The strongest objection to this view is that submission, as we have seen, is present in Genesis 2, that is, before the Fall (described in Gen 3). We have seen that Paul calls upon women to be submissive to the headship role of man, not on the basis of the curse but on the basis of the order and manner of God's creation.

Paul's Interpretation of "Helper Role." The decisive factor against *Women in Ministry's* interpretation of the phrase "helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18) is Paul's allusion to this text in 1 Corinthians 11:9: "Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man." Paul makes this statement in the context of his admonition that women should respect male headship in the church by covering their heads according to the custom of the time. The head covering was a *custom* (1 Cor 11:13-15) subservient to the *principle* of male headship (1 Cor 11:3). While the principle is permanent, its application will vary in different cultures.

Significantly, Paul alludes to Genesis 2:18 to buttress his admonition to women to respect male headship, but he does so without using the phrase "helper fit for him." Instead he gives his own interpretation of this phrase, namely, that woman was created for man and not the other way around. There is no doubt in Paul's mind as to the meaning of "helper fit for him." He did not have to dissect *k^enegdo* in order to come up with an interpretation. The apostle states unequivocally the plain meaning of the phrase "helper fit for him," namely, that woman was created for the sake of man. If woman was created for man's sake, that is, to help him in the tasks God gave him, then it follows that her helping role is a submissive one.

To avoid possible misunderstandings, we must note that Genesis 2:18 and Paul's interpretation of it in 1 Corinthians 11:9 do not say that woman was made to be man's slave or plaything; they say rather that she was made to meet man's need for a fitting companion and fellow-worker. When men view their wives as less than God-given helpers, they are unfaithful not only to the teaching of Genesis but also to the example of Christ's servant headship, which is the model for husband-wife relationships (Eph 5:23-30).

The foregoing considerations show the fundamental importance Paul attached to the order and manner of the creation of Adam and Eve as found in Genesis 2. For Paul, the creational order constitutes the theological basis requiring that women not serve in a headship role in the church. Such a role would not accord with the submissive, helping role God envisaged for woman at creation. To reject Paul's interpretation of Genesis 2 means to reject the internal witness of the Bible.

4. Man Names the Woman both Before and After the Fall

Genesis 2 indicates the principle of headship and submission still further by the fact that God entrusted man with naming not only the animals (Gen 2:19-20), but also the woman herself, both before and after the Fall (Gen 2:23; 3:20). In the Bible, name-giving often indicates authority. God exercises this prerogative by naming things He created and by later giving new names to such people as Abraham and Jacob (Gen 17:5; 35:10).

Giving a name is more than labeling. It is, as Gerhard von Rad puts it, “an act of appropriate ordering, by which man intellectually objectifies the creatures for himself.”¹⁸ God entrusted man with the responsibility of naming the animals to help him comprehend their characteristics and the environment surrounding him. Naming expressed an assessment of each creature’s character (Gen 2:19).

“God was not waiting to see what sounds Adam would associate with each animal,” James Hurley observes. “The prerogative of assigning them names reflects control. He was allowing his vicegerent to express his understanding of and to exercise his rule over the animals by assigning them names. Adam does so, and demonstrates his control: ‘whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name’ (Gen 2:19)”¹⁹ In naming the animals Adam fulfills part of his commission to subdue the earth (Gen 2:18), which consists not only in transforming it physically, but also in comprehending it intellectually. It is significant that Adam, not Eve, is entrusted with naming the animal kingdom. This was to enable man not only to comprehend his environment, but to lead him to realize his need for a “helper fit for him” (Gen 2:18).

When Adam discovered that there was no animal suitable to be his companion, God proceeded to fashion a woman from his own body. In his reaction to the creation of woman, Adam revealed not only his joyful astonishment but also his intellectual understanding of the nature of male and female: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man” (Gen 2:23).

Note that God does not introduce the woman to man, nor does she introduce herself. Adam himself grasps the new situation. In designating her “Woman” Adam defines her identity in relationship to himself. He interprets her as feminine, unlike himself and yet his counterpart. He sees her as part of his own flesh. He defines the woman not only for his own understanding of her but also for her self-understanding. Adam’s defining of the woman is in keeping with the headship responsibility God entrusted to him.

“Adam’s sovereign act [of naming the woman] not only arose out of his own sense of headship, it also made his headship clear to Eve. She found her own identity in relation to the man as his equal and helper *by the man’s definition*. Both Adam and Eve understood the paradox of their relationship [equal and yet different] from the start.”²⁰ Adam’s responsibility to serve as God’s subordinate ruler continues after the Fall. In Genesis 3:20, Adam assigns the woman a new name which reflects God’s promise that, despite their transgression, the woman would bring forth children to continue the race (Gen 3:15-16). “The man called his wife’s name Eve [*Hawwah*, life-giving], because she was the mother of all living” (Gen 3:20).

There is no indication that Adam’s assigning of a personal name to the woman after the Fall was any different from what he did originally in giving her a class name after her creation. In both instances the man exercised his headship responsibilities. By the first name, “woman—’*ishshah*,” Adam defined the woman’s *nature* as “taken out of man” (Gen 2:23); by the second name “Eve—*Hawwah*,” Adam defined her *function* as “the mother of the living” (Gen 3:20). Both naming acts were in keeping with Adam’s headship responsibilities.

The Author’s Interpretation. Rejecting this interpretation, our author argues that although “assigning names in Scripture often does signify authority over the one named, . . . such is not the case in Genesis 2:23.”²¹ The first reason he gives is that “the word ‘woman’ (*’ishshah*) is not a personal name but a generic identification. This is verified in verse 24, which indicates that a man is to cleave to his *’ishshah* (‘wife’) and further substantiated in Genesis 3:20, which explicitly records man’s naming of Eve only after the Fall.”²²

This argument has three major problems. First, while indeed the word “woman” is not a personal name but a “generic identification,” this does not diminish the responsible role of Adam in giving her a class name. Such a name was designed to define who she was in relationship to himself at the moment of her creation. By giving Eve a class name Adam fulfilled the role assigned him by God to name all the living creatures according to their characteristics. We do not know what language was spoken in Eden. In Hebrew the name for woman, *’ishshah*, sounds very much like the name for man, *’ish*. A pun of sorts may have been intended.

The reason given for assigning Eve such a class name is “because she was taken out of man” (Gen 2:23). This explanation suggests that Adam called Eve *’ishshah*, woman, because he realized that she was indeed his own kind, from his own body.

Second, while Genesis 2:24 “indicates that a man is to cleave to his *’ishshah* (‘wife’),” this does not minimize the headship role of man. The function of this text is to affirm man’s responsibility to form a committed marital relationship. This commitment involves *leaving* father and mother and *cleaving* to his wife. In both instances it is man who is called upon to take the initiative and responsibility to form a committed marital union. The use of the “generic” class name *’ishshah* (wife/woman), rather than a personal name, reflects the general principle stated in the text that man is to cleave to his wife.

Lastly, Adam’s assigning the personal name “Eve” to his wife after the Fall (Gen 3:20) only serves to reconfirm his headship role. After Eve’s creation, Adam gave her a *class name* to define her identity in relationship to himself. After the Fall, Adam gave her the *personal name* “Eve” to define her role as “the mother of the living” (Gen 3:20). In both instances Adam acts in keeping with his headship responsibilities by defining the woman’s nature and function.

The second reason the author gives for rejecting any headship role in man’s naming of the woman in Genesis 2:23 is his claim that this text “contains a pairing of ‘divine passives,’ indicating that the designation of ‘woman’ comes *from God*, not man. Just as woman ‘was taken out of man’ *by God*, with which man had nothing to do, so she ‘shall be called woman,’ a designation originating in God and not man.”²³

Assuming for the sake of argument that the designation of “woman” originates from God and not from man, does this negate the headship role of man? Hardly so! Why? Because Adam would then be using a term coined by God Himself to define the woman’s derivation from himself. In this case, Adam exercised his authority by using a divinely coined term to define the woman’s relationship to himself. However one looks at it, Adam is involved in naming Eve before and after the Fall, simply because this is part of his God-assigned headship role.

Are Submission and Equality Contradictory? Most feminists today view the principle of equality in nature and submission in function, which is present in Genesis 2, as a contradiction in terms. For example, Scanzoni and Hardesty write, “Many Christians thus speak of a wife’s being equal to her husband in personhood, but subordinate in function. However, this is just playing word games and is a contradiction in terms. Equality and subordination are contradictions.”²⁴

The claim that equality and subordination are an unacceptable contradiction fails to recognize that such an apparent contradiction exists in our

Savior Himself. On the one hand Christ says, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30) and “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9), and on the other hand He states, “I can do nothing on my own authority; . . . I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me” (John 5:30) and “the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). Christ is fully God (John 1:1; Col 1:15-20) and yet “the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3; cf. 15:28).

The submission in Genesis 2 is similar to the one that exists in the Godhead between Father and Son. In fact, Paul appeals to the latter model to explain in what sense a husband is the head of a wife, namely, as God is the head of Christ (1 Cor 11:3). This is a unique kind of submission that makes one person out of two. Man is called to be the head of a one-flesh relationship. Submission in Scripture does not connote subservience, as commonly understood, but willing response and loving assistance.

Susan T. Foh aptly remarks, “We know only the arbitrariness, the domination, the arrogance that even the best boss/underling relationship has. But in Eden, it was different. It really was. The man and the woman knew each other as equals, both in the image of God, and thus each with a personal relationship to God. Neither doubted the worth of the other nor of him/herself. Each was to perform his/her task in a different way, the man as the head and the woman as his helper. They operated as truly one flesh, one person. In one body does the rib rebel against or envy the head?”²⁵

PART III

GENESIS 3: SIN AND SUBORDINATION

1. Distortion of Creation

The first two chapters of Genesis present God’s creation as He intended it to be. We have seen that God built male headship (not male domination) and female submission into the glorious pre-Fall order of creation. The third chapter of Genesis describes the disruption and distortion of creation brought about by the Fall. Our purpose here is to analyze briefly how the Fall affected the relationship between man and woman.

Genesis 3 is a crucial chapter for understanding what went wrong with God’s original perfect creation. If human life started out in Edenic bliss, how do we account for the pain, sorrow, conflicts, and death that afflict mankind today? Genesis 3 explains their origin and gives us hope for God’s provision of redemption and ultimate restoration.

Much of the chapter consists of what might be called a trial, in which God interrogates Adam and Eve, establishes their guilt, and pronounces punishment over the serpent, the ground, the woman, and the man. Of special interest for our study is the judgment pronounced upon the woman in Genesis 3:16. This judgment has two aspects. The first relates to childbearing and the second to her relation to her husband. Childbearing, part of the pre-Fall divine design for filling the earth (Gen 1:28), was now to become a painful process (Gen 3:16). The husband-wife relationship would also experience a painful distortion: “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Gen 3:16).

The Author’s Interpretation. Our author finds in this passage the beginning of the submission of woman to man which he believes did not exist before the Fall. He maintains that it was only “after the Fall, according to Genesis 3:16, that the husband was given a servant headship role to preserve the harmony of the home, while at the same time the model of equal partnership was still set forth as the ideal. This post-Fall prescription of husband headship and wife submission was limited to the husband-wife relationship. In the divine revelation throughout the rest of the Old Testament and the New Testament witness, servant headship and voluntary submission on the part of husband and wife, respectively, are affirmed, but these are *never* broadened to the covenant community in such a way as to prohibit women from taking positions of leadership, including headship positions over men.”²⁶

So far we have examined the author’s thesis by focusing on his interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2. We have found his attempts to negate the presence of male headship and female submission in these two chapters to be unsuccessful. A close study of significant details of these texts in the light of Paul’s interpretation of the same passages has shown that the principle of male headship and female submission is rooted and grounded in the very order and manner of Adam and Eve’s creation.

At this juncture we need to analyze the *Women in Ministry* chapter’s interpretation of Genesis 3:16. We intend to address two questions: (1) Does Genesis 3 mark the origin of male headship and female submission, as our author claims? Or does it allow for the possibility of a painful distortion of an already existing headship-submission principle? (2) Is male headship restricted to the home, as the author contends, or does it extend also to the community of faith in such a way as to exclude women from serving in headship positions over men? We shall attempt to answer these questions by considering first the role of Adam and Eve in the Fall and then the divine judgments passed on them.

The Nature of the Temptation. In the first five verses of Genesis 3, Satan, masquerading as a serpent, plants seeds of doubt in Eve's mind which lead her to question the limitation God had placed on them regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent pretended to disclose an important secret to Eve, namely, that by partaking of the forbidden fruit she would reach her full potential and become divine. Eve succumbed to the deception. Genesis describes in a matter-of-fact way the actual acts of Adam and Eve: "She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Gen 3:6 KJV).

What happened has significant implications. The text clearly indicates that Eve played the leading role in taking the fruit, eating it, and giving it to her husband, who enters the scene at a later time. The latter is suggested by the prepositional phrase "with her" (*immah*) which, as H. C. Leupold points out, "strongly suggests that at the outset, when temptation began, Adam was not with Eve but had only joined her at this time."²⁷ Ellen White states even more plausibly that Adam was not at the tree during the temptation at all, but that Eve, after eating the forbidden fruit, went in search of Adam and brought some to him.²⁸

Note that Adam did not take the fruit from the tree but received it from his wife, who played the leading role in the Fall. Adam willingly let his wife take the lead. Apparently, as Ellen White indicates, Eve "was flattered [by the serpent] with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned to her"²⁹ at her husband's side. She usurped Adam's headship, and instead of being his helper to live as God intended, she led him into sin.

A careful reading of Genesis 3 suggests that the original sin of Adam and Eve was largely due to role reversal. The Fall did not originate male headship and female submission, as our author contends, but actually resulted from a failure to respect these roles. Adam failed to exercise his spiritual leadership by protecting Eve from the serpent's deception, and, on her part, Eve failed to respect her submissive role by staying by her husband's side. The tragic consequences of the first sex role reversal carry a solemn warning for Christians today who are told that role interchangeability is a sign of human emancipation.

Why Is Adam Responsible for Mankind's Sin? If our author's contention is correct that "before the Fall there was full equality with no headship-submission in the relationship between Adam and Eve (Gen 2:24),"³⁰ then why didn't God summon Adam and Eve to account together for their transgression? After all, Eve had played the leading role. Why did God call out *only to Adam*, "Where are you" (Gen 3:9)? Why does Genesis 3:7 say that it was

only after *Adam* ate of the forbidden fruit that the eyes of *both* were opened? Why does Paul hold Adam responsible for the entrance of sin into this world when he writes, “Sin came into the world through one man” (Rom 5:12)? Why didn’t he say “sin came into the world through one woman” or “through the first couple”?

Why is Christ portrayed as the second Adam and not the second Eve? The answer to these questions is simple: God had appointed Adam to serve in a headship role. He bore primary responsibility for failing to exercise his spiritual leadership at the time of the temptation. Consequently, as the head of Eve and of the human family, his transgression brought sin and death to fallen humanity.

In both Genesis 2 and 3, Adam is addressed as the one to whom God had entrusted the responsibility of spiritual leadership. Adam received the divine instructions not to eat of the tree of knowledge (Gen 2:16-17); consequently, he was in a special way responsible for instructing Eve so that neither of them would transgress God’s command. The great fault of Adam in the Fall was his failure to exercise his role of spiritual leadership. Instead of leading his wife into obedience to God’s command, he allowed his wife to lead him into disobedience.

The leadership position that God assigned to Adam made him especially responsible for the transgression of the divine commandment. Werner Neuer rightly observes that “the leadership position of the man intended by God in Genesis 2 precludes ascribing to Eve the chief guilt for the Fall, as has happened time and again in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. His seduction by Eve offers no excuse for Adam, for he was pledged on the basis of his spiritual responsibility to correct his wife and to prevent the disobedience initiated by her from turning into joint rebellion against God.”³¹ Because of his failure to exercise his spiritual headship role at the time of Eve’s temptation, Adam is fittingly viewed in the Bible as the head of fallen humanity. If this interpretation is correct, as the text strongly suggests, then *Women in Ministry*’s contention that male headship is a post-Fall phenomenon is clearly incorrect.

The Curse on the Serpent. After interrogating the first human couple, God states the consequences of their actions to the serpent, the woman, and the man. These consequences have been generally referred to as “curses.” The curse upon the serpent affects not only the serpent as an animal (Gen 3:14) but also the relation between Satan and mankind, characterized by an “enmity” and hostility which will eventually end at the destruction of Satan himself (Gen 3:15). God’s merciful promise to defeat our enemy through the victorious Offspring of the woman is our only hope for a glorious destiny.

