

Women in Scripture and Headship | BY EDWIN E. REYNOLDS, PH.D.

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This article is an excerpt taken from the Minority Report of the North American Division Theology of Ordination Study Committee. The article begins with a discussion of hermeneutics and the Genesis account of creation. We pick it up as it moves into consideration of leadership and carry it to its conclusion.

Throughout Scripture women are active in many influential roles, but there is no clear instance of their exercising a spiritual headship role. That is, no woman was ever placed by God as a religious head over a man: women were never given a priestly role in the Old Testament nor in the New Testament are they ever seen functioning as apostles or elders. Some women in the Bible are described as prophetesses,¹ but one cannot necessarily assume, by virtue of this work, that God intended for them to fulfill a spiritual headship responsibility. Miriam, for example, was explicitly condemned for attempting to arrogate to herself the privileges that God had given to Moses. She argued, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" (Num 12:2), implying that, since she also had the gift of prophecy, she was somehow equal to him in spiritual authority. God made it clear by afflicting her with leprosy that her assumption was not only wrong but sinful. The punishment of Aaron, who joined with her in this challenge to Moses' authority, was evidenced by God's departure from the sanctuary (Num 12:9–10). Interestingly, however, by virtue of his headship authority as high priest, he could still intercede for Miriam, which, together with Moses' prayer to God, availed for her healing.

Deborah is a woman in Scripture who has been considered not only as a prophetess but



Deborah

also a judge. However, by means of several important indicators, the Biblical text reveals that Deborah was not a judge in the same sense as other judges. First, she is never called a "judge"² nor is the normal formula ("X judged Israel Y years") used of her.³ Second, the temporary character of Deborah's judging activity is emphasized in several ways (Judg 4:4), including use of the phrase "at that time" (*bā 'ēt habî*).⁴ Third, in order to prepare the reader for a woman temporarily acting in this capacity, the way Deborah is introduced deliberately emphasizes in five different ways that she is female before mentioning her work of judging.⁵ Finally, rather than sitting

in the gate as judges and elders did (e.g., Ruth 4:9–11; 1 Sam 9:18) and kings somewhat later (1 Kgs 22:10; Jer 38:7), the description of Deborah is more in line with her role as a prophetic messenger (sitting under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel, Judg 4:5): “In the absence of the usual magistrates, the people had sought to her for counsel and justice.”⁶ Confirmation that Deborah’s activity was more an extension of her prophetic role because the divinely-intended judge was unwilling to lead is indicated several times throughout the narrative: God calls Barak to act as Israel’s deliverer through Deborah’s prophetic message (vv. 6–7); at Barak’s refusal to lead Israel into battle unless she would accompany him “and thus support his efforts by her influence and counsel,”⁷ Deborah prophesies that she will go and the victory will be gained, but that it

Jezebel



“will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman” (Jael, not Deborah, vv. 8–9); the “Song of Deborah,” sung by Deborah and Barak, alludes to both of them as “leaders” who “took the lead in Israel” (5:1–2).

In short, Deborah was obedient to the prophetic role that God had called her to do in an exceptional situation. Her work was temporarily expanded to encompass some of the functions that a judge would do, but, as Ellen G. White indicates, it was Barak who “had been designated by the Lord himself as the one chosen to deliver Israel.”⁸ This reading of Judges is confirmed by the New Testament, which mentions Barak, not Deborah, in recalling Israel’s deliverance at that time (Heb 11:32). This single Biblical example of notable leadership by a woman during the time of the judges, when “there was no king in Israel” and “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 17:6, etc.), does not provide a sound basis for establishing a principle of female headship in contradiction to the rest of Scripture. Underscoring the fact that having female leaders of Israel was not God’s plan, the two examples of women queens usurping power in the Old Testament are thoroughly negative. Queen Jezebel led the Northern Kingdom of Israel into apostasy and endeavored to exterminate God’s true prophets, including Elijah (1 Kgs 18:4; 19:1–2). Athaliah, after coming to the throne of Judah, consolidated her power by killing all the male heirs save young Joash who was hidden away for six years by the wife of the high priest (2 Kgs 11:1–3; 2 Chr 22:10–12).