The Judgment Upon the Woman. The divine judgment upon the woman is of central concern for our study, because it deals directly with the impact of the Fall upon the husband-wife relationship. The judgment upon the woman has two aspects. The first relates to her role as a mother and the second to her role as a wife. As a mother she will still be able to bear children, but God decrees that she will suffer in childbirth: “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children” (Gen 3:16). Childbearing, which was part of the pre-Fall divine design for the filling of the earth (Gen 1:28), will now become a painful process.

As a wife, the woman will suffer in relation to her husband. “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Gen 3:16). This divine judgment represents a measure-for-measure response to Eve’s attempt to usurp her husband’s headship. The meaning of the first phrase appears to be, as Leupold puts it, “She who sought to strive apart from man and to act independently from him in the temptation, [now] finds a continual attraction for him to be her unavoidable lot.”³² Feminists may try to banish a woman’s attraction for man, but it is there to stay. This is not necessarily a punitive element. The meaning of the word “desire” (Hebrew *ʾeshuqah*) is illuminated by its occurrence in Song of Solomon, where the Shulamite bride joyfully exclaims, “I am my beloved’s, and his *desire* is for me” (Song 7:10).

The second phrase, “he shall rule over you,” has been the subject of numerous interpretations. Our *Women in Ministry* chapter acknowledges that the “word *mashal* [to rule] in this form in verse 16*d* means ‘to rule’ (and not ‘to be like’) and definitely implies subjection.”³³ The meaning appears to be that as the woman sought to rule man by taking control in her own hands and leading him into temptation, now her penalty is that she will be ruled by her husband. This does not mean that God gives a license to man to exercise despotic rulership. The author rightly points out that the Hebrew word for “to rule,” *mashal*, is used in many passages “in the sense of servant leadership, to ‘comfort, protect, care for, love.’”³⁴ The Old Testament uses *mashal* in a positive sense to describe God’s rulership (Is 40:10; Ps 22:28) and the future rulership of the Messiah (Mic 5:2).

When a man rules in the spirit of Christ, such rule is not harsh or domineering and “may be regarded as a blessing in preserving the harmony and union of the relationship.”³⁵ But where sin prevails, then such a husband’s rulership may become a miserable domination. God ordained that man should exercise godly headship, not ungodly domination.

The phrase, “he shall rule over you,” represents God’s rejection of the woman’s attempt to take on the leadership role at the time of the Fall and His

summons to the woman to return to her creation submission to man. The story of the Fall shows how the woman endangered herself and her husband by her bid to dominate. God's judgments upon the woman represent the divine remedy to maintain the intended order of the sexes as it appears in Genesis 2. The divinely intended submission of women has nothing to do with male domination and oppression of women. It is a beneficial arrangement designed to protect men and women from the destructive powers of evil.

Not all the elements of the divine judgment are punitive. God's declaration that the woman will bear children is not punitive; only the pains of birth are punishments for the Fall. Similarly, her desire for a man is not necessarily punitive, because the same is said about man before the Fall: the man leaves his parents in order to cleave to his wife (Gen 2:24). The punitive aspects of Genesis 3:16 do not imply that all aspects of subordination must be seen as punishment.

Summing up, we can say that the wording of Genesis 3:16 does not warrant our author's conclusion that the relationship between man and woman has been fundamentally altered by the Fall. George W. Knight cogently points out that "Genesis 3 presumes the reality of childbearing (Gen 1:28), in which the woman will now experience the effects of the Fall and sin (Gen 3:16). It presumes the reality of work (Gen 1:28; 2:15), in which the man will now experience the effect of the Fall and sin (Gen 3:17ff.). And it presumes the reality of the role relationship between wife and husband established by God's creation order in Genesis 2:18ff., a relationship that will now experience the effects of the Fall and sin (Gen 3:16). 'He shall rule over you' expresses the effect of sin corrupting the relationship of husband (the head) and wife. Just as childbearing and work were established before the Fall and were corrupted by it, so this relationship existed before the Fall and was corrupted by it. Neither childbearing, nor work, nor the role relationship of wife and husband is being introduced in Genesis 3; all are previously existing realities that have been affected by the Fall."³⁶

The Judgment Upon Man. The divine punishment for Adam's disobedience contains three significant points worthy of consideration. First, man's relationship to the ground is distorted: "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; . . . In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread . . ." (Gen 3:17-19). Work is not the punitive element, just as childbearing was not Eve's punishment. The punitive element is the pain in cultivating the ground in the sweat of one's brow.

The second important point is God's rationale for inflicting the punishment. The first reason God gave for inflicting the punishment was not "Because you have eaten of the tree which I commanded you," but "*Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you*" (Gen 3:17). The point here is obvious. Adam sinned first of all because he listened to the voice of his wife rather than to the command of God. By so doing, he abdicated his headship. Second, and as a result of the first, Adam sinned by transgressing the simple and plain command God had given him (Gen 2:17).

Note that God issued a formal indictment only before sentencing Adam, and not before sentencing Eve. The reason is that Adam was the head and thus ultimately responsible for the disobedience of both. God did not place the blame on both as if both shared equal responsibility. God says: "Because *you* have listened to the voice of your wife . . . cursed is the ground because of *you*" (Gen 3:17). The "*you*" refers exclusively to Adam, because he had been entrusted with the responsibility to serve as the spiritual and moral leader.

A third point to note is that God told *only Adam* that he would die: "till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; *you* are dust, and to dust *you* shall return" (Gen 3:19). Eve died too, of course, but God pronounced the death sentence on Adam alone, because he was the head, and the death sentence upon him included Eve and all members of the human family that he represented.

Paul's Use of Genesis 3. In our study of Genesis 1 and 2 we noted that Paul faithfully appealed to the implication of these chapters to support his teaching that women ought not "to teach or to have authority over men" (1 Tim 2:12). We must now turn our attention to Paul's use of Genesis 3. His main reference to Genesis 3 is found in 1 Timothy 2:14: "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor." This is the second of the two reasons Paul gives to support his teaching. The first reason is the priority of Adam's formation (1 Tim 2:13).

This second reason, based on Eve's deception, has produced many dangerous interpretations. Some have assumed that this verse teaches that women are disqualified to act as leaders in the church because they are more gullible than men. Paul "may have in mind the greater aptitude of the weaker sex to be led astray."³⁷ A variation of this interpretation is that women "are inferior in their gifts so far as the teaching office is concerned."³⁸

These interpretations are wrong because nowhere does Scripture suggest that women are more prone to err than men or that their teaching gifts

are inferior. If the latter were true, how could Paul admonish women to teach their children and other women (Titus 2:3-5; 2 Tim 3:15)? How could he praise women fellow-workers for their roles in the missionary outreach of the church (Rom 16:1, 3, 12; Phil 4:3)?

To understand the meaning of 1 Timothy 2:14 we must note that this verse is linked to the preceding one by the conjunction “and” (*kai*), which Paul often uses as an explanatory connective (see 1 Tim 4:4; 5:4-5). In this case the connective “and” suggests that the typological meaning of Adam’s having been formed first, as mentioned in verse 13, is connected with the typological meaning of Eve’s deception, mentioned in verse 14.

Apparently Paul is saying that both Adam’s formation and Eve’s deception typologically represent woman’s subordination to man. As we have noted, Paul’s first reason for his teaching appeals to the order of creation and the second reason to the Fall. The second reason shows what happens when the order of creation is disregarded. When Eve asserted her independence from Adam she was deceived.

The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* supports this interpretation, “The apostle’s second argument for the submissiveness of women is that when Eve tried to assert leadership she was beguiled.”³⁹ In a similar vein George W. Knight writes: “In 1 Timothy 2:14 Paul also refers to the Fall after citing the creation order . . . to show the dire consequences of reversing the creation order on this most historic and significant occasion.”⁴⁰

Conclusion

Our study of the first three chapters of Genesis has shown that the principle of male headship and female submission was established by God at creation and not, as *Women in Ministry* contends, after the Fall. We have found that Genesis 1 simply affirms that man and woman are equally created in the image of God but are sexually different. By twice calling the human race “man” (Gen 1:26-27), God whispers male headship already in Genesis 1, though it is explained in chapter two.

Genesis 2 clarifies the equality and gender distinctions of Genesis 1. Man and woman are equal in nature, because they share the same human flesh and bone and have the same spiritual value before God. Yet they are different in function, because woman is to be submissive to man. The latter is indicated by the following four elements of the narrative: (1) the priority of man’s creation (Gen 2:7, 22), (2) the manner of the woman’s creation out of man (Gen 2:21-22), (3) the woman’s creation to be man’s helper (Gen 2:18-20), and (4) man’s naming of the woman both before and after the Fall (Gen 2:23;

3:20). The headship of man is implied also in chapter 3 where God calls upon the man to answer for the pair's transgression and indicts the man (not the woman) for failing to fulfill his headship role by listening to the voice of his wife rather than to His command.

Genesis 3 describes the distortion of the creation order brought about by the Fall. This distortion affected not only the serpent, the land, work, and childbearing, but also the submission of woman to man. Sinful man would now take advantage of his headship to dominate and oppress his wife. Contrary to our author's view, the curse on the woman marked not the institution of submission but rather its distortion into oppressive domination.

Paul attaches fundamental importance to the teachings of the first three chapters of Genesis. We found that he appeals to the pre-Fall order and manner of creation as the basis for the submission of woman to the leadership of man, both in marriage and in the church. Paul's appeal to the order of creation is in line with Christ's teaching that calls for a restoration of the creational relationship (Matt 19:8) by the members of His kingdom. The function of redemption is not to redefine creation but to restore it, so that wives may learn godly submission and husbands may learn godly headship.

Paul bases his teaching concerning the role of women in the church not on the consequences of the Fall described in Genesis 3, but on the pre-Fall order of creation presented in Genesis 1 and 2. The foundation of his teaching is not the divine judgments pronounced at the Fall but God's original purpose manifested in the order and manner of human creation. It is unfortunate that in his interpretation of Genesis 1, 2, and 3, our author consistently ignores Paul's appeals to these chapters to support his teachings in regard to male-female role distinctions in the home and in the church. Ignoring the internal witness of the Bible can give rise to private interpretations.

Genesis 1-3 deals primarily with husband-wife relations, but the underlying principle of equality and submission has broader implications for the roles of men and women within the community of faith. This will become evident in the next two sections, where we examine the ministry of women in both Old and New Testaments. We shall see that though women ministered to God's people in a variety of vital religious roles, including that of prophet, there are no indications in Scripture that they were ever ordained to serve as priests in the Old Testament or as pastors, elders, or bishops in the New Testament. The reason is to be found, not in the patriarchal mentality of Bible times but in the recognition of the headship role which God appointed man as the "firstborn" of the human family, to be fulfilled in the home and in public worship. The Bible implies this principle in the creation story of Genesis 2 and upholds it in both the Old and New Testaments.

PART IV

HEADSHIP, SUBMISSION, AND EQUALITY

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Husband-Wife Relationships. The author's fundamental thesis is that the principle of male headship and female submission originated at the Fall (Gen 3:16) and was designed to govern *only* the husband-wife relationship and not male-female roles in the religious life of God's people. To prove the validity of this thesis he endeavors to show in the second half of his chapter that in both the Old and New Testaments the principle of headship and submission applies to the home but not to the religious community of faith. Since elsewhere I have dealt at length with the ministry of women in the Old and New Testaments, here I will limit my comments to a few basic observations.⁴¹

The author finds in the Old Testament ample "evidence for the husband headship principle in marriage," but he emphasizes that "such headship does not override the basic equality between marriage partners, nor does it imply the husband's ownership, oppression, domination, or authoritative control over the wife."⁴² On this point we are in perfect agreement. God never intended that husband headship should be a means of domination or oppression but a responsibility of service. A survey of the evidence in this area is unnecessary because there is no disagreement.

The area of disagreement centers on the role of women in the religious life of ancient Israel and of the New Testament church. Our author maintains that "while the headship principle of Genesis 3:16 clearly functions to regulate the Old Testament husband-wife relationship, this principle is not widened into the covenant community in such a way as to cause the rejection of women leaders on the basis of gender—even women leaders exercising headship over men."⁴³

Does a Prophetess Exercise a Headship Role? Deborah is the author's major example to support his contention that women served in headship roles over men in the Old Testament covenant community. He writes, "I note particularly the leadership role of Deborah the prophetess and judge (Judges 4-5). Deborah clearly exercised headship functions over men as the recognized political leader of the nation, the military leader of Israel on an equal footing with the male general Barak, and a judge to whom men and women turned for legal counsel and divine instruction. There is no indication in the text that such female leadership over men in the covenant community was looked upon as unusual or was opposed to the divine will for women."⁴⁴

In examining Deborah's role in ancient Israel, we first note that she is introduced to us in Scripture as a "prophetess" who judged the people under a palm tree and not as a military leader. "Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment" (Jud 4:4-5).

Did Deborah as a prophetess exercise a headship role over men in ancient Israel? The answer is No! Why? Because the role of a prophet or prophetess is that of a messenger, not a leader. A prophet exercises no authority of his own but communicates the messages and decisions of the One who has sent him.

The careers of the Old Testament prophets make it clear that they did not exercise headship. They often rebuked the leaders who did have the headship, trying to persuade them to change their evil course and turn to God. All too often their efforts were rejected. Some of them, such as Micaiah (1 Kings 22) and Jeremiah (Jer 38), were imprisoned because their messages displeased the rulers. Isaiah is said to have been sawn in two at the order of the king. Jesus recognized and lamented how the prophets had been treated: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you!" (Matt 23:37).

Clearly the prophets did not exercise headship in Israel. Their messages had great power and moral authority, because they came from God; but the prophetic role entailed no headship. Even when the country's leaders obeyed God's word conveyed through the prophets, the prophetic role was never that of head. The relationship between prophets and leaders (heads) in the best of times is illustrated in Ezra 5:1, 2: "Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and with them were the prophets of God, *helping them*" (emphasis mine).

What is true of the male prophet is no less true of the female prophetess. Her role was not that of head but of messenger. The Bible sees the prophetess in a supportive and complementary role which does not negate male headship. Paul clarifies this point in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, where he defends the right of women to pray and prophesy in the church because the gifts of the Spirit are given to the church without regard to sexual differences (Joel 2:28; 1 Cor 12:7-11). Note, however, that Paul opposes the behavior of those women who disregarded their subordinate position by praying and giving prophetic exhortations to the congregation with their heads uncovered like the men.

Paul opposes this practice because “any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head—it is the same as if her head were shaven” (1 Cor 11:5). The “head” being dishonored is her husband, for Paul states in verse 3 that “the head of a woman is her husband.” Why would it dishonor her husband for a woman to pray and prophesy in public with her head uncovered? Simply because the head covering, whatever its nature, was seen in that culture as the sign of her being under the “head” or authority of a man (cf. 1 Cor 11:10). Thus, the removal of such a sign constituted a repudiation of her husband’s authority or headship, which a woman was called to respect, not only in the home but also in the church.

Did Deborah Exercise a Headship Role? The implications for our study are clear. Since the prophetic role did not involve headship, prophesying by a woman, such as Deborah, did not violate the principle of male headship, as long as she did it in a proper manner and demeanor that did not negate male headship. There are several indications that Deborah respected the principle of male headship explained by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

First, Deborah’s role as a judge was unique, for, contrary to our author’s assertion, she is the only judge in Judges who did not serve as a military leader. Instead of leading an army into battle like other judges, as the Lord’s messenger she received instruction from Him to summon Barak to lead an army of ten thousand men into battle against Sisera, the general of Jabin, king of Canaan, who was oppressing Israel (Jud 4:6-7). It is significant that Deborah did not assume the headship role of an army general; she conveyed God’s call to Barak to serve in that capacity.

Second, in a discreet way Deborah rebuked Barak for his unwillingness to go to battle without her (Jud 4:8). Because of his reluctance, Deborah warned Barak that “the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman” (Jud 4:9). But the woman who earned the glory by killing Sisera while he slept in her tent was not Deborah but Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite (Jud 4:17-22).

Third, perhaps to avoid any possible misunderstanding about their role within their culture, the prophetic ministries of Deborah and Huldah (2 Kings 22:14-20) differ significantly from those of male prophets, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Male prophets exercised their prophetic ministry in a public manner, being commissioned to proclaim the word of the Lord before the people and the king himself (Is 6:9; 7:3; 58:1; Jer 1:10; 2:2; 7:2; Ezek 2:3; 6:2). For example, the Lord said to Isaiah, “Cry aloud and spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins” (Is 58:1). Similarly, to Jeremiah the Lord said,

“Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all of you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the Lord” (Jer 7:2).

The prophetic ministry of Deborah was substantially different from this. She did not go out and publicly proclaim the word of the Lord. Instead, individuals came to consult her privately under the palm tree where she sat: “She used to sit under the palm of Deborah . . . and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment” (Jud 4:5). Presumably she came to be known as a godly woman through whom God communicated His will.

People came to trust her judgment in resolving their disputes. Though it would not have been out of place for Deborah as a prophetess to proclaim God’s word publicly, she did not exercise her prophetic ministry in a public forum like the Old Testament male prophets. Even when she spoke to Barak she talked to him privately (Jud 4:6, 14). And the song of praise was sung by Deborah and Barak together (Jud 5:1), which suggests equality rather than headship. More telling still is the fact that she is praised as a “mother in Israel” (Jud 5:7). It is evident that she was perceived to be primarily a *spiritual mother*, not as filling the traditional role of an elder or judge or prophet.

Similarly, Huldah (2 Kings 22:14-20) did not proclaim God’s word publicly, though it would not be wrong for a prophetess to do so since the prophetic role does not entail headship. Huldah, however, explained the word of the Lord privately to the messengers sent to her by King Josiah (2 Kings 22:15), giving no occasion to anyone to misinterpret her adherence to the womanly role. Miriam’s prophetic ministry also avoided misinterpretation, for she ministered only to women. “Then Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and *all the women went out after her* with timbrels and dancing. And Miriam sang to *them*” (Ex 15:20-21, emphasis mine).

The preceding considerations suggest that the ministry of Deborah as a judge was unusual, even unique. It is possible that the Lord used her at a critical time of apostasy, when the spiritual leadership of men was lacking. We are told that “the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord . . . and the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan” (Jud 4:1-2). The exceptional calling of a woman like Deborah at a time of crisis can hardly be used to establish the general principle of women serving in a headship role over men in the covenant community. As if anticipating the current debate, Calvin makes a pertinent comment regarding Deborah: “If any one brings forward, by way of objection, Deborah (Jud 4:4) and others of the same class, of whom we read they were at one time appointed by the command

of God to govern the people, the answer is easy. Extraordinary acts done by God do not overturn the ordinary rules of government, by which He intended that we should be bound.”⁴⁵

To sum up, women who fulfilled a prophetic ministry in the Old Testament did not exercise a headship role, nor did their male counterparts. In the New Testament, women prophesied publicly before the congregation, but their demeanor (head covering) had to show respect for male headship.

Note that prophetic speaking in the Corinthian congregations was understood in the broad sense of communicating a message of exhortation from God. We may conclude that this ministry did not involve assuming the leadership role of the church for at least two reasons. First, Paul suggests that the prophetic ministry of “upbuilding and encouragement and consolation” (1 Cor 14:3) was open to all: “For you can all prophesy one by one” (1 Cor 14:31). This by itself indicates that the prophetic role did not convey leadership or headship on the one who exercised it. Second, as we have seen, the prophetic role was that of a messenger, not of a leader or head. The prophets often had to convey the messages of God to the leaders, but they did not have headship power to implement the instructions in those messages.

In light of the above considerations, we conclude that the prophetic ministry of women in both the Old and New Testaments was not seen as exercising headship over men but as respecting the leadership role of men in the community of faith, even when the prophetic ministry involved bringing messages of rebuke or correction from God.

No Women Priestesses in the Old Testament. Regrettably, in his discussion of the role of women in the covenant community of ancient Israel, our author does not address the crucial question as to why women served as prophetesses but not as priestesses. An examination of this question could have provided a much-needed corrective to his claim that women exercised headship positions over men in the religious life of ancient Israel. The absence of priestesses shows otherwise. The reason women were precluded from ministering as priestesses is that priests served as representatives of God to the people. Their headship role could not legitimately be fulfilled by a woman. This fact alone constitutes a serious challenge to the author’s thesis.

Another author addressed the question, “Why not a woman priest in Israel?” in chapter 2 of the same symposium, *Women in Ministry*. Since our first author frequently refers to this scholar, we will briefly consider the two basic reasons our second author gives for the exclusion of women from the priesthood. The first is historical and the second is theological. His historical

reason is that priestesses in the ancient Near East “were often associated with sacred prostitution.” Thus for him, the absence of priestesses in ancient Israel “is to be understood as a reaction to pagan syncretism and sexual perversion.”⁴⁶

This popular argument falls short on at least two counts. First, the fact that some of the pagan priestesses served as prostitutes cannot be a valid reason for God to exclude Israelite women from serving as exemplary priestesses at the sanctuary. A legitimate practice cannot be prohibited because of its perversion. The sons of Eli “lay with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting” (1 Sam 2:22), but there is no indication that these prostitutions resulted in the abolition of male priesthood or of the ministry of women at the entrance of the sanctuary. If the argument were valid, then not even men should have functioned as priests because of the danger of male prostitution, which the Bible views as more abominable than female prostitution, calling male cult prostitutes “dogs” (Deut 23:18; Rev 22:15).

Second, there are indications that many, if not most, of the pagan priestesses in the ancient world lived chaste and devoted lives. Some of the Babylonian priestesses lived in cloisters.⁴⁷ The women priests who officiated, for example, at the temples of Vesta, Apollo, Athena, Polias, and Dionysius, as well as in the various mystery religions, were in most cases either celibate or very continent in their life-styles. This shows that the argument regarding the danger of “sacred prostitution” does not hold water.⁴⁸

Why Couldn’t Women Offer Sacrifices? The theological reason the second author gives for the exclusion of women from the priesthood is “because of the sacrificial function, the only priestly act denied to women.”⁴⁹ Women could not offer priestly sacrifices, he writes, because of “the incompatibility of the sacrifice, normally associated with death and sin, and the physiological nature of the woman traditionally associated in the Bible with life and messianic pregnancy.”⁵⁰

The notion that women were precluded from the sacrificial function of the priesthood because physiologically their nature is “associated in the Bible with life and messianic pregnancy,” sounds more like an ingenious rabbinical speculation than a biblical reason. Nowhere does the Bible suggest such a reason.

Our second author seeks support for his view in the command, “You shall not boil a kid in its mother’s milk” (Ex 23:19), but it doesn’t fit. First, the primary reason for this injunction is generally recognized to be God’s concern to prevent the Israelites from adopting a common Canaanite ritual practice. Second, boiling a kid in its mother’s milk was not the same as a

woman's offering an animal sacrifice. The former was prohibited, he speculates, "because it would be incongruous to associate the milk of the mother, carrier of life to the kid, with the death of the very kid."⁵¹ But this hardly applies to a woman sacrificing an animal, because she would not be sacrificing her own offspring. In fact, sacrificing an animal would not have contradicted a woman's capacity to give life, because God promised to restore life through the death of the offspring of the woman (Gen 3:15). Typologically speaking, a woman could have offered sacrifices more fittingly than a man, because the animal she would sacrifice could represent her Messianic offspring, who would be sacrificed for the salvation of His people.

The Representative Role of a Priest. The true reason for the exclusion of women from the priesthood is to be found in the unique biblical view of the priest as representative of God to the people. This second author himself acknowledges this to be the "essential concept underlying the priesthood," namely, that "the priest was considered as God's representative."⁵² He also correctly points out that in both the Old and New Testaments "the Messiah is consistently identified as a priest."⁵³ It was because of this headship role of a priest as representative of God and of the Messiah to come that women were excluded from the priesthood.

The priesthood developed through several stages in the Old Testament. During patriarchal times the head of the household or of the tribe fulfilled the priestly function of representing his household to God. Thus Noah (Gen 8:20), Abraham (Gen 22:13), Jacob (Gen 35:3), and Job (Job 1:5) each served as the representative priest of his family. With the establishment of the theocracy at Sinai and the erection of the tabernacle, God appointed the tribe of Levi to serve as priests in place of *the firstborn or head of each family*. "Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the people of Israel instead of every *firstborn* that opens the womb among the people of Israel. The Levites shall be mine, for all the *firstborn* are mine" (Num 3:12-13). We noted earlier that the notion of the firstborn derives from Adam, the first created, and is even applied to Christ, "the firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15). The firstborn was the head of the family, and the priests served as the spiritual heads of Israel.

While God called all the people of Israel, male and female, to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:5-6; cf. Is 61:6), after the Sinai apostasy the Levites were chosen to serve as the representative heads of the whole nation because of their allegiance to God (Ex 32:26-29). When the priests ministered they acted as the representatives of God to the people.

Because of this representative role which the priests fulfilled as heads of the household of Israel, women were excluded from the priesthood. A woman could minister as a prophet, because a prophet was primarily a

communicator of God's will and God communicates His will through men and women, irrespective of gender. But a woman could not function as a priest, because a priest was appointed to act as the representative of the people to God and of God to the people. As James B. Hurley correctly observes, "The Mosaic provision [for an exclusively male priesthood] stands in a historical continuum and continues the practice of having representative males serve to officiate in public worship functions."⁵⁴

"The fact that most pagan religions of the time did have priestesses, as well as priests," notes John Meyendorff, "shows that a male priesthood was the sign of a specifically biblical, i.e. Jewish and Christian, identity."⁵⁵ This unique, counter-cultural Jewish and Christian practice stems not from the religious genius of either Judaism or Christianity but from divine revelation which at creation established a functional headship role for man to fulfill in the home and in the household of faith.

Did God Dress Eve as a Priestess? The second author's most imaginative attempt to find "biblical" support for a priestly role for women in the Old Testament is his interpretation of the garment of skins God made for Adam and Eve (Gen 3:21). "God chose animal skin. This specification not only implies the killing of an animal, the first sacrifice in history, but by the same token, confirms the identification of Adam and Eve as priests, for the skin of the atonement sacrifice was specifically set apart for the officiating priests (Lev 7:8). By bestowing on Adam and Eve the skin of the sin offering, a gift reserved for priests, the Genesis story implicitly recognizes Eve as priest alongside Adam."⁵⁶

This claim that "Adam and Eve were, indeed, dressed as priests" cannot be supported biblically. The Bible gives no indication that priests wore garments made from the skins of the animals they sacrificed. The priests wore fine linen garments (Ex 28:29), which were often called garments of "salvation" (2 Chron 6:41; Ps 132:16) because they typified the purity and salvation that God offered through the ministry of the priests. No such typological significance is attached to any skin garment in the Bible. We are on much firmer ground if we interpret the text at its face value as meaning, to use the words of Ellen G. White, that "the Lord mercifully provided them with a garment of skins as a protection from the extremes of heat and cold."⁵⁷ While the slaying of animals for man's needs may suggest the idea of sacrifice, the text *per se*, as Leupold points out, "does not teach that, nor is it an allegory conveying a lesson to that effect. The meaning is what the letter of the statement says—no more."⁵⁸

Had God dressed Eve as a priest at the time of the Fall, it would be surprising that we do not find a single clear example of a "female priest" in

the Bible. The reason is not cultural but theological, namely, the biblical teaching that only men could serve in the headship roles of priest in the Old Testament and of apostles, elders, and pastors in the New Testament.

Conclusion. Women played a most vital role both in the private and public religious life of ancient Israel. As full members of the covenant community, women participated in studying the law and teaching it to their children (Prov 1:8; Deut 31:12; Neh 8:2), in offering prayers and vows to God (1 Sam 1:10; Gen 25:22; 30:6, 22; 21:6-7), in ministering at the entrance of the sanctuary (1 Sam 2:22), in singing, and in the prophetic ministry of exhortation and guidance (Ezra 2:65; 1 Chron 25:5-6; Jud 4:4-6; 2 Kings 22:13-14).

But, in spite of the first author's attempts to prove the contrary, the religious roles of women in ancient Israel were different from those of men. Women served in accordance with the principles of equality of being and submission of function that are implicit in the creation story. The principle of male headship in the home and in public worship is recognized even by Clarence J. Vos, an Evangelical feminist, who writes: "It was not her [the woman's] task to lead the family or tribe in worship; normally this was done by the patriarch or the eldest male member. That a male was appointed to this function no doubt rested on the idea that the male was considered the 'firstborn' of the human family—a motif discernible in the creation story of Genesis 2."⁵⁹

PART V

HEADSHIP, SUBMISSION, AND EQUALITY

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the final section of his chapter, our first author endeavors to prove that the New Testament is consistent with the Old Testament in applying the principle of headship and submission only to husband-wife relationships and not to the role of women in the church. To prove his thesis he attempts to show that "*all* of the New Testament passages regarding headship and 'submission' between men and women are limited to the marriage relationship" "and not men and women in general."⁶⁰

For the sake of brevity I will comment only on the three Pauline passages relevant to our discussion on the role of women in the church (1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:34-36; 1 Tim 2:8-15), addressing the fundamental question, Are Paul's admonitions regarding women's behavior in the church meant for wives only or for women in general?⁶¹

1. Headship and Headcovering: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Paul discusses the appropriate headdress for men and women during a worship service. The basic rule for church order that Paul gives in this passage is that in worship services men should leave their heads uncovered while women should have their heads covered. It seems probable that Paul was responding to a report received about some Corinthian women who were either refusing to cover their heads or who were questioning the practice. Possibly some women saw the abandoning of their head coverings as an expression of their liberty and equality in Christ.

The importance of this passage lies not so much in what Paul says about head coverings as in the significance that he attaches to head coverings as a symbol of the role distinctions that men and women must preserve at church. For Paul, these distinctions are not grounded on cultural conventions but on the principle of male headship and female submission established by God at creation. To support this principle, in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 the apostle appeals not to the story of the Fall in Genesis 3 but to the manner of the creation of Eve out of man and for man in Genesis 2. If the submission of women were regarded as a consequence of the Fall, as our author contends, then the headcovering would have been a shameful sign of guilt. But Paul sees it as a sign of honor for women (1 Cor 11:7, 15), because in Paul's culture it represented obedience to the submissive role that God assigned to women.

Modern readers find it difficult to comprehend why Paul should place so much importance on such a trivial matter as headcovering. The key to understanding why this custom was important for Paul is found in the opening verse of the section: "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor 11:3). Paul is concerned that the principle of male headship and female submission be outwardly respected in the church through the custom of women covering their heads.

What matters to Paul is not the headgear itself but respect for the distinction between the sexes which the headgear expressed in that particular culture. By laying aside their headgear, the Corinthian women were rebelling against their divinely-intended submission. What to some appears as a petty fight over a trivial matter of women's head covering was in reality an important theological battle against women who wanted to obliterate role distinctions set in place by God Himself at creation.

Seen in its proper light, this passage speaks volumes to our culture today, where the feminist movement is promoting role interchangeability, the

obliteration of sexual role distinctions in all realms of life. Ultimately, this effort results in the breaking down of the fundamental structure established by God for the well-being of the home, the church, and society.

Wives or Women? On the basis of still another author's analysis of 1 Corinthians 11 in Chapter 15 of the same symposium, *Women in Ministry*,⁶² our author argues that the passage affirms male headship *only* in marital relationships and *not* over women in general. "The context in 1 Corinthians is one of wives submitting to the headship of their own husbands, and not the headship of men over women in general."⁶³ The main support for this conclusion is two Greek words, *gyne* and *aner*, which can be translated either as man and woman or as husband and wife. "The context of 1 Corinthians 11 clearly favors the translation 'husband' and 'wife.'"⁶⁴

As we noted at the beginning, Seventh-day Adventists opposed to women's ordination do not hold to "the headship of men over women in general." In offering a choice only between this general headship and headship confined to the marriage relation, the author presents a false dichotomy. Taken together, the writings of Paul do not assert the subordination of all females to all males but the subordination of females under their proper heads. In the home, the proper head is the husband or father, as our author affirms. Paul's counsel in Ephesians 5:22, 23 is evidence for this view: "Wives, be subject to your husbands . . . For the husband is the head of the wife." In the church family, the proper head is not all males but the appointed male leadership of the elder or elders, who serve in the role of father to the entire church, both male and female (see 1 Tim 3:2-5).