In the New Testament, female believers were called to significant supportive roles in the ministry of Jesus: learning lessons from him just like the other disciples (Luke 10:39), providing financial means for the furtherance of his ministry (Luke 8:3), and supplying moral encouragement during the crucial closing week (John 12:1–8), not least by their determined presence at the cross (Mark 15:40–41; John 19:25). They were also his witnesses before and after his resurrection (Luke 8:1–2; 24:9–10). Jesus com-

manded Mary Magdalene to tell the news to the other disciples (John 20:15–18) and, together with the other women who went to the tomb, was among the first witnesses to his resurrection (Luke 24:2–10). Although these roles would undoubtedly have been offensive to Jewish cultural sensitivities, Jesus invited them to fulfill these important tasks. So out of step was Jesus' treatment of women with prevailing Jewish attitudes, that even the apostles did not believe the witness the women brought them of the risen Lord (Luke 24:11).⁹

We also have ample evidence of women working in local churches: Priscilla and her husband Aquila in their spare time labored in Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome, working with Paul, teaching accurately “the way of God,” and opening their home for church gatherings (Acts 18:1, 18, 26; 1 Cor 16:9; Rom 16:3); Phoebe, a “servant” (*diakonos*)¹⁰ of the church at Cenchreae near Corinth and patron of Paul and others, delivered Paul's epistle to Rome and may have encouraged generous support of his mission to Spain (Rom 16:1; cf. 15:25–32); Mary was notable in Rome for her hard work in the church (16:6); Junia with Andronicus were “well-known to the apostles” (v. 7);¹¹ Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis “worked hard in the Lord” (v. 12). But there is no clear evidence that any of these women ever exercised a headship role. Their labors appear to be supportive of the work being carried forward by the apostles and other men whom God had called to lead his church. Today God still seeks both men and women willing to fill supportive roles in the advancement of his work. Paul indicates the importance of each person's contribution to the process of reaping the crop for harvest (1 Cor 3:4–11). Every worker has an important role to play, but God gives the resultant increase so that no individual is more important than another. Equality of service is not incompatible with different roles; all are servants of Christ and the glory belongs to God for the growth of the church and the abundant final harvest.

Ordination in the New Testament Church

Jesus established his church by ordaining twelve men from a much larger group of disciples.¹² He named them “apostles,” thus anticipating their future sending as his personal emissaries (Mark 3:13–14). This took place more than a year after their initial call (cf. Mark 1:16–20; John 1:35–51)¹³ and represents a further stage both in their experience as disciples and in the development of the church. While all who join themselves to Christ are expected to be fruitful disciples (John 15:1–6), some were set apart or ordained to special leadership capacities. After his death and resurrection, Jesus bestowed the Holy Spirit on the apostles, making them his undershepherds, instructing them, and authorizing them to act on his behalf (John 20:21–23). In this light, Ellen White draws out the significance of the gift of the Holy Spirit in qualifying men for the gospel ministry:

*Before the disciples could fulfill their official duties in connection with the church, Christ breathed His Spirit upon them. He was committing to them a most sacred trust, and He desired to impress them with the fact that without the Holy Spirit this work could not be accomplished.... Only those who are thus taught of God, those who possess the inward working of the Spirit, and in whose life the Christ-life is manifested, are to stand as representative men, to minister in behalf of the church.*¹⁴

Ordination (to “set apart for an office or duty”)¹⁵ is described in the New Testament by various Greek words, which reflect the preferred vocabulary of the individual authors. The only ritual associated with ordination in the New Testament is the laying on of hands, although prayer, fasting, and other practices are also sometimes mentioned. Use of the ritual, based on Old Testament precedent (Num 8:10; 27:18) serves to represent both the sanction of the church at large (through the one previously ordained by the church) and church members (who have expressed their confidence in God's calling of the individual through their vote with the uplifted hand, 2 Cor 8:19).

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Specifically mentioned as being recipients of the laying on of hands are deacons and elders (Acts 6:6; 14:23), which explains why these two offices also appear together in I Timothy 3. Paul, in writing to Titus on the island of Crete, makes no mention of deacons, instructing him to appoint elders for the churches in the various towns there (1:5). Timothy, on the other hand, was stationed in Ephesus. Being one of the leading cities of the empire, it must have had considerably larger churches than the island of Crete, because, like the church in Jerusalem, both elders and deacons were required. The role of Timothy and Titus, as elders overseeing a number of churches, is similar to that of the ordained minister today.

Turning in greater detail to 1 Timothy, the verses immediately preceding chapter 3 contain what some consider to be instructions as to how wives should relate to their husbands. However, normally such instructions are given as part of

Mary Magdalene



what is generally referred to as a household code like those found in Ephesians 5:21–6:9 and Colossians 3:18–4:1. The use in Ephesians 5 of pronouns which are translated “one’s own” (*idios*, v. 22; *beautou*, vv. 28–29) show clearly that the Greek words *anēr* and *gynē* should be translated in that context as “husband” and “wife,” not generically (“man” and “woman”). The article has a similar function in Colossians 3:18–4:1 to specify “wives” (v. 18), “husbands,” (v. 19), as well as “children” (v. 20), “fathers” (v. 21), “slaves” (v. 22), and “masters” (4:1). 1 Peter 2:18–3:7 addresses instructions to servants (2:18) followed by “similarly” (*houtōs*, 3:1, 7) to address wives and husbands, thus signaling the presence of a household code there also. In short, household codes always have indicators showing that reference is being made to husbands and wives.

First Timothy 2, while it resembles a household code, has no such indicators; nor is there mention of masters, servants or children. So here *anēr* and *gynē* should be translated generically, “man” and “woman” rather than “husband” and “wife.” Further support for this translation is seen in the fact that 1 Timothy 2 deals with worship life rather than home life, as well as from 1 Timothy 3:15 which calls the church “the house of God.” Understandably, then, this passage has been labeled a church code.¹⁷

Such an application of the rules of the house to the church should not be all that surprising since we have many references in the New Testament to churches meeting in homes, including in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:19) where Timothy was located at the time that Paul wrote his first epistle to him (1 Tim 1:3). First Timothy 2 begins with instructions that prayer should be offered for all people (vv. 1-7),¹⁸ and that the men “in every place,” i.e., wherever there is a church gathering for worship (cf. 3:15), “should pray, lifting holy hands, without anger or quarreling” (v. 8). Next follows instructions for “women who profess godliness,” i.e. believers—women in the church.¹⁹ They should dress modestly and prudently (vv. 9–10), so that fashion does not lead to rivalry or divisions in the church. What

immediately follows should also be understood as part of this church code: women should not take an authoritative teaching role (vv. 11–12) apart from or independent of the male-based church leadership prescribed in 1 Timothy 3. Again, as in the earlier part of the chapter, Paul gives his rationale for this assertion, this time based on the history and theological significance of the Creation and the Fall: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (vv. 13–14).

Mentioning the order of creation, man first and then woman, concisely invokes from Genesis 2 the male leadership principle that God established in Eden. The word Paul chooses for deceive (*exapataō*; cf. Gen 3:13, LXX) means “to cause someone to accept false ideas about someth[ing].”²⁰ As we saw above, the serpent deceived Eve by approaching her as if she were the head, reversing the headship principle, and by suggesting that she and Adam could rise to a higher level of power through eating the forbidden fruit. Adam was not deceived—he saw the headship principle had been reversed and “mourned that he had permitted Eve to wander from his side. . . . Love, gratitude, loyalty to the Creator—all were overborne by love to Eve. She was a part of himself, and he could not endure the thought of separation.”²¹ Yet, Paul also exalts as crucial one of the roles that only women can play in counteracting the Fall and obtaining salvation—as mothers in fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. This verse points first and foremost to the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the promised seed (Gal 3:16), the source of eternal salvation (Heb 5:9); but it is also a part of God’s plan that women who have the opportunity exercise this God-given privilege and role of bearing and raising godly children (1 Tim 2:15; 1 Cor 11:11–12). Paul is not suggesting that women who are unable or choose not to have children cannot be saved since he makes clear that the condition for obtaining salvation is not child-bearing per se, but maintaining one’s connection with Christ by continuing “in faith and love and

holiness, with self-control” (v. 15).²²

Paul’s explanation in 1 Timothy 2:11–15 of the relations between believing men and women in the church, predicated on the creation order of Genesis 1–3 (which Paul had already established in 1 Cor 11), lays the basis for his stipulations regarding the qualifications for overseers and deacons that immediately follow in 1 Timothy 3. Confirmation that these chapters form a church code appears in 1 Timothy 3:14–15: “...that you may know how it is necessary for people to conduct themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth” (cf. v. 5, Mounce). As those who carry responsibility for the spiritual and material well-being of the church, overseers and deacons must be carefully selected based on the specified qualifications, which are almost the same for both offices. In addition, however, the overseer must also be “able to teach” (*didaktikon*, cf. 2 Tim 2:24), a qualification not required of deacons. Another church code, Titus 1:5–3:2, gives nearly identical qualifications for the overseer/elder, including competence in teaching (1:5–9).²³