The author is correct when he says that the statement, "the head of a woman is her husband" (1 Cor 11:3, RSV) most likely refers to the husband-wife relationship. In fact, Paul uses the same words in Ephesians 5:23 when speaking exclusively of the headship of the husband over his wife. In spite of this evidence, four considerations give us reason to believe that the passage has a broader application that includes also the relationships and behaviors of men and women in the church.

First, verses 4 and 5 speak inclusively of "every man" and "every woman" respectively. The qualifying word *pas*, "every," suggests that the regulation about head coverings applies to all men and women and not just to husbands and wives.

Second, verses 7-9 appeal to the manner of the creation of Eve out of Adam as a basis for the regulation given. This theological reason suggests that Paul is thinking of all men and women rather than of husbands and wives exclusively.

Third, “verses 11-12 speak of the mutual interdependence of the sexes in the process of procreation. If only husband and wife were meant, these verses would be illogical, for the husband does not come into being through the wife nor is the wife the source of the husband. Verses 13-16 argue from nature, which would give greater support that men and women in general are being discussed rather than just husbands and wives.”⁶⁵

Fourth, the ambiguity which is caused by the double meaning of *gyne*, namely, wife and woman, can be clarified when we bear in mind that for Paul the husband-wife relationship in marriage is the paradigm for the man-woman relationship in the church. For Paul, the submissive role of a married woman is a model for women in general, and by the same token the headship role of a married man is a model for men in general. This important point will be elaborated shortly. This means that although 1 Corinthians 11 focuses on husbands and wives, the principle of headship and submission is applicable to the broader relations of men and women in the church. In Paul’s view, men should behave properly like men, regardless of their marital status; likewise women, regardless of whether they are married or not, should behave in ways that befit women. It is not a matter of all men exercising headship over all women, but of each person respecting his or her God-given role.

We would conclude with Fritz Zerbst that “the Apostle had husbands and wives in mind when he wrote this passage. However, Paul in this passage at the same time speaks also generally of man and woman. In order to understand Paul we must bear in mind that the relationship between the sexes always has its center in marriage.”⁶⁶

2. Women Speaking in the Church: 1 Corinthians 14:33-36

In 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 Paul gives brief instruction regarding the role of women in church somewhat similar to the advice found in 1 Timothy 2:9-15. The passage reads as follows: “As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached?” (1 Cor 14:33b-36).

This passage occurs in the context of the discussion of how to maintain order in the worship assemblies. Beginning with verse 26, Paul gives specific instructions on how speaking in tongues and prophesying should be regulated in the church, so that good order might prevail. It is in this context that Paul gives his instruction regarding the silence of women in the assembly. This

instruction has been the subject of considerable controversy, especially because it appears to stand in stark contrast to 1 Corinthians 11:5, where Paul assumes that women may pray and prophesy in the church.

Does 1 Corinthians 14:34 Contradict 1 Corinthians 11:5? The apparent contradiction between the two passages can be resolved by recognizing that Paul's concern in both situations is for women to respect their submissive role. In 1 Corinthians 11:5 respect for male headship entailed that women comply with the head-covering custom of the time when they prayed and prophesied in the church. In 1 Corinthians 14:34 respect for male headship entailed that women comply with the custom of the time by refraining from asking questions publicly of their husbands or church leaders.⁶⁷

To appreciate the consistency of Paul's teaching about women's speaking and being silent in the church, it is important to distinguish between the permanent headship-submission principle and its cultural, time-bound application. Wearing a head covering and refraining from asking questions in the assembly were customary ways in Paul's time for women to show submission to their husbands and church leaders. Thus, "not asking questions in the assembly" was a *custom* subservient to the *principle* that "[women] should be subordinate" (1 Cor 14:34). While the principle is permanent, its application is culturally conditioned. Yet in every culture the principle is to be expressed in the home and in the church through appropriate customs.

Paul seeks to maintain an authority structure in the home and in the church, where men are called to exercise responsible and sacrificial leadership, and where women respond supportively. Repeatedly the apostle emphasizes the importance of respecting the headship-submission principle. "The head of a woman is her husband" (1 Cor 11:3). "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord" (Eph 5:22; cf. Col 3:18). "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men" (1 Tim 2:11-12). "Train the young women . . . to be submissive to their husbands" (Titus 2:4-5).

In light of the headship-submission principle, it is understandable why Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-34 would deny to women an authoritative speech function, such as questioning their husbands or church leaders in the church. To allow these things would have undermined the above principle. On the other hand, in 1 Corinthians 11:5, Paul readily allowed women who had proper demeanor to pray and prophesy in the church, because these activities did not involve assuming a position of authority over men.

Wives or Women? To defend his thesis that the principles of headship and submission apply only to the home and not to the church, our author

endeavors to prove again that “Paul is not addressing women in general in these verses, but certain Corinthian *wives*, since the same Greek word *gyne* can mean either ‘woman’ or ‘wife,’ depending upon the context. This becomes obvious in light of verse 35, in which reference is made to the husbands of these women: ‘And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home.’”⁶⁸ This restrictive interpretation overlooks some major considerations.

First, we already noted in our discussion of 1 Corinthians 11:3 that for Paul the husband-wife relationship is the paradigm for the man-woman relationship in general. Married women, who made up the majority of women in the congregation, served as a model for women in general. Stephen B. Clark illustrates this point with a fitting analogy: “If Paul had forbidden children to speak in public as an expression of their subordination to their parents, no one would hesitate to apply the rule to orphans as well as to children with parents. The parent-child relationship would be the normal case, but the rule would also apply to children with surrogate parents. Similarly, unmarried women would be expected to adhere to a rule for married women.”⁶⁹

Second, it is difficult to see why *only* married women would be singled out and required to be silent, especially since in 1 Corinthians 11 married women with a proper demeanor are permitted to speak. In much of the ancient world marriage meant an *improvement* in the freedom and status of women. Thus we have reason to believe that Paul and his readers would reason that if married women were enjoined to be silent, how much more the single ones?

Third, in 1 Corinthians 12 to 14 Paul assumes that all the members of the church, men and women, participate in worship. “When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all these things be done for edification” (1 Cor 14:26). If each member is encouraged to participate in worship, why would married women be excluded?

Fourth, we should note that Paul’s ruling concerning women in the church in 1 Corinthians 14 is given in the context of a chapter dealing with spiritual gifts which are given to all, irrespective of marital status. This makes it hard to believe that Paul would exclude married women from exercising their spiritual gifts. Paul’s concern is not to exclude the participation of married women from the worship service, but to ensure that all women exercise their spiritual gifts in accordance with God’s law. “They should be subordinate, as even the law says” (1 Cor 14:34). The “law” to which Paul refers is presumably the headship-submission principle which he grounds in the order of creation (1 Cor 11:79; 1 Tim 2:13-14). This principle, as we have

seen, applies to the behaviors of men and women in the church and not exclusively to the relationship between husbands and wives.

Fifth, are we really supposed to think, to use the words of Donald A. Carson, a highly respected Evangelical scholar, “that Christian women enjoyed full freedom and perfect egalitarianism in function in the church as long as they were single, and then from the day of their marriage onward became silent for fear of offending the husband to whom they were to submit? These considerations effectively dismiss those interpretations that admit that Paul insists on certain role distinctions between the sexes but limit such distinctions to the home, denying that they have any bearing on the church.”⁷⁰

3. Women and Leadership in the Church: 1 Timothy 2:9-15

From the earliest days of the New Testament church, most Christians have believed on the basis of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 that the New Testament places certain restrictions on the ministry of women in the church. It is not surprising that in the contemporary debate over the role of women in the church, this passage more than any other has polarized interpreters. The passage says, “Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.”

The significance of this passage lies in the fact that it specifically addresses the question of the role of women within the church by stating unequivocally: “I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent.” It is not surprising that this passage has been examined at great length by evangelicals who oppose or limit the full participation of women in the ministry of the church, as well as by those who support it.

In light of the immediate and wider context of the pastoral epistles,⁷¹ Paul’s intent is not to prohibit women from participating in the general teaching ministry of the church (“they [women] are to teach what is good,” Titus 2:3), but rather to restrain women from aspiring to the restricted teaching role of the leader of the congregation. The reason for Paul’s ruling is that the exercise of a headship function by a woman is incompatible with the submissive role which God at the creation assigned to women in the home and in the church.

Paul’s teachings regarding the role of women in the church appear to have been occasioned by false teachers who sowed dissension (1 Tim 1:4-6;

6:4-5; cf. 2 Tim 2:14, 16-17, 23-24) by teaching abstinence from certain foods, from marriage, and probably from sex altogether (1 Tim 4:1-3). These false teachers had persuaded many women to follow them in their ascetic program (1 Tim 5:15; 2 Tim 3:6-7). Apparently they were encouraging women to discard their submissive role in favor of a more egalitarian status with men. This is suggested by their encouragement to abstain from marriage (1 Tim 4:3), which indicates they probably denigrated traditional female roles. Paul's counsel in 1 Timothy 5:14 to young widows "to marry, bear children, rule their household" may also reflect his effort to counteract these false teachers by affirming traditional female roles in order to "give the enemy no occasion to revile us" (1 Tim 5:14).

The situation in Ephesus is remarkably similar to that of Corinth. In both metropolitan cities, church members appear to have been influenced by false teachers who promoted the removal of role distinctions between men and women. Most likely it was the need to counteract these false teachings that occasioned Paul's teaching about the roles of men and women in church ministry.

Contemporary Relevance. Paul's teachings on the role of women are relevant today, because in some ways the contemporary emancipation of women may closely reflect that of his time.⁷² If, as numerous scholars argue, Paul's opponents in the pastoral epistles included "women [who] were in the forefront of the libertarian trend"⁷³ as evidenced by their extravagant dress, the "forsaking of domestic roles such as raising children in order to assume such a prominent role in congregational life—as teaching,"⁷⁴ then Paul was addressing a situation strikingly similar to the one existing today.

The existence of a "women's liberation" movement in early Christianity is implied not only by Paul's strictness (1 Tim 2:11-12; 5:13; 2 Tim 3:6; 1 Cor 11:5-10; 14:34), but also by such post-New Testament documents as the fictional *Acts of Paul* (about A.D. 185). In this book, Paul commissions a woman, Thecla, to be a preacher and teacher of the word of God. "Go and teach the word of God," he says. Thecla obeys by going away to Iconium, where she "went into the house of Onesiphorus . . . and taught the oracles of God."⁷⁵

The attempt of this apocryphal document to present Paul, not as forbidding but as commissioning a woman to be an official teacher of the Word of God in the church, offers an additional indication of the possible existence of a feminist movement in Paul's time.⁷⁶ If such a movement existed at that time, then Paul's instruction on the role of women in the church would be particularly relevant to our time, when the feminist movement is gaining strength within the church.

Wives or Women? To defend his thesis that male headship applies only to the home and not to the church, the author interprets 1 Timothy 2:8-15 like the previous two Pauline passages. In his view, this passage also applies only to “the relationship of husbands and wives and not men and women in general.”⁷⁷ His arguments are similar to those already examined. For example, his first argument is that when “*gyne* and *aner* are found paired in close proximity, the reference is consistently to wife and husband and not women and men in general.”⁷⁸ He has used this argument with the two previous passages. The rest of his arguments are designed to buttress his contention that Paul’s ruling applies exclusively to husband-wife relationships.

Surprisingly, his arguments apparently did not persuade the very editor of the symposium, despite the fact that she argues for the same egalitarian view. She correctly observes, “The text itself seems to be discussing attitudes in worship rather than the marriage relationship.”⁷⁹ She recognizes that the purpose of 1 Timothy is not to instruct Timothy on how husbands and wives should relate to one another but on “how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim 3:14-15).

Our author’s attempt to differentiate between wives and women on the basis of the dual meaning of *gyne* is a legitimate academic exercise but is totally foreign to Paul’s thought. For the apostle the role of a wife in the home serves as a paradigm for the role of women in the church because, after all, the church is an extended spiritual family, the household of God. To this fundamental biblical concept we shall return shortly.

Had Paul intended to confine his prohibition in verse 12 only to the relationship of a wife to her husband, then he likely would have used a definite article or a possessive pronoun with *man*: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over *her* man.” This is how the apostle expressed himself when writing specifically about husband-wife relationships: “Wives, be subject to *your* (Greek *idiois*) husbands” (Eph 5:22; Col 3:18). But such a possessive pronoun is absent from 1 Timothy 2:12.

The context is abundantly clear. Paul addresses men and women in general as members of the church and not just husbands and wives, as he does in Ephesians 5:22-23 and Colossians 3:18-19. The apostle calls upon *all* men, not just husbands, to lift up holy hands in prayer (1 Tim 2:8). He summons *all* women, not just wives, to dress modestly (1 Tim 2:9). Similarly Paul prohibits *all* women, not just wives, to teach authoritatively as the head of the congregation (1 Tim 2:12). This teaching may not be popular, but it has the merit of being true to Scripture.

4. Excursus: The Church as a Family

Time and again throughout this study we have noted that our author differentiates between the roles of husband and wife in the home and of men and women in the church. Such a distinction presupposes that the church functions more like a service organization than like a family. In a service organization, roles are assigned on the basis of competence, irrespective of gender. In a family, however, it is different. Certain basic roles are determined by gender. A man is called to serve as a father and a woman as a mother. What is true for the home is equally true for the church. The reason is simple. In the Bible the church is seen not as a service organization but as an extended spiritual family, patterned after the natural family.

The Bible uses the family model to explain the respective roles of men and women within the church. Just as husbands and fathers ought to exercise godly leadership within the home, so upright and mature men ought to be appointed as spiritual fathers of the church, the household of God (1 Tim 3:1-5). Similarly, just as wives and mothers ought to nurture and train the children, so caring and mature women are to serve as spiritual mothers in the church (1 Tim 5:9-16; Titus 2:3-5). It is noteworthy that Deborah is praised in the Bible for having served God's people as "a mother in Israel" (Jud 5:7) rather than as judge. Just as in the case of marriage there is a certain distinction between the roles of father and mother, so in the church there is a certain distinction between the spiritual roles of men and women.

New Testament View of the Church as a Family. The New Testament teaches in various ways that the church is an extended spiritual family and not merely a service organization. By accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior, believers "receive adoption as sons" (Gal 4:5). As adopted children they call God "Abba! Father!" (Gal 4:6) and relate to one another as "brother and sister" (James 2:14-15; 1 Cor 8:11; 1 Thess 4:6; Rom 12:1). Within this spiritual family Christ Himself is called "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom 8:29). Believers are called "sons of God" and "children of God," in contrast to unbelievers, who are outside God's family (1 John 5:1-5). To be a child of God means to have intimate fellowship with God the Father (Rom 8:15) and with Jesus Christ our elder brother (Rom 8:29).

The pastor-elder functions as a spiritual father within the church family because of his role in bringing new converts into the church and nurturing them subsequently. For example, Paul refers to the Corinthian believers as his children and to himself as their father. "I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. . . . For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (1 Cor 4:14, 16; cf. Eph

5:1; Gal 3:26). Furthermore, he refers to church members as “beloved children” (Eph 5:1), “sons and daughters” (2 Cor 6:18), “brethren” (1 Cor 1:10, 11, 26; 2:1), “sisters” (Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 7:15), all terms indicative of a family relationship.

This understanding of the church as an extended family of believers, led by elders who function as spiritual fathers and shepherds, explains why women were not appointed as elders or pastors, namely because their role was seen as being that of mothers and not fathers.

Paul develops the theme of the church as the family or household of God especially in his first letter to Timothy. He calls Timothy his “son” (1 Tim 1:2, 18) and advises him to treat older men like “a father; younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity” (1 Tim 5:1-2). He also reminds Timothy that a church leader must be a respectable family man, with the tried virtues of fatherhood. “The saying is sure: If anyone aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God’s church?” (1 Tim 3:1-5).

The analogy between the church and the family is not an incidental illustration but the basis for defining leadership roles in the church. In effect, Paul is saying that a fundamental criterion for appointing a man to serve as church leader is a track record of being a good father. Why? Because the same skills and spiritual headship needed for a father to manage well “one’s own house” are also required for overseeing the church family.

Women as Spiritual Fathers? The analogy between the church and the family helps us understand why the Bible precludes appointing a woman to serve as the representative spiritual father and shepherd of a congregation. The reason is not that women are less capable than men of piety, zeal, learning, leadership, preaching, or whatever else it takes to serve as a pastor, but simply because such a role is perceived in the New Testament as being that of a spiritual father and not of a spiritual mother. The New Testament emphasizes the importance of respecting the functional role distinctions of men and women established by God at creation. These role distinctions, we have noted, do not imply superiority or inferiority, but reflect a divine design and concern for well-ordered and harmonious relations within the home and the church.