The importance of such competency is apparent in view of the frequent New Testament references to false teachers, and not only in the Pastoral Epistles. Requiring this competency of the overseer or elder coupled with disallowing women an authoritative teaching role (1 Tim 2:12) helps to explain why the person filling the office of overseer/elder “must be . . . the husband of one wife” (3:2, *dei . . . einai, mias gynaiikos andra*), a stipulation Paul underscores also to Titus (1:6). Deacons have a similar requirement (1 Tim 2:12).²⁴ Some translate this phrase as “one-wife husband,” arguing that the word order in Greek places the emphasis on “one-wife” (as opposed to two or more) when actually the syntax makes all parts of the phrase emphatic. It stresses competence in managing a stable, respectable Christian home, which demonstrates in turn that, as an ordained officer of the church, the man should be capable of caring for and managing well God’s church. The requirement that he be “the

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husband of one wife” cannot refer to polygamy, which was not practiced in cities of the Roman empire such as Ephesus;²⁵ rather, it stipulates that men be appointed who exemplify a loving, unselfish headship and the values of a lifelong marriage. The parallel between 3:12 for deacons and 3:2, 4–5 for the elder shows that there is a connection between having one wife and the ability to manage the household well (including any children).

The New Testament’s emphasis on the importance and integrity of the family social structure is not simply out of convenience to harmonize with the surrounding culture or out of expedience to facilitate mission. In fact, not unlike today, there were many cultural forces in Greco-Roman society that tended to undermine family stability including immoral lifestyles, homosexuality, and materialism. In the church too, Paul expresses concern that false teachers

Mary and Martha



were subverting “whole families” (Titus 1:12). The key role that Christianity accorded to the family, placing it at the heart of religious faith and worship, helps explain its explosive growth and rapid expansion throughout the ancient world. It also makes clear that the church’s continued growth, vitality, and stability depend largely on godly spiritual leadership in the homes that compose it.

Paul underscores that the structure of the human family was established at creation: “the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man” (1 Cor 11:3 NIV). “For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (vv. 8–9; cf. 1 Tim 2:13). Christ is not just the head of Adam, but the head of every man. And “the husband is the head of the wife” (Eph 5:23). This human family structure was integrated at creation into heaven’s existing order in which cherubim and seraphim are nearest the throne (Ps 99:1; Isa 6:2; Ezek 10:3; 11:22), Christ as Archangel is head over these as well as the rest of the angelic host (1 Thess 4:16; Rev 12:7; cf. Josh 5:13–15), and “the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3).

First Corinthians 11 is similar to 1 Timothy and Titus, but as a corrective church code. We see the same clues: a generic use of man and woman in connection with an argument from the creation order (11:3, 7–9) and instructions for how men and women are to behave in the church (11:4–6, 13–15). Apparently there were some believers in Corinth who were not following the accepted practices for affirming the headship principle in the church. So Paul first articulates the overarching principle that “the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man,” which is modeled by Christ himself, who is submissive to his Head, God the Father (v. 3). Paul makes application of this headship principle, based on the governing role of the head to the body (vv. 4–6, as also in Eph 5:22–33), and he defends it vigorously (vv. 7–16). “Head” (*kephalē*) in this context, as elsewhere in the New Testament,²⁶ does not refer to

“source,” which is not at issue here, but to “authority” (v. 10).²⁷ The notion of head as authority is frequent also in the OT, where the term (Heb. *rōš*) is used for rulers, chiefs, captains, and other authorities. Even in prophecy, heads symbolize authority, whether kings, rulers, powers, or kingdoms (Dan 2:38; 7:6; Rev 17:9–10).

After explaining how the headship principle articulated in verse 3 should impact one’s decorum in worship, Paul gives several supporting arguments for the principle. His primary Biblical rationale comes from the order and purpose of creation in Genesis 1–2: (1) woman is the glory of man inasmuch as she came from man (1 Cor 11:7–8); and (2) woman was created for the man (v. 9). He also appeals to the decorum angels manifest in worship (v. 10).²⁹ Paul balances this male leadership principle, however, with a “nevertheless” (*plēn*) clause in vv. 11–12 in order to remind his readers that it is not unconditional, that interdependence also functions among believers. Thus, as in the New Testament household codes,³⁰ unselfish love is presumed in the church code too. Paul wraps up his instructions with subsidiary arguments which are universal, not local or cultural—from reason (v. 13) and nature (vv. 14–15). Finally, he makes clear that all of the churches follow a consistent practice, from which no deviation will be considered (v. 16). While the nature of the head covering is not completely clear, Paul’s main point applies with equal force today: the way men and women conduct themselves in church should indicate that the principle of male church leadership is operative and accepted by all who take part in worship. Since every reason Paul gives for upholding this principle transcends local culture and practice, it follows that what he enjoins for the church at Corinth is not unique or applicable only to them. The principle of submission to the designated head is not limited by location or circumstance because it is practiced in all the churches and even in heaven. Paul shows how headship functions throughout divine-human, human, and divine relations,³¹ thereby empha-

sizing the same kind of nourishing headship relation by men in the church that Christ has with the church as a whole (cf. Eph 5:23), which resembles the role relation God the Father bears to Christ (1 Cor 11:3).

A few chapters later, in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul lays down another corrective church code. This set of rules deals with disruptive speech by both men and women in the church. Verses 33b–35, which forbid women from speaking in church, must be understood in this setting. Rather than contradicting what Paul has just said in 1 Corinthians 11:5 about women praying and prophesying in church, the rule should be read in light of this more comprehensive instruction that precedes it.

Relation of Spiritual Gifts to Ordination

There are several lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament, which together reflect a wide diversity of talents put to spiritual use. These gifts include prophecy, evangelism, teaching, helps, hospitality, ministry to the poor, and many others. Such gifts are available to both men and women without regard to race, class, or nationality. Still, while everyone is given some gift (1 Cor 12:7), there may be gifts that are not available to everyone since each of them is distributed in accordance with the Spirit’s choosing, bestowal, and direction, not ours (v. 11). The same may be said of church offices. Various church capacities, including that of prophet, are open to women (Luke 2:36; Acts 21:9; cf. 2:17–18; 1 Cor 11:5). However, women are never seen functioning as pastors, even though some, like Priscilla with her husband Aquila, were certainly involved in the work of instructing and making disciples, because the commission to share the gospel is something that all Christians should be actively engaged in (Luke 24:8–10; Rev 22:17). Nor are women ever seen functioning as elders/overseers, no doubt because this office combines headship and shepherding functions. Paul speaks tenderly to the “elders” (*presbyteroi*) of the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:17), whom the Holy Spirit

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appointed as “overseers” (*episkopoi*) to “shepherd” (*poimainō*) the church of God (v. 28). Peter also seems to use overseer and shepherd (or “pastor”) synonymously when he speaks of Jesus as “the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (1 Pet 2:25),³² as well as in his exhortation to the leaders of the churches of Asia Minor to “shepherd the flock of God, . . . exercising oversight [*episkopountes*]” (5:2). The elder is given oversight over God’s “flock” to protect it from danger and deception (Acts 20:29). It is an office that was given only to men who, like Adam and other spiritual leaders of the home and the church, will be called “to give an account” (Heb 13:17).

Summary and Conclusion

In the course of this brief but wide-ranging study, we have seen that the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of ordination and church order was established very early through extensive Bible study and remained essentially unchanged until the 1970s and 1980s when church policy started becoming more dominant in defining ministerial functions. However, the increasing conflict over the ordination of women, seen in recent years at various levels of our church, suggests that deeper theological issues are involved which can only be fully resolved by returning to a more Biblically based understanding and practice of ordination. An alternative approach suggests that we must continue down the path of pragmatic solutions because the Bible provides us no more than a vague, principle-based “trajectory.” It implies that the Old Testament’s consistent affirmation of male priests, the precedent of Jesus in ordaining twelve men as apostles, the selection of seven male deacons, and the teachings of Paul regarding the qualifications of church officers, are all products of the time, circumscribed by the limits of the culture. In fact, ordaining women represents a significant departure from the Biblical model. Is our degenerate Western culture of modernism and post-modernism, with its intentional dismantling of the family and family values, Christian distinctiveness,