Men and women were created *not superior and inferior*, but rather *different from and complementary to* one another. What God made woman to *be* and what He intends her to *do* make her different from but not inferior to man. This difference is reflected in the different roles men and women are called to fulfill in life. The woman is to be wife and mother, while the man is to be husband and father. As a father, a man is called to be the caring head and guardian of a home. This divinely established role in the natural family must be reflected in the church, because the church is the extended family of God. This means that to appoint a woman to serve as elder or pastor is analogous to assigning her the role of fatherhood in the family.

The Danger of the Partnership Paradigm. The biblical model of different yet complementary roles for men and women in the home and in the church may well be a scandal to liberal and evangelical feminists bent on promoting the egalitarian, partnership paradigm. Nonetheless, Christians committed to the authority and wisdom of the Scriptures cannot ignore or reject a most fundamental biblical principle. Blurring or eliminating the role distinctions God assigned to men and women in the home and in the church is not only contrary to His creational design but also accelerates the breakdown of the family, church structure, and society.

Donald G. Bloesch, a well-known evangelical theologian inclined toward the ordination of women, acknowledges that “it cannot be denied that the women’s liberation movement, for all its solid gains, has done much to blur the distinctions between the sexes and that many women who have entered the ministry appear committed to the eradication of these distinctions.”⁸⁰ This trend, as Bloesch observes, “is in no small way responsible for accelerating divorce and the breakdown of the family.”⁸¹ Feminist ideologies are generally opposed to the sanctity of the family and to the worthiness of the call to motherhood. The reason is that such ideologies, as Michael Novak keenly observes, “thrive best where individuals stand innocent of the concrete demands of loyalty, responsibility, and common sense into which family life densely thrusts them.”⁸²

To realize freedom from the constraints of motherhood, some Evangelical feminists, like their liberal counterparts, denigrate the role of woman as homemaker and advocate abortion on demand. Donald Bloesch warns that “the fact that some clergywomen today in the mainline Protestant denominations are championing the cause of lesbianism (and a few are even practicing a lesbian life-style) should give the church pause in its rush to promote women’s liberation.”⁸³ Such things ought likewise to give us pause in the rush to promote women’s ordination, one facet of the women’s liberation movement.

The Danger of Role Reversals. Another important consideration is the negative impact of role reversal when a woman serves in the headship role of elder or pastor in the church. If male headship in the church is replaced by that of a woman, male headship in the family will be imperiled. The headship of a husband in his family can hardly remain unaffected if a woman or his own wife serves as the head of the congregation to which he belongs. What impact will this role reversal also have on the families of the congregations? Will it not at least tempt some women in the congregation to arrogate to themselves a position of headship in the family similar to the headship exercised in the church by their female pastor?

Consideration must also be given to the impact of the role modeling a female pastor can have on the children of divided families who have no father figure in their homes. To these children the pastor sometimes becomes the only positive father role model in their lives. A female pastor would deprive these children of an appropriate father role model.

Even more crucial is the negative impact that role reversal can have in our apprehension of God as our heavenly Father. Vern Poythress perceptively remarks that “the absence of godly, fatherly leadership within the church makes the affirmation of the Fatherhood of God closer to an abstraction. God’s Fatherhood is, of course, illustrated preeminently in the great deeds of the history of redemption that embody His fatherly rule, care, and discipline. But we are richer in our understanding of God because most of us have enjoyed having a human father, and we are richer still if we can see the fatherly care and rule of God embodied at a practical level in the older men of the church (Titus 2:2) and especially in the overseers.”⁸⁴

C. S. Lewis rightly warns that “we have no authority to take the living and seminal figures which God has painted on the canvas of our nature and shift them about as if they were mere geometrical figures.”⁸⁵ The sexual role distinctions, Lewis notes, go beyond physical appearance. They serve “to symbolize the hidden things of God.”⁸⁶ Lewis warns that when we are in the church, “we are dealing with male and female not merely as facts of nature but as the live and awful shadows of realities utterly beyond our control and largely beyond our direct knowledge.”⁸⁷

Lewis means that the male role of father in the home and of the pastor as spiritual father in the household of faith (1 Cor 4:15) points to a much greater reality, “largely beyond our direct knowledge,” namely, that of the heavenly Father, the original and ultimate “Father” of the home, the church, and the human family. Paul clearly expresses this connection in Ephesians 3:14-15. “For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom all fatherhood

(*patria*) in heaven and on earth derives its name” (NIV margin). The text suggests that all earthly fathers, whether biological fathers in the home or spiritual fathers in the church, reflect the image of the heavenly “Father,” albeit in a human, creaturely way.

It is in no way derogatory to the female sex to affirm that an elder or pastor exercises fatherhood and not motherhood for God’s family, because as E. L. Mascall observes, “his office is a participation in God’s own relationship to his people and God is our Father in heaven and not our Mother.”⁸⁸ The female sex has its own distinctive dignity and function, but it cannot represent the Fatherhood of God to His people, a dominant theme in both Old and New Testaments. The reason is simple. The sexual and symbolic role of a woman is that of mother and not of father. To change the nature of the symbol means to distort the apprehension of the reality to which the symbol points. To put it simply, a woman who stands for motherhood cannot appropriately represent the Fatherhood of God in the home or in the extended family of faith, the church.

CONCLUSION

The objective of our study has been to examine *Women in Ministry*’s fundamental thesis that the role distinctions of husband-headship and wife-submission originated as a result of the Fall (Gen 3:16) and apply exclusively to the home. Consequently, he contends, in the church women can serve even in headship positions over men.

Our study has shown that the author’s thesis, though ingeniously defended, does not do justice to the biblical witness. We have found that the principles of male headship and female submission are rooted in the order of creation and apply not only in the home but also in the church. The Fall marks not the institution of the wife’s submission but its distortion into oppressive domination.

Respect for the principles of male headship and female submission is evident in both the Old and the New Testament. Women served with distinction in ancient Israel and in the New Testament church in various vital ministries, yet they were never ordained to function as priests, elders, or pastors. The reasons were not socio-cultural but theological, namely, the recognition that God created man to serve in a servant-headship role in the home and in the community of faith.

The nature of this investigation has required that considerable attention be given to headship and submission in the man-woman relationship because of *Women in Ministry*’s attempt to restrict it to the home. The study

of this important principle should not be seen as an end in itself, but rather as an exploration of a divine plan designed to ensure unity in diversity. “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Cor 12:12-13). The reason why God gave different gifts and functions to men and women is not that we may argue about who is the greatest in the kingdom, but that men and women, as joint heirs of the gift of eternal life, may use their different gifts to build up the body of Christ and bring human beings with their many differences into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. In willingly following the divine plan, we will find our greatest strength and harmony both in our homes and in the church.

ENDNOTES

1. Nancy Vyhmeister, ed., *Women in Ministry* (Berrien Springs, Mich., 1998), p. 257.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 434.
3. Richard M. Davidson, “Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture,” *Women in Ministry*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, Mich., 1998), p. 259.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 284.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Richard M. Davidson (note 3), p. 261.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Nancy Vyhmeister (note 1), p. 342.
10. Richard M. Davidson (note 3), p. 262.
11. Werner Neuer, *Man and Woman in Christian Perspective* (Wheaton, Ill., 1991), p. 70.
12. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 46.
13. Richard M. Davidson (note 3), p. 262.
14. George W. Knight III, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Chicago, 1985), p. 31.

15. Richard M. Davidson (note 3), p. 262.

16. Raymond C. Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Ill., 1991), pp. 103-104.

17. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, trans. J. H. Marks (Philadelphia, 1961), p. 80.

18. Ibid.

19. James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, 1981), p. 211.

20. Raymond C. Ortlund (note 16), p. 103.

21. Richard M. Davidson (note 3), p. 263.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation* (Waco, Tex., 1974), p. 28; cf. Paul K. Jewett (n. 35), p. 110.

25. Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, N. J., 1979), p. 62.

26. Richard M. Davidson (note 3), p. 284.

27. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1950), p. 153.

28. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 56. The story makes the most sense if, as Ellen White says, Adam was not with Eve at the tree. Had he been at the tree, how could one account for his silence during Eve's dialog with the serpent? Eve's giving some of the fruit to her husband "with her," then, takes place when she finds him and persuades him also to eat.

29. Ibid., p. 59.

30. Richard M. Davidson (note 3), p. 284.

31. Werner Neuer (note 11), p. 76.

32. H. C. Leupold (note 27), p. 172.

33. Richard M. Davidson (note 3), p. 267.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 268.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 269, citing *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 59.

36. George W. Knight III (note 14), p. 31.

37. Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: an Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1957), p. 77. See also H. P. Liddon, *Explanatory Analysis of St. Paul's First Epistle to Timothy* (Minneapolis, 1978), p. 19.

38. Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1975), p. 60.

39. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D. C., 1957), vol. 7, p. 296.

40. George W. Knight III (note 14), p. 32. The same view is expressed by Douglas J. Moo: "In vv. 13-14, then, Paul substantiates his teaching in vv. 11-12 by arguing that the created order establishes a relationship of subordination of woman to man, which order, if bypassed, leads to disaster" ("1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance," *Trinity Journal* 1/1 [1980]: 70).

41. For a fuller discussion, see chapters 1 and 2 of my book *Women in the Church: a Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church* (Berrien Springs, Mich., 1987).

42. Richard M. Davidson (note 2), pp. 270-271.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 272.

45. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1979), p. 67.

46. Jacques B. Doukhan, "Women Priests in Israel: A Case for their Absence," *Women in Ministry*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, Mich., 1998), p. 38.

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50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., p. 33.

52. Ibid., p. 34.

53. Ibid., p. 35.

54. James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1981), p. 52.

55. John Meyendorff, "The Orthodox Churches," in *The Ordination of Women: Pro and Con*, ed. Michael P. Hamilton and Nancy S. Montgomery (New York, 1975), p. 130.

56. Jacques B. Doukhan (note 46), p. 37.

57. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 61.

58. H. C. Leupold (note 27), p. 179.

59. Clarence J. Vos, *Woman in Old Testament Worship* (Delft, England, 1968), p. 207.

60. Richard M. Davidson (note 3), pp. 281, 280, emphasis his.

61. A lengthy analysis of these texts is available in my book *Women in the Church* (note 41), chapter 6.

62. W. Larry Richards, "How Does a Woman Prophesy and Keep Silence at the Same Time? (1 Corinthians 11 and 14)," *Women in Ministry*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, Mich., 1998), pp. 313-333.

63. Richard M. Davidson (note 3), p. 275.

64. Ibid.

65. Ralph H. Alexander, "An Exegetical Presentation on 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and 1 Timothy 2:8-15," Paper presented at the Seminar on Women in Ministry, Western Baptist Seminary, November 1976, pp. 5-6.

66. Fritz Zerbst, *The Office of Woman in the Church* (St. Louis, Mo., 1955), p. 33.

67. For a fuller discussion of this issue, see my *Women in the Church* (note 41), pp. 164-173.

68. Richard M. Davidson (note 3), p. 276, emphasis his.

69. Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1980), p. 187.

70. Donald A. Carson, "'Silent in the Churches:' On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Ill., 1991), p. 151.

71. For a fuller examination of 1 Timothy 2:11-15, see chapter 6 of my book *Women in the Church* (note 41); in the present treatment I am stating only my conclusions.

72. For information on the improved social status of women in the Roman world in New Testament times, see Mary Lefkowitz and Maureen Fant, *Women in Greece and Rome* (Toronto, 1977); J. P. V. D. Balsolon, *Roman Women* (London, 1962).

73. Philip B. Payne, "Libertarian Women in Ephesus: A Response to Douglas J. Moo's Article: '1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance,'" *Trinity Journal* 2 (1981), p. 190; see also David M. Scholer, "1 Timothy 2:9-15 and the Place of Women in the Church's Ministry" in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, Ill., 1986), pp. 195-205; Catherine Clark Kroeger, "1 Timothy 2:12—A Classicist's View," in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, Ill., 1986), pp. 226-232.

74. See Carroll D. Osburn, "Authenteo (1 Timothy 2:12)," *Restoration Quarterly* 25 (1983), p. 11.

75. *Acts of Paul* 41, 42, in *New Testament Apocrypha*, eds. Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Philadelphia, 1965), vol. 2, p. 364; Tertullian challenges the use that some made of Thecla's example to defend the right of women to teach and to baptize, by pointing out that the presbyter who fabricated the story was convicted and removed from office (*On Baptism* 17).

76. The suggestion is made by Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles, Hermeneia* (Philadelphia, 1972), p. 48.

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79. Nancy Vyhmeister (note 1), p. 342.

80. Donald G. Bloesch, *Is the Bible Sexist?* (Westchester, Ill., 1982), p. 56.

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82. Michael Novak, "Man and Woman He Made Them," *Communio* 8 (Spring 1981), p. 248.

83. Donald G. Bloesch (note 79), p. 56.

84. Vern Sheridan Poythress, "The Church as Family: Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Ill., 1991), pp. 245-246.

85. C. S. Lewis, "Priestesses in the Church," in *God in the Dock*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1970), p. 238.

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88. E. L. Mascall, "Women and the Priesthood of the Church," in *Why Not? Priesthood and the Ministry of Women*, eds. Michael Bruce and G. E. Duffield (Appleford, England, 1972), pp. 111-112. Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph.D., is Professor of Religion, Andrews University.

Chapter 10

ELLEN WHITE AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

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In accord with historic Protestant teaching, Seventh-day Adventists give priority to the Bible as the rule of faith and practice for the Christian. They also believe that God has given a prophetic witness to the church in the life and work of Ellen G. White (1827-1915). This witness was not to supersede the Bible nor to be an addition to the canon of Scripture, but to call attention to the truths of Scripture and to make their application plain. In light of its belief in the prophetic role of Ellen White (often called simply “Mrs. White”), the church takes her writings seriously, viewing them as a source of “comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.”¹

What was Mrs. White’s stance in regard to the ordination of women? The interest within the Adventist church in the matter of whether to change church polity to include women among those eligible for ordination has prompted some to search Mrs. White’s writings for indications for or against the issue. Not surprisingly, the variety of ideas and opinions about what the church should do have been accompanied by differing constructions of what her position was.

Objective. Since most of the work on this matter has endeavored to find support for women’s ordination in Mrs. White’s writings or in her involvement in certain matters of the Adventist Church’s history, the purpose of this study is to examine the validity of such claims as have come to my attention and to present briefly what Ellen White taught regarding the ministry of women in the church. In so doing I will not document the sources of the claims to be examined. Addressing the issues raised is more important

than identifying the individuals who have articulated the various views, some of whom are my personal friends, and all of whom have my respect. Our mutual interest is best served simply in learning what is truth and following it. In areas where we may come to differing conclusions, Christian courtesy will lead us to guard the feelings and reputations of those whose positions we may regard to be in error.

PART I

ELLEN WHITE'S

"ORDINATION" STATEMENTS

1. The 1895 "Ordination" Statement

Women to Be Set Apart. The nearest that Ellen White came to calling explicitly for women to be ordained is in the following statement, published in 1895: "Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work. Place the burdens upon men and women of the church, that they may grow by reason of the exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness."²

This statement clearly calls for a setting apart to a special work. On the basis of the counsel that these women "be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands," we might even venture to use the term "ordination." But ordination to what? Note the elements of her statement.

1. This ministry is part-time. "Women who can devote some of their time. . . ." Therefore, from the start, it does not seem to be referring to pastoral ministry.

2. The work is something other than what the church was already doing. "This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor."

3. It may not even involve holding a church office in the usual sense of the term. The women should be “appointed.” The clause, “In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers³ or minister,” may be construed as placing them in a category other than that of church officer, although this is by no means certain. Yet it is clear that they are not equated with “the minister,” nor are they being regarded as the officers whose responsibility it is to lead the local congregation.

So was Mrs. White here calling for an ordained woman ministry? If one uses the term “ministry” in its broad sense of service, yes. But she has clearly distinguished this “ordained ministry” from that of the pastor or the leading church officers. To say that this statement supports ordaining women to positions of congregational leadership or ecclesiastical authority is, it seems to me, simply not supported by the elements of the statement itself.

The Context of the Statement. The article in which the statement is contained, entitled “The Duty of the Minister and the People,” is a call for involvement of the laity in the work of the church, which ministers and conference officers were apparently undervaluing and discouraging. Its purpose is not to change the structure of the pastoral ministry, but rather to change its emphasis from one in which most of the burdens are seized and carried by the minister, to one in which the laity is active and motivated in the work of the church. A candid reading of the entire article will make this clear, especially the following portion, which even refers to one of the duties of the women appointees mentioned:

The minister’s work is the lay member’s work as well. Heart should be bound to heart. Let all press forward, shoulder to shoulder. Is not every true follower of Christ open to receive his teachings? And should not all have an opportunity to learn of Christ’s methods by practical experience? Why not put them to work visiting the sick and assisting in other ways, and thus keep the church in a workable condition? All would thus be kept in close touch with the minister’s plans, so that he could call for their assistance at any moment, and they would be able to labor intelligently with him. All should be laborers together with God, and then the minister can feel that he has helpers in whom it is safe to trust. The minister can hasten this desirable end by showing that he *has* confidence in the workers by setting them to work.⁴

2. “Ordination” of Women Physicians

Setting Apart of Physicians. Since Mrs. White said that women should train as physicians,⁵ and in another statement she calls for an “ordination” of physicians who are engaged in missionary work and soul-winning,

some have felt that here we would find her authorization for ordaining women. The latter statement reads as follows:

The work of the true medical missionary is largely a spiritual work. It includes prayer and the laying on of hands; he therefore should be as sacredly set apart for his work as is the minister of the gospel. Those who are selected to act the part of missionary physicians, are to be set apart as such. This will strengthen them against the temptation to withdraw from the sanitarium work to engage in private practice. No selfish motive should be allowed to draw the worker from his post of duty. We are living in a time of solemn responsibilities; a time when consecrated work is to be done. Let us seek the Lord diligently and understandingly.⁶

A Qualified “Ordination.” Does Ellen White here call for physicians to be ordained as ministers? Were that her intention, she could have said it much more directly: “he therefore should be set apart as a minister.” But her wording, as I understand it, is more circuitous simply because she intends something else. He is to be *as* sacredly set apart *as is* the minister. The missionary physician is to be set apart *as such*. As what? As a *missionary physician*. That is made even clearer by the motivation for doing it—to strengthen him against the temptation to leave the sanitarium work to engage in private practice. Ordaining physicians as ministers would not be likely to have a bearing on that, but ordaining them as missionary physicians would.

In speaking of the spiritual nature of the work of a true medical missionary, Mrs. White says this work “involves prayer and the laying on of hands.” No one would argue that she was here saying that the work of the medical missionary involved ordaining people to the gospel ministry, or even ordaining elders. Quite clearly she is here speaking of prayer for the sick. This statement is an indication that the expression “prayer and the laying on of hands” may refer to more than one thing, not simply to ordination to the gospel ministry.

So again we return to the important question to ask when considering these statements of Ellen White: when she called for ordination, it was ordination *to what*? This statement will not support the assertion that she called for women to be included in the ordained pastoral ministry.

3. Women in Church Ministry

Ordination to Gospel Ministry? Ellen White was clear that women can and should “labor in the gospel ministry.” Her statement, as it appears in *Evangelism*, reads, “There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry. In many respects they would do more good than the ministers who

neglect to visit the flock of God.”⁷ Women who do such labor, especially full-time, were to be paid fairly for their work from the tithe. “The tithe should go to those who labor in word and doctrine, be they men or women.”⁸ She added, “Seventh-day Adventists are not in any way to belittle woman’s work.”⁹

From statements such as these, some have concluded that Mrs. White called for elimination of any role distinction between men and women in the ministry of the Adventist Church. They infer that, since she clearly urged fairness in the treatment of women workers, this should be understood to include ordination to the gospel ministry irrespective of gender.

Did Mrs. White intend that such a use be made of her statements? In the absence of a statement from her addressing the issue directly, absolute proof may be beyond us. But we can gather evidence from her statements that may help us to determine more precisely what she was and was not saying.

Personal Ministry. First, we must let Mrs. White tell us what kind of work she is talking about when she says, “There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry.”¹⁰ The statement comes from Manuscript 43a, 1898 (Manuscript Release #330), which opens with this paragraph:

Some matters have been presented to me in regard to the laborers who are seeking to do all in their power to win souls to Jesus Christ. The ministers are paid for their work, and this is well. And if the Lord gives the wife as well as the husband the burden of labor, and if she devotes her time and her strength to visiting from family to family, opening the Scriptures to them, although the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her, she is accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry. Should her labors be counted as nought, and her husband’s salary be no more than that of the servant of God whose wife does not give herself to the work, but remains at home to care for her family?¹¹

The subject under discussion is the pay of ministers’ wives, and the kind of work they are doing is described: visiting homes and opening the Scriptures to the families. Further, Mrs. White dismisses the matter of ordination as irrelevant to the issue, rather than seeing it as a remedy to the injustice regarding pay. Her point is simply that these ministers’ wives, who are functioning as what we would call Bible Instructors, are “accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry,” and they should be paid for such ministry.

Later in the same document she again refers to this visitation-oriented work these women were doing and includes an implied rebuke to the ministers who were not doing it.

If women do the work that is not the most agreeable to many of those who labor in word and doctrine, and if their works testify that they are accomplishing a work that has been manifestly neglected, should not such labor be looked upon as being as rich in results as the work of the ordained ministers? Should it not command the hire of the laborer?¹²

Visitation Ministry. It is in this setting that Mrs. White's statement, "There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry," appears. The sentence that follows it again underscores the nature of the work she envisioned for these women: "In many respects they would do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God." Immediately she adds, "Husband and wife may unite in this work, and when it is possible, they should. The way is open for consecrated women."¹³

So it seems that she is not calling for women to have role- interchangeability with men, but rather a complementary ministry that focuses on personal work. Her statements seem primarily to deal with ministers' wives, encouraging a husband-wife ministry. She noted the lack of ordination for the woman, but gave no indication that she was calling for that status to change. On the other hand, she left no doubt that the status of the pay issue should change:

This question is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled it. You are to do your duty to the women who labor in the gospel, whose work testifies that they are essential to carry the truth into families. Their work is just the work that must be done. In many respects a woman can impart knowledge to her sisters that a man cannot. The cause would suffer great loss without this kind of labor. Again and again the Lord has shown me that women teachers are just as greatly needed to do the work to which He has appointed them as are men. They should not be compelled by the sentiments and rules of others to depend upon donations for their payment, any more than should the ministers.¹⁴

In another place Mrs. White talked about the same problem, and named some of the women she was concerned for as well as describing their work: "There are ministers' wives, Srs. Starr, Haskell, Wilson and Robinson, who have been devoted, earnest, whole-souled workers, giving Bible readings and praying with families, helping along by personal efforts just as successfully as their husbands. These women give their whole time, and are told that they receive nothing for their labors because their husbands receive wages. . . . I will feel it my duty to create a fund from my tithe money, to pay these women who are accomplishing just as essential work as the ministers are doing, and this tithe I will reserve for work in the same line as that of ministers, hunting for souls, fishing for souls. . . . These sisters are giving their time to educating those newly come to the faith. . . ."¹⁵

As nearly as I can tell, this is the kind of “gospel ministry” that Ellen White envisioned women doing. In all the places that I have seen where she defines or describes gospel ministry for women, she does so in terms of this personal work, especially directed toward other women and families. She seems to have been thinking especially, though perhaps not exclusively, about the wives of ministers and their opportunities for service. She believes that the ordained ministers should also “visit the flock of God,” but she sees in women a special suitability to this work.

4. Women as Pastors to the Flock

A Call for Women Pastors? In the above statement from 1898, in which Ellen White says “There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry,” she describes that labor as we would the work of a Bible Instructor. She associated this work with care for (visiting) “the flock of God.” This statement may provide a key to a clearer understanding of a statement published two years later: “All who desire an opportunity for true ministry, and who will give themselves unreservedly to God, will find in the canvassing work opportunities to speak upon many things pertaining to the future, immortal life. The experience thus gained will be of the greatest value to those who are fitting themselves for the ministry. It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God.”¹⁶ The remainder of the paragraph describes the benefits of character and experience that will come to those who engage in the canvassing work.

Some hold that Ellen White is here calling for women, under the preparation of the Holy Spirit, to become gospel ministers in the commonly-accepted sense of the term today, that is, the conference-employed, perhaps even ordained, leader of a local congregation. But is that how she used the term “pastor” in this passage?

Personal Shepherding. First, though “pastor” may be our common term, it was not Ellen White’s. Her common term was “minister.” Our laserdisc concordance of the published writings of Mrs. White shows that her usages of “minister,” “ministers,” “minister’s,” etc. (which include uses as verbs), outnumber use of similar words built around “pastor” by more than 50 to 1. Even so, by far the majority of her uses of these “pastor” terms simply designates the minister at the head of the congregation.

But in some passages we find evidence of other meanings. In such statements the term “pastor” is often used in connection with “the flock.” The references show concern for nurture of God’s people, as a shepherd might show tender personal care for each individual sheep. One such reference

where Mrs. White makes this nurturing connotation explicit is in the following account, written from Australia in 1892: “Elder H used to live here and preach to the people, but he was not a shepherd of the flock. He would tell the poor sheep that he would rather be horse-whipped than visit. He neglected personal labor, therefore pastoral work was not done in the church and its borders. . . . Had the preacher done the work of a pastor, a much larger number would now be rejoicing in the truth.”¹⁷

Other examples of this specialized usage of “pastor” may be cited briefly. In referring to ministers who have educated themselves as debaters, Mrs. White said, “In many respects men trained in this kind of school unfitted themselves to become pastors of the sheep and lambs.”¹⁸ Speaking of ministers who devote excessive time to reading and writing, she says, “The duties of a pastor are often shamelessly neglected because the minister lacks strength to sacrifice his personal inclinations for seclusion and study. The pastor should visit from house to house among his flock, teaching, conversing, and praying with each family, and looking out for the welfare of their souls.”¹⁹

Her concern for personal care for the flock is expressed again this way: “Responsibilities must be laid upon the members of the church. The missionary spirit should be awakened as never before, and workers should be appointed as needed, who will act as pastors to the flock, putting forth personal effort to bring the church up to that condition where spiritual life and activity will be seen in all her borders.”²⁰ In each instance here the concept of “pastor” is associated with personal work for the flock of God, even when it is done by “members of the church” rather than the minister. One who visits families, teaching them and praying with them, showing personal care and interest, is doing pastoral work.

Itinerant Ministry. Second, the work of the Adventist minister in Ellen White’s time was quite different from the work of the “pastor” as we know it today. The ministers were largely evangelists, raising up a church in a place, getting it established, and then moving on to another place. The idea of a settled ministry whose duties were primarily with those who were already believers is a fairly recent innovation in the Adventist Church, developing in the 1930’s, 40’s, and especially 50’s.²¹ In the setting of such an itinerant ministry, Mrs. White’s term, “pastors to the flock of God,” at times denotes not so much an office as a function, performed in personal ministry to the sheep of Jesus’s flock.

This is why canvassing (selling religious books from door to door) is such a good preparation for ministry. It gets the worker out visiting in homes,

doing personal labor, seeking to bring the lost sheep into the Lord's flock, or (we might say) pastoring the flock of God. It is a work that both men and women can and should do. But such a work does not *necessarily* involve appointment to the headship role of a congregation or ordination to the gospel ministry.

Personal Ministry in the Home. Third, in a parallel passage a few pages later in the same book, Ellen White explicitly shows that her endorsement of canvassing as preparation for the ministry is based on its orientation toward personal ministry in the home: "Some men whom God was calling to the work of the ministry have entered the field as canvassers. I have been instructed that this is an excellent preparation if their object is to disseminate light, to bring the truths of God's word directly to the home circle. In conversation the way will often be opened for them to speak of the religion of the Bible. If the work is entered upon as it should be, families will be visited, the workers will manifest Christian tenderness and love for souls, and great good will be the result. This will be an excellent experience for any who have the ministry in view.

Those who are fitting for the ministry can engage in no other occupation that will give them so large an experience as will the canvassing work."²² This personal work in the home, which is at the heart of the canvassing work, is the very method of labor for which Mrs. White said women were especially fitted and in which they could do a work "in the line of ministry" that men could not do.

The Need for Male Ministers. Fourth, elsewhere in this same volume Ellen White discusses the need for more ministers to be trained and enter the field. If at this time she had intended to open the regular ministerial option for women, one might well expect her to say so. But note the references to gender in the following: "There is an urgent demand for laborers in the gospel field. Young men are needed for this work; God calls for them. Their education is of primary importance in our colleges, and in no case should it be ignored or regarded as a secondary matter. It is entirely wrong for teachers, by suggesting other occupations, to discourage young men who might be qualified to do acceptable work in the ministry. Those who present hindrances to prevent young men from fitting themselves for this work are counterworking the plans of God, and they will have to give an account of their course. There is among us more than an average of men of ability. If their capabilities were brought into use, we should have twenty ministers where we now have one."²³

This view is reinforced later in the same volume where Section Seven, “Calls to Service,” opens with an article entitled, “Young Men in the Ministry.”²⁴ Among numerous calls for “men” and “young men” to enter the ministry, there is no mention of women being urged to join the ranks of the ministers, mention which we might well expect if it had been Mrs. White’s intention earlier in the volume to indicate that women as well as men were to prepare for the regular gospel ministry.

So in the statement with which this section opened, in which Mrs. White said that “the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit. . . prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God,” was she calling for women as well as men to be pastors in today’s sense of the term? Her use of the term “pastor” to describe a function as well as an office and her recognition that the two did not always go together leave open an alternative interpretation—that “pastors to the flock of God” designates those who exercise a personal ministry of visitation and instruction in the home.

If one chooses to adopt the alternative explanation, then the statement is harmonious with other statements Mrs. White makes about the kind of work women are especially qualified to do, fulfilling a role that is complementary to that of men. It also harmonizes with her specifically male-directed calls for ministerial workers in the same volume of the *Testimonies*. If on the other hand one chooses to say that this passage does call for women to serve in the office of pastor, then one must account for the singularity of this statement—there are no other, different statements that make the same point in an unequivocal manner.

Women as Ministers? Some have thought a passage from *Testimonies*, Vol. 8, pp. 229-230 provided such a different, confirming statement about women serving as ministers in the same capacity as men: “Young men and young women who should be engaged in the ministry, in Bible work, and in the canvassing work should not be bound down to mechanical employment.” The context is a call for our institutions to train the young people for evangelistic work. Here it seems that “the ministry” is distinguished from “Bible work,” a distinction that seems somewhat blurred in other major statements.

One could argue that in this statement Mrs. White is urging both young men and women to go into all three lines of labor. But that is not necessarily the case. The statement may be understood simply to be urging young people to go into whatever line of evangelistic work is suitable to them, without trying to specify what is appropriate to each gender. To make such

a distinction clear is difficult without the sentence becoming wordy and ungainly. And one should note that the burden of the message is not to change church polity to make room for women to serve in the same capacities as men, but rather to encourage the employment of both men and women in soul-winning work rather than in manual labor.

5. Women in Preaching Ministry?

“Address the crowd whenever you can.” This injunction, published in *Evangelism*, p. 473, in a section the compilers entitled “Women in Public Ministry,” was addressed to Mrs. S. M. I. Henry, who had already been granted a ministerial license the previous year. It has been taken by some as Mrs. White’s encouragement for women to seek a preaching ministry, which today is equated with being an ordained minister of the church.

Is Ellen White here promoting the employment of women as ministers in the usual sense of the term? No. The context is clearly a concern for the women of the church to be instructed how to be servants of Jesus. The statement comes from a letter from Mrs. White, published in Mrs. Henry’s column in the *Review* of May 9, 1899. In the paragraph right before the passage quoted in *Evangelism*, she writes of her concern for the sisters: “If we can, my sister, we should speak often to our sisters, and *lead* them in the place of saying ‘Go.’ Lead them to do as we should do: to feel as we should feel, a strong and abiding perception of the value of the human soul. We are learners that we may be teachers. This idea must be imprinted in the mind of every church-member” (emphasis hers). The concern for the sisters is explicit again two paragraphs after the *Evangelism* passage: “Teach our sisters that every day the question is to be, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do this day?”