and, ultimately, “truth,” better equipped to address the needs of the church today than are the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy? From our earliest beginnings as Seventh-day Adventists, we have found a solid, Bible-based approach to be our source of unity, and this challenge will be no exception. Ultimately, when policy-based rather than Scripture-based solutions to theological problems are employed, church order and unity may be undermined, as our recent experience in connection with this issue has shown. Genuine unity is the product of the converting power of the Word of God. It must be our guiding light—not a social reengineering of gender roles and functions that can never bring lasting relief from the abuses brought about by sin. Jesus has shown us the way, not through external social reforms but through inner transformation and the power of a positive example.

Beginning with the creation narrative of Genesis 1 and 2, the Bible consistently describes human beings as both equal and complementary, assigning the primary leadership role to the man with a supportive role given to the woman. The entrance of sin attempted to reverse these roles, but God indicated that male leadership would continue (Gen 3:16). Paul describes, based on Genesis, how this leadership, both in the home (Eph 5) and in the church (1 Cor 11), is to be subject to and modeled after Christ’s own unselfish headship. Throughout Scripture, women fulfill important supportive roles and women were specifically included by Jesus in his ministry. They also assisted the apostles in their work of establishing churches, but none are ever seen functioning as an elder or deacon because such persons “must be” (*dei . . . einai*) the husband of one wife, exhibiting godly character qualities and demonstrating wise spiritual leadership in the home (1 Tim 3:2–5, 12; Titus 1:6). This same Scriptural requirement applies also to pastors, whose headship role transcends that of a local church elder. The theological basis for this requirement is grounded in the early chapters of Genesis. Paul sets out guidelines for men and

women in the church based on the creation order, which in turn is based on the relation between the Father and the Son (1 Tim 2–3; 1 Cor 11, 14; Titus 1–3). Within this Biblical paradigm of godly male headship, all supportive avenues for service within the church are open to both women and men based on their Spirit-bestowed gifts and calling, including teaching, helps, hospitality, ministry to the poor, and many others. Naturally, how men and women relate to each other in a church setting will vary somewhat from culture to culture. At the same time, it will be evident that the principle of male church leadership is supported by the congregation as a whole, particularly by those who take leading roles in worship.

To follow the Bible model on the issue of women's ordination will require courage like that of our pioneers. Nevertheless, it is the only basis on which we can expect to maintain global unity, receive God's continued blessing, and, most importantly, anticipate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to finish his work. ■

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References

1. Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Noadiah, and the wife of Isaiah in the Old Testament, and Anna, and the four daughters of Philip in the New Testament.

2. Although the qal participle *šōpēt* is used substantively to mean "judge" (Judg 2:16, 17, 18ter, 19; 11:27), this is never applied to Deborah, who calls herself "a mother in Israel" (5:7).

3. See Judg 10:2 (Tola), 3 (Jair); 12:7 (Jephthah); 12:9 (Ibzan), 11 (Elon), 14 (Abdon); 15:20 and 16:31 (Samson).

4. Besides this temporal phrase in Judg 4 :4, use of a participle ("judging") rather than the normal verb form ("judged")—the only such case in the entire book of Judges (besides the verses listed in the previous endnote, see also Judg 3:10; 11:27; 12:8, 11, 13, all of which employ either a qal perfect or a qal imperfect with waw-consecutive)—suggests "a comparatively transitory act" (GKC §116f; cf. Jouon §121f).

5. Judg 4:4 is literally translated: "Now Deborah [feminine proper noun], a woman, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she [feminine pronoun]." ... Since Deborah is a feminine name and "prophetess" (*nēbî'â*) is grammatically feminine in Hebrew there is no need to add that she was a woman unless that point is being stressed. Furthermore, this construction is unique in the Old Testament; nowhere else is "woman" (*'iššâ*) linked to *nēbî'â*.

6. White, Ellen G., "Defeat of Sisera," *The Signs of the Times*, June 16, 1881, par. 4.

7. *Ibid.*, par. 6.

8. *Ibid.*, emphasis supplied.

9. Cf. *ZIBBCNT* 1:182.

10. In the New Testament, *diakonos* is the preferred designation for all church workers irrespective of capacity, because all serve Christ, who made Himself a Servant (Luke 22:27; cf. Phil 2:7, which uses *doulos*). Elsewhere *diakonos* carries the technical sense of "deacon," a church officer working under the authority of an elder/overseer (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8–16), in apparent contrast to women who seem to have fulfilled some church duties, though without an official title (1 Tim 3:11).

11. Literary, epigraphic, and historical evidence is divided

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homes that
compose it.

(BDF 125.2; MM 306) as to whether the name *Iouian* is feminine (Junia) or masculine (Junias), though the latter possibility is strengthened by the presence of three other shortened names in this list ending in -as (Patrobas, Hermas, Olympas, vv. 14–15), all clearly masculine (William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [4th ed.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1900], 422–23); see also Al Wolters, “IOYNIAN (Romans 16:7) and the Hebrew Name Yēhunnī,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127/2 (2008): 397–40. The translation “among the apostles” is possible too, but in that case may refer to “missionaries” (2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25) rather than to authoritative church leaders. Andronicus and Junia, then, could be a husband and wife missionary team with Junia directing “her energies especially to other women” (Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* [BECNT 6; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998], 797).

12. White, Ellen G., *The Desire of Ages*, 296: “When

Miriam

Jesus had ended His instruction to the disciples, He gathered



the little band close about Him, and kneeling in the midst of them, and laying His hands upon their heads, He offered a prayer dedicating them to His sacred work. Thus the Lord’s disciples were ordained to the gospel ministry” (cf. *idem*, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 4).

13. See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (ed. Francis D. Nichol; 7 vols.; Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1956), 5:230–31; cf. 196–97.

14. White, Ellen G., *The Desire of Ages*, 805.

15. Edwards, D. Miall, “Ordain, Ordination,” *ISBE* (1915 ed.), 4:2199, col. 2. The word “ordination,” derived from *ordinatio*, has its analogs in the other Latin-based languages. However, the concept is translated in various ways, in some languages closely reflecting the Biblical idea of the “laying on of hands” (e.g., Russian and Korean), while in others (e.g., Indonesian and Tagalog) translating it with a word that means “poured oil.”

16. Hugenberger, Gordon P., “Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis?,” *JETS* 35/3 (1992): 357, is forced to admit that at most it is only “a partial household code.” However, as we shall see, it really pertains to church life rather than home life.

17. Towner, Philip H., “Household Codes,” *DLNT*, 514. Similarly, David L. Balch, “Household Codes,” *ABD*, 3:318, who calls it a “congregational code.”

18. Paul gives several reasons for this: God wants all to be saved, Jesus is mediator and died for all, and Paul was ordained a preacher, apostle, and teacher of the Gentiles, which embraces the world.

19. Paul is well aware that some became believers while their spouses did not (cf. 1 Cor 7:12–16) and so, if he were writing about how to behave at home, he could not assume that the women “profess godliness.” He can only assume this because he is giving instructions for behavior in a worship setting. Besides, if this is a homesetting verses 9–10 do not make sense: why would Paul be concerned about how women dressed at home?

20. *BDAG* 345.

21. White, Ellen G., *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 56.

22. Some women (the unmarried or otherwise incapable of giving child-birth) might need to accept that it is not

God's plan yet for them to have children; to such this verse obviously does not apply.

23. Here, and in Acts 20:17, 28, overseer (*episkopos*) is used interchangeably with elder (*presbyteros*). Judging from the negative qualities listed in Titus 1:10–14, there may have been problems with some of the overseers of the churches on Crete.

24. The possibility of construing *anēr* as “person” is excluded because it is linked in both these verses with *gynē* which refers to the man's wife. Further confirmation is found in v. 11 where “the women” are referred to separately and without such a specification, perhaps because they were the wives of the deacons. In any case, these women had a supportive role, doing work similar to that of the deacons though without the title (see n. 50 above).

25. Cf. Walter Scheidel, “Monogamy and Polygyny,” in *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (ed. Beryl Rawson; Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World; West Sussex, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 108: “Greco-Roman monogamy may well be the single most important phenomenon of ancient history that has remained widely unrecognized.”

26. The word is used elsewhere of Christ as “head over all things” in relation to the church (Eph 1:22