A Special Ministry. To what work was Mrs. White specifically encouraging Mrs. Henry? The first three paragraphs of the letter make it plain: “The work you are doing to help our sisters feel their individual accountability to God is a good and necessary work. Long has it been neglected; but when this work has been laid out in clear lines, simple and definite, we may expect that the essential duties of the home, instead of being neglected, will be done much more intelligently. The Lord would ever have us urge upon those who do not understand, the worth of the human soul.

If we can arrange, as you are now working, to have regularly organized companies intelligently instructed in regard to the part they should act as servants of the Master, our churches will have life and vitality such as have been so long needed.

Christ our Saviour appreciated the excellency of the soul. Our sisters have generally a very hard time, with their increasing families and their unappreciated trials. I have so longed for women who could be educators to help them to arise from their discouragement, and to feel that they could do work for the Lord. And this effort is bringing rays of sunshine into their lives, and is being reflected upon the hearts of others. God will bless you, and all who shall unite with you, in this grand work.”

Teaching Ministry. It seems that Mrs. Henry’s work was to encourage the establishment of regularly organized companies, presumably of women, and to instruct them in how to serve Christ. This would add life and vitality to the churches. In addition, Mrs. White encouraged her to “address the crowd whenever you can.” This probably included the Adventist pulpits, though it seems it was not limited to them.

The article on Mrs. Henry in the *SDA Encyclopedia* notes, “In 1898 she conceived a plan for what she called ‘woman ministry.’ Lecturing on the role of the mother in the moral education of society, she stressed this from coast to coast in the United States and Canada. She also presented her plan to SDA congregations. A. W. Spalding remarked later that in the work instituted in the SDA Church by Mrs. Henry came ‘the first semblance of an organized effort to train parents and to give help in their problems.’”²⁵

Ellen White was not encouraging Mrs. Henry to aspire to a pulpit ministry, nor to become a minister in the usual sense of that term. She was counseling her to continue in her teaching ministry, to use every opportunity that might come her way (including pulpit invitations) to promote her view of “woman ministry” (and, for that matter, laywork irrespective of gender), a view that would strengthen the home and family life and help women see the value and beauty in serving Christ, even within their traditional roles.

When Ellen White herself published the material she had written to Mrs. Henry, she did not publish the entire letter, but reworked portions of it for general use. She published it in *Testimonies*, Volume 6, pp. 114-116, under the title, “Women to Be Gospel Workers.” And the section where Mrs. White said, “Address the crowd whenever you can,” does not appear there.

PART II

HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS

Interest has been shown recently in certain historical matters surrounding the ministry of Ellen White. It would be well to examine these carefully.

1. Was Ellen White Ordained?

No Record. There is no record of Ellen White ever having been ordained by the laying on of human hands. Yet from 1871 until her death she was granted “ministerial credentials” by various organization of the church. The certificate that was used said, “Ordained Minister.” Three of her credential certificates from the mid 1880’s are still in our possession. It is interesting to note that on one of them (1885) the word “ordained” is neatly struck out. On the 1887 certificate, the next one we have, it is not.

Had she been ordained in the interim? Some have seemed to imply that such might have been the case. But if so, that leaves open the question why she had been voted the credentials of an ordained minister for the previous fifteen years. In those years, as well as in the years following, her name simply appears in the listings of those being voted ministerial credentials. The difference between the 1885 certificate with “ordained” crossed out and the one following it from 1887, where “ordained” was allowed to stand, cannot be significant, because on a still-earlier certificate from 1883 (which we also have) the word “ordained” has not been struck out.

No one would argue that the crossing out of “ordained” in 1885 represented a change of status for her, that she had been “unordained” in that year. Rather, the crossing out of “ordained” highlights the awkwardness of giving credentials to a prophet. No such special category of credentials from the church exists. So the church utilized what it had, giving its highest credentials without an ordination ceremony having been carried out. In actuality, the prophet needed no human credentials. She functioned for more than twenty-five years (prior to 1871) without any.

A Clear Indication. But the question whether she had been ordained or not is settled definitively by her own hand. In 1909 she filled out a “Biographical Information Blank” for the General Conference records. On the blank for Item 19, which asks, “If ordained, state when, where, and by whom,” she has simply inscribed an X. This is the same response she makes to Item 26, which asks, “If remarried, give date, and to whom.” In this way she indicated that she had never remarried, nor had she ever been ordained. She was not here denying that God had chosen and equipped her, but she was responding to the obvious intent of the question, indicating that there had never been an ordination ceremony carried out for her.²⁶

2. Licensing of Woman Ministers

Until recently it had been largely forgotten that a number of women carried a ministerial license from the Seventh-day Adventist Church during

the late 1800's and early 1900's. Most of these were the wives of ordained ministers, and most of them apparently were engaged in the kind of personal labor (a Bible Instructor kind of work) that Ellen White described in passages such as those we have already cited. In general, they do not seem to have served as the leaders of churches or even, very often, as public speakers. There are some notable exceptions to that latter point: Minnie Sype and Lulu Wightman, and apparently Ellen Lane, are examples of women who functioned effectively as public evangelists. But to date I have seen no evidence that women served as the leaders of churches. Perhaps further research will shed more light on this matter.

A Mandate for Ordination? It is now being suggested by some that the circumstances surrounding the licensing of women as ministers comprise a mandate for ordaining women today. The argument, in brief, is this: Women were first licensed as ministers the same year (1878) the church first called for an examination to be made of candidates for license, it being understood that licensing would put women on the path to ordination. Ellen White took an active part in examining the qualifications of candidates for license, some of whom presumably were female. The church considered ordaining women shortly after it began licensing them. Though the proposal was not adopted, Mrs. White did not oppose it or warn against it. She in fact called for ordaining women to church ministries and paying them from the tithe.

Some Inaccuracies. Several inaccuracies appear in this scenario. First is the assertion that the decision to examine the qualification of candidates for license coincides closely with the licensing of the first woman, Ellen Lane, in 1878. Advocates of this view say that the church thereby showed that it recognized that licensing put these women on the path to ordination, and it was going to be careful whom it licensed.

The facts are that Ellen Lane was first licensed not in 1878, but three years earlier in 1875.²⁷ The minutes of the Michigan Conference Annual Session show that Sister Roby Tuttle was licensed at the same time. Further, these were not the first women to receive the ministerial license. That honor seems to belong to S. A. H. Lindsey, who received a license from the New York and Pennsylvania Conference at a conference session on August 9, 1871.²⁸ The licensing of these women therefore cannot demonstrate that the church at that time assumed licensing of women would likely lead to ordination. The policy calling for an examination prior to licensing anyone came seven years after the first woman licensee, and the question of the propriety of ordaining women would not be considered until 1881, ten years after their first licensing.

The second inaccuracy is the assertion that Ellen White took an active part in the examination of candidates for license (one public speaker has included *female* candidates), even recommending that some of them not receive licenses. This is based first upon the fact that Mrs. White attended certain conference sessions at which women were granted the ministerial license,²⁹ and second on a comment she wrote about her stay at a camp meeting in Oregon: "I was unable to sit up yesterday, for with much writing, reining myself up to meet different ones who put in requests for license, speaking in public, and showing the unfitness of different ones to attempt to teach others the truth, it was too much for my strength."³⁰ But the statement does not say that she took part in examinations or that she recommended that some of the candidates not receive licenses. It merely lists things she had been doing and makes no connection between "meeting" certain license applicants and "showing the unfitness" of certain unnamed individuals to teach the truth. Her lack of intent to connect those two elements is shown by the fact that they are separated by another item on the list—"speaking in public." And there is not a hint here that any of the candidates for license are female.

Meaning of "Showing the Unfitness." If Mrs. White's "showing the unfitness of different ones to teach others the truth" was not in the context of an examination for a license, then what *was* it about? A possible clue occurs later in the same paragraph, where she describes her sermon of the night before: "I here brought in genuine sanctification and the spurious article which is so common."³¹ Was she counteracting false doctrine that was already being taught there, and showing the unfitness of those who were already teaching it? Certainty on that point may not be possible, but it goes beyond the facts to assert that Mrs. White here said that she recommended that certain applicants not receive licenses.

A more likely interpretation of the Oregon situation is that it parallels an experience Mrs. White published in *Testimony* No. 29 that same year.³² Under the title, "The Cause in Iowa," she spoke about danger to the work from unsanctified ministers, singling out two for special notice without whose work the cause would be better off. She considered them unfit to teach the truth to others: "Not having experimental godliness themselves, how can they lead the people to the Fountain with which they themselves are unacquainted?"³³ And again, "Brother F is not fitted for his work."³⁴ And the problem was broader: "The ministry is corrupted by unsanctified ministers."³⁵ Here the same elements (unfitness of some to teach the truth; lack of genuine sanctification) that are mentioned in Oregon appear again. And the problem is not with candidates for license, but with those already in the work.

The third inaccuracy in the scenario is the claim that the Adventist Church considered ordaining women shortly after it began licensing them, indicating that licensing was understood to put them on the ordination track. We have already shown above that rather than three years (which would correspond roughly to today's typical time between licensing and ordination in the Adventist ministry), it was at least ten years after the church started licensing women that it considered ordaining them. And the events of that consideration need some further explication.

3. The 1881 Resolution to Ordain Women

Two Resolutions. A resolution to ordain women came from the Committee on Resolutions at the 1881 General Conference session. Some have suggested that it was not the only one pertinent to the issue, since the preceding resolution reads:

Resolved, That all candidates for license and ordination should be examined with reference to their intellectual and spiritual fitness for the successful discharge of the duties which will devolve upon them as licentiates and ordained ministers.³⁶

This resolution was adopted. It expands the 1878 mandate for examining candidates for license to include candidates for ordination. It has been suggested that this was enacted in connection with the following resolution, which would authorize ordaining women to the ministry. But such would be putting the cart before the horse. If the intent of this resolution had been to address the question of what to do with the women licentiates, one would expect it to be considered *after* the resolution calling for their ordination. Then the argument might have been: 1) Yes, it is proper to ordain them; and 2) We should examine their qualifications before doing so. But it does not make sense the other way around. As I see it, one is only at liberty to conclude that the resolution was addressed to those who were already candidates for ordination (as well as license, which is included here).

The Concern of the Resolution. What is more, those who claim that this resolution was intended to provide for prudent advancement in ordaining women overlook the provisions of the resolution itself. It differs from the 1878 action, not just in including candidates for ordination, but in the criteria that are to be applied. The 1881 resolution stipulates "That all candidates for license and ordination should be examined with reference to their *intellectual and spiritual fitness* . . ." ³⁷ The 1878 action had specified only that candidates for license be examined "in regard to their *doctrinal and educational qualifications*." ³⁸ There is a clear shift in emphasis from doctrinal knowledge

and amount of education to intellect and spirituality as the areas of desired qualifications.

This echoed Ellen White's expressed concerns about the prevailing conditions among the ministry of the church at that time, conditions that led her to call for reform. In "The Cause in Iowa" testimony cited above and published the year before the General Conference adopted this resolution, Mrs. White makes an explicit call for a change in the examination of ministerial candidates' qualifications. She writes, "There must be a decided change in the ministry. A more critical examination is necessary in respect to the qualifications of a minister."³⁹

She made it clear that the problem was spiritual. In the next paragraph she wrote, "The ministry is corrupted by unsanctified ministers. Unless there shall be altogether a higher and more spiritual standard for the ministry, the truth of the gospel will become more and more powerless."⁴⁰ It was spiritual qualifications that she was calling for. Is it only coincidental that the 1881 resolution revised the criteria to call for examination of these qualities before giving a license or credentials to a minister? It seems clear that the real concern of this first resolution was the condition of the ministry, not whether the church should ordain women.

Resolution on Women's Ordination. The 1881 General Conference resolution that does address the ordination of women deserves another look, as well. It reads,

Resolved, That females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry.⁴¹

Some have thought that the resolution was passed at the General Conference, but was sidetracked by the General Conference Committee. This is not the case. The first resolution, calling for spiritual qualifications for church ministry, was adopted, but this one on ordination for women was referred to the General Conference Committee. Referral to committee is a way of providing for more careful study of something on which the whole body is uncertain. It has also functioned at times as a means of dealing with something that will not pass, without having to vote it down. The committee never returned it to the General Conference session.

Yet to conclude that a three-man committee killed the resolution does despite to the facts. Those who would maintain that three recalcitrant men were thwarting the will of the church in 1881 are obliged to explain why no one even brought the matter up again at the General Conference in 1882, or

in 1883, or in 1884. In fact, General Conference sessions were held yearly until 1889, when they became biennial. Yet, to my knowledge, no one ever reintroduced the resolution.

Unlike today's situation, the issue apparently created little stir. The minutes of the session record not only the resolutions and their outcome, but the names of those who spoke to them. The first resolution, calling for examining ministers' qualifications, does not seem controversial. Nine people spoke to it, and it was adopted. The next resolution, calling for ordaining women to the pastoral ministry, had eight people speak to it, and it was referred to committee.⁴² When this fact is combined with the one noted above, that the measure was never reintroduced, it seems clear that the idea of ordaining women had little support in the church at that time.

Ellen White's Silence. Ellen White was not present at that General Conference session. She likely read the report of the resolutions in the *Review* a few weeks later or heard about them from her son Willie, but we have no record of her making any comment one way or the other on the matter. This is harder to explain from the position that she favored ordination than from the position that she opposed it. Proponents of ordination today that I am acquainted with do not try to explain her silence, one calling it "a mystery still to church historians." They simply deny that her silence lent approval to the handling of the matter, or they claim that her silence must at least be construed as permissive in light of her responsibility to warn the church against error and her encouragement to women to participate in the work of the church.

One must beware of arguments from silence, which are incapable of giving proof. Ellen White's silence, by itself, neither promotes nor refutes ordination for women. But if she favored it, her silence is indeed a mystery. Why did she not speak out when the church veered away from ordaining women? On the other hand, if she did not favor it, then some reasons for silence come to mind. She may simply have felt that the issue was not important. Or, if she felt that the church should not ordain women, she may have made no comment on the resolution simply because none was necessary. The church was not about to begin ordaining women, so no corrective was needed.

Another Example of Silence. Indeed, we know of another time when the church faced real dangers that Mrs. White was warned of in vision, and yet she kept silent. In connection with the crisis over pantheism that came to a head with the publication of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg's book *Living Temple*, she wrote the following: "About the time that *Living Temple* was published, there passed before me in the night season, representations indicating that some danger was approaching, and that I must prepare for it by writing out the

things God had revealed to me regarding the foundation principles of our faith. A copy of *Living Temple* was sent me, but it remained in my library, unread. From the light given me by the Lord, I knew that some of the sentiments advocated in the book did not bear the endorsement of God, and that they were a snare that the enemy had prepared for the last days. I thought that this would surely be discerned, and that it would not be necessary for me to say anything about it.”⁴³

Had the church leaders discerned the danger of the concepts in *Living Temple* and moved against it, evidently Mrs. White would have said nothing. Yet her silence would not have been permissive in regard to pantheism. Only when it was clear that the error was gaining ground did she speak out. By contrast, when the church considered a resolution in 1881 to ordain women as pastors, that view did not prevail, and Mrs. White said nothing about it. But if, on the other hand, the error were in the rejection of women’s ordination, and such error had triumphed at the General Conference, then we might well expect her to have spoken out against that rejection.

Charged to Protest Injustice. Especially would we expect Mrs. White to have spoken out against denying ordination to women if such denial were (as some today claim) arbitrary, unjust and oppressive. She stated, “I was charged not to neglect or pass by those who were being wronged. I was specially charged to protest against any arbitrary or overbearing action toward the ministers of the gospel by those having official authority. Disagreeable though the duty may be, I am to reprove the oppressor, and plead for justice. I am to present the necessity of maintaining justice and equity in all our institutions.”⁴⁴

The women we are speaking of here were licensed as ministers of the gospel, but church officials did not see fit to permit their ordination. Mrs. White spoke strongly in favor of the women workers being paid and paid fairly, even from the tithe; she spoke about the importance of supporting aged ministers;⁴⁵ she protested against unfair treatment of black ministers;⁴⁶ but she had nothing to say when the General Conference declined to ordain licensed women ministers. Perhaps the instruction to protest unfairness came after 1881 (her statement is from twenty-five years later, in 1906). But even so, the practice of not ordaining women prevailed through to the end of her life and beyond. Evidently she did not see this as “arbitrary,” “overbearing,” or a matter of “justice and equity.” She had been “specially charged to protest” against such things, but on this she had no protest.

Again, one must be careful not to claim too much on the basis of silence. Yet Mrs. White’s silence on the ordination issue, especially in light

of the related data we have looked at, should make one slow to claim that she gave her support or influence to the cause of bringing women into the ordained pastoral ministry.

Active Personal Ministry. The final claim of the scenario we have been examining is that Ellen White called for women to be ordained and for them to be paid from the tithe. We have already examined the passages that are used to say that Mrs. White called for women to be ordained to the gospel ministry (especially the “ordination” statement from 1895), and we have found that they do not make such a call. Yet we must recognize that Mrs. White did call for women to be involved in an active personal ministry, especially to women and families, and that she envisioned paying from the tithe the women workers who gave themselves whole-souled to this work, “although the hands of ordination have not been laid”⁴⁷ upon them. But there is no basis in that statement for saying that Mrs. White called for women to be ordained in the usual sense to the gospel ministry.

PART III

ELLEN WHITE’S VIEW OF WOMAN’S ROLE IN THE CHURCH

We have already seen that Ellen White made no explicit statement supporting (nor prohibiting) ordination for women. When she had opportunity to speak for it, as she did in response to the failure of the 1881 General Conference resolution that would have provided for it, she said nothing. When she could have called for it in connection with the pay issue for women, she did not do so. All the evidence that I have seen so far fails to substantiate support in her writings for ordaining women.

Varied Ministries. Then what did she envisage as woman’s role in the church? That study is considerably broader than the one I have attempted here in examining the claims that she supported ordination. But the material that I have looked at, some of which has been quoted above, indicates that she saw women as able to do a great work for Christ in personal contacts, bringing the message for this hour into homes and families. And she recognized and cited important contributions they could make in various leadership responsibilities in the church, as well.

For instance, during the same time period in which she made some of the strong appeals we have noted above, she called for training to be offered for women in our schools. Speaking of Avondale, the new school in Australia,

she said, “The Lord designs that the school should also be a place where a training may be gained in women’s work. . . .” After enumerating certain domestic and educational training to be included, she adds, “They are to be qualified to take any post that may be offered—superintendents, Sabbath school teachers, Bible workers. They must be prepared to teach day schools for children.”⁴⁸

She saw an important mission for women: “Wonderful is the mission of the wives and mothers and the younger women workers. If they will, they can exert an influence for good to all around them. By modesty in dress and circumspect deportment, they may bear witness to the truth in its simplicity. They may let their light so shine before all, that others will see their good works and glorify their Father which is in heaven. A truly converted woman will exert a powerful transforming influence for good. Connected with her husband, she may aid him in his work, and become the means of encouragement and blessing to him. When the will and way are brought into subjection to the Spirit of God, there is no limit to the good that can be accomplished.”⁴⁹

While there is surely an emphasis on a husband-wife ministry here, single women (“the younger women workers”) are also included. The type of work is not here designated, but would surely include the various lines of work Mrs. White specified that we have noted before. With modesty and propriety, women may let their light shine and may exert a limitless influence for good. Such will be the effect when the will and way are brought into subjection to God.

Working Within One’s Own Sphere. Yet Mrs. White noted that not all would be willing to live in subjection to God. From our first parents, both men and women have shown that they have been unwilling to do so. Though the issue in the following passage is not specifically the role relations of men and women in the church, perhaps the principles may find some application there.

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.⁵⁰

Clearly it is important in her view to operate within the sphere that God has assigned, for our own happiness, nobility and effectiveness. Defining that sphere is, of course, what this whole discussion is about in our church. While Ellen White will have some things to say that will help us sort matters out, she would be the first to say that we should go to the Bible for guidance on the matter of the role relationships of men and women. “The Scriptures are plain upon the relations and rights of men and women.”⁵¹

Respect for Role Distinctions. She would also remind us of the dangers of imbibing the spirit of the times when that is out of harmony with our Scriptural duty. The statement just quoted comes from a passage that deals with a women’s rights movement in the 1860’s. A part of that movement was an attempt to bring about much-needed reform in the matter of women’s dress. But the alternative proposed to the abuses that had flourished consisted of a style that minimized the differences between the dress of men and of women.

After addressing the Biblical call for a clear distinction in dress, Mrs. White commented on the spirit that attended the women’s rights movement: “Those who feel called out to join the movement in favor of woman’s rights and the so-called dress reform might as well sever all connection with the third angel’s message. The spirit which attends the one cannot be in harmony with the other. The Scriptures are plain upon the relations and rights of men and women.”⁵² Was there a spirit of disaffection, of promotion of self? In the assertion of one’s rights, is there a spirit that comes not from above, and that would keep us from representing the character of Jesus, who did not think that equality was “a thing to be grasped” (Phil 2:6)? This statement seems to warn us of such dangers.

Respect for Husband’s Leadership. And contrary to the positions taken by many feminists today, Mrs. White upheld, in both her practice and her teaching, the traditional understanding of the Bible’s statements on the headship of man in marriage. Arthur White writes, “Her understanding of the proper relationship between husband and wife stands out in a letter written to a friend in her early married life: “We women must remember that God has placed us subject to the husband. He is the head and our judgment and views and reasonings must agree with his if possible. If not, the preference in God’s Word is given to the husband where it is not a matter of conscience. We must yield to the head” [Letter 5, 1861]. She would not stand in the pulpit to speak at the Sabbath morning worship service if James White was present. He would take the Sabbath morning service, and she would speak in the afternoon. Only when he was stricken with paralysis in 1865 and for some

time could not take his place in public work did she depart from this procedure.”⁵³

Yet we still have not answered fully the question of what Mrs. White’s concept of women’s work really was. She stressed the importance of working within one’s own sphere, and did so in the setting of the danger of leaving the very work to which God was calling, while seeking some supposedly higher sphere of labor. Her concern seems to have been not so much to deny this or that activity to anyone, but rather to encourage each to labor within his God-appointed sphere, where he could be most effective.

Emphasis on Personal Ministry. It is clear that Ellen White did see a particular sphere of labor for women. In *Testimonies*, Volume 6, she published a selection called, “Women to Be Gospel Workers.”⁵⁴ Since this was published during her lifetime (1900), under her supervision, one may presume that she took responsibility for the title and that the selection represents fairly what her view of women as “gospel workers” really entailed.

And what do we find there? First is her own reworking of the material she had earlier sent to S. M. I. Henry, which Mrs. Henry published in the *Review*,⁵⁵ and to which I have already referred. The emphasis is on individual accountability to God to be involved in personal work for others. In addition to the statements from the *Review* article which I have quoted earlier, a few other statements will help to give the main thrust:

“The most successful toilers are those who cheerfully take up the work of serving God in little things. Every human being is to work with his life thread, weaving it into the fabric to help complete the pattern.

The work of Christ was largely made up of personal interviews. He had a faithful regard for the one-soul audience. From that one soul the intelligence received was carried to thousands.

We should educate the youth to help the youth; and as they seek to do this work they will gain an experience that will qualify them to become consecrated workers in a larger sphere. Thousands of hearts can be reached in the most simple, humble way.

... Nothing is to be allowed to keep the servant of God from his fellow men. The individual believer is to labor for the individual sinner. Each person has his own light to keep burning; and if the heavenly oil is emptied into these lamps through the golden pipes; if the vessels are emptied of self, and prepared to receive the holy oil, light will be shed on the sinner’s path to some

purpose. More light will be shed on the pathway of the wanderer by one such lamp than by a whole procession of torchlights gotten up for a show.”⁵⁶

Ministry to Families. Ellen White added some other material after the reworked paragraphs from her letter to Mrs. Henry, and they became part of this article in *Testimonies*, Volume 6. Here too she speaks specifically of the work that women are to do, after first speaking of what they are to be.

The Lord has a work for women as well as men to do. They may accomplish a good work for God if they will first learn in the school of Christ the precious, all-important lesson of meekness. They must not only bear the name of Christ, but possess His Spirit. They must walk even as He walked, purifying their souls from everything that defiles. Then they will be able to benefit others by presenting the all-sufficiency of Jesus.

Women may take their places in the work at this crisis, and the Lord will work through them. If they are imbued with a sense of their duty, and labor under the influence of the Spirit of God, they will have just the self-possession required for this time. The Saviour will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of His countenance, and this will give them a power which will exceed that of men. They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their labor is needed.

A direct necessity is being met by the work of women who have given themselves to the Lord and are reaching out to help a needy, sin-stricken people. Personal evangelistic work is to be done. The women who take up this work carry the gospel to the homes of the people in the highways and the byways. They read and explain the word to families, praying with them, caring for the sick, relieving their temporal necessities. They present before families and individuals the purifying, transforming influence of the truth. They show that the way to find peace and joy is to follow Jesus.”⁵⁷

There is a bit more in the article, but the above statements will illustrate the perspective Mrs. White identifies with concerning women as gospel workers. She saw them involved in personal work, with women and in families. If done in the right spirit, under the influence of Christ, “the light of His countenance. . . will give them a power which will exceed that of men. . . . Their labor is needed.”

This is the very concern that we hear expressed today by those who would like to see women serving in the ordained ministry of the church or who urge their election as local elders—that their ministry is needed, especially to women and families. Clearly Ellen White shared that concern, but also it is

quite clear that she envisioned this ministry being performed by women without reference to their serving as ordained elders or pastors. She said that such ministry is capable, when rightly done, of exhibiting a power greater than that of men. It is noble work, needed work. In defining women's work in this way, she has in no way belittled it.⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

Did Ellen White call for ordaining women as elders or pastors? No. Did she explicitly forbid it? No. She simply did not address it directly as an issue. But it also seems clear that she did not envision it. What she did envision is significant: apart from the matter of ordination, she urged a vigorous participation of women especially in personal ministry, one that is not yet being widely done and that the Adventist Church needs desperately.

What difference would our adoption of Ellen White's view of the role of women in the church make? It calls for no change in church structure or polity, yet its implementation would revolutionize the church's practice. There would be a great increase in personal work being done, both by paid full- and part-time workers and by volunteer laborers. If the work were done in the light of the spirit of Jesus, the women would show a power greater than that of the men. There would be an explosion in the numbers of people won to Christ and His truth through the gentle, appealing ministry of women. There would be healing in the home relationships, as godly women workers challenged men to reflect the self-sacrificing headship of Christ in their own relationship with their wives, and women to honor that headship as they would the headship of Christ. Families would be strengthened, and the church would make a start on the road to showing a world filled with hurting and broken families what a difference the practice of the Lordship of Jesus really makes.

ENDNOTES

1. "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," Number 17: The Gift of Prophecy, in *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1986* (Washington, D.C.: 1986), p. 7.
2. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (hereinafter *Review and Herald* or simply *Review*) 72, 28 (July 9, 1895): 434.
3. The assertion, advanced by some, that "church officers" here refers to conference officials is unlikely in view of Ellen White's use twice in this article of the term "conference officers" to refer to this group and her corresponding single use of "officers of the church" to refer to the local church leaders. She seems to have been able to avoid ambiguity on this point.
4. *Review and Herald* 72, 28 (July 9, 1895): 433, emphasis original.
5. See, for instance, Ellen G. White, *Medical Ministry* (Mountain View, California, 1932), p. 140.
6. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C., 1946), p. 546 (Manu- script 5, 1908).
7. *Evangelism* (n. 6), p. 472.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 492; see also p. 491 for fairness in pay.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 492-493.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 472.
11. She protests such practices through much of the manuscript. More of what she says here may be seen in *Evangelism* (n. 6), pp. 492.3-493.2, though the material is credited to other, later books and manuscripts of Mrs. White.
12. *Evangelism* (n. 6), p. 493, credited there to Manuscript 142, 1903, but appearing also in Manuscript 43a, 1898 (Manuscript Release #330).
13. Manuscript Release #330, p. 3 (Manuscript 43a, 1898). Manuscript Releases are available from the Ellen G. White Estate, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Springs, Maryland 20904.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Manuscript Release #959, pp. 1-2 (Letter 137, 1898).
16. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (hereinafter *Testimonies*) (Mountain View, California, 1948), Volume 6, p. 322.

17. Manuscript Release #763, pp. 5-6 (from "Experiences in Australia," p. 53, written in Adelaide, Australia, Oct. 11, 1892).
18. Manuscript Release # 761, p. 10 (Manuscript 24, 1888).
19. Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C., 1948), p. 337.
20. *Testimonies* (n. 16), Vol. 5, p. 723.
21. Ken Corkum, "The Role of the Seventh-day Adventist Minister in Public Evangelism," D.Min. Dissertation (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University, 1986), pp. 98-101. For unequivocal statements by A. G. Daniells and George Starr regarding the non-settled nature of ministerial work during Mrs. White's lifetime, see Corkum, pp. 32 and 90. Other related statements by Daniells, Mrs. White, and others may be found in Corkum, especially pp. 50-91.
22. *Testimonies* (n. 16), Volume 6, p. 334.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 411-416.
25. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, revised edition, ed. Don F. Neufeld, et. al. (Washington, D.C., 1976), pp. 581-582.
26. Arthur L. White published this information in the introduction of an article entitled, "Ellen G. White the Person," *Spectrum* 4, 2 (Spring, 1972): 7.
27. *Review and Herald* 46, 8 (August 26, 1875): 63.
28. *Review and Herald* 38, 13 (September 12, 1871): 102.
29. For example, see *Review and Herald* 53, 24 (June 12, 1879): 190. On this occasion the record shows that "Brother Butler and Sister White spoke at some length on the subject of licenses," though it gives no indication of what they said. At another business session later the same day a ministerial license was granted to a woman, though there is no indication Mrs. White was present at that meeting. A camp meeting was in progress on the same grounds (see p. 188 of the same issue), and the meeting in question took place at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, both of which factors might have influenced Mrs. White to be elsewhere at that time. In fact, on this occasion and on every other that I have checked in the 1870's and early 80's, I have so far been unable to substantiate Mrs. White's presence at a specific meeting in which a ministerial license was voted to a woman.

30. Manuscript Release #1215, p. 1 (Letter 32a, June 14, 1880).

31. *Ibid.* This was evidently a problem affecting the church at large, for in the next year Mrs. White published an 82-page pamphlet entitled *Bible Sanctification: A Contrast of the True and False Theories* (Battle Creek, Michigan, 1881). This was an edited version of a series of ten articles published in the *Review and Herald* between January 18 and May 3, 1881. Their appearance in pamphlet form in the same year of their publication in the *Review* indicates the importance they held for the church. *Bible Sanctification* was later republished as *The Sanctified Life* (Washington, D.C., 1937).

32. *Testimonies* (n. 16), Vol. 4, pp. 430-449.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 437.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 439.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 442. Note again the concern with sanctification.

36. *Review and Herald* 58, 25 (December 20, 1881): 392.

37. *Ibid.*, emphasis supplied.

38. *Review and Herald* 52, 16 (October 17, 1878): 122, emphasis supplied.

39. *Testimonies* (n. 16), Vol. 4, p. 442.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Review and Herald* 58, 25 (December 20, 1881): 392.

42. *Ibid.*

43. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 1 (Washington D.C., 1958), pp. 202-203. The original source is Manuscript 46, 1904, which was published in Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 2 (Washington, D.C., 1904). The passage quoted appears on p. 52 of that publication.

44. *Review and Herald* 83, 30 (July 26, 1906): 8. (Also in *Selected Messages*, Book 1 [n. 43], p. 33.)

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Testimonies* (n. 16), Vol. 9, p. 223 (Manuscript 129, 1902).

47. Manuscript Release #330, p. 1 (Manuscript 43a, 1898).

48. *Evangelism* (n. 6), p. 475 (Letter 3, 1898).

49. *Evangelism* (n. 6), pp. 467-468 (Manuscript 91, 1908).

50. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, California, 1958), p. 59.

51. *Testimonies* (n. 16), Vol. 1, p. 421.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Arthur L. White, "Ellen G. White the Person," (n. 26), p. 20. See also *Testimonies* (n. 16), Volume 1, p. 307, which comes from a testimony entitled, "Family Religion." In it Mrs. White also describes the duty of the husband to show a Christlike headship in his home.

54. *Testimonies* (n. 16), Vol. 6, pp. 114-118.

55. *Review and Herald* 76, 19 (May 9, 1899): 293.

56. *Testimonies* (n. 16), Vol. 6, pp. 115-116.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118.

58. She cautioned others concerning that danger: "Seventh-day Adventists are not in any way to belittle woman's work." *Evangelism* (n. 6), pp. 492-493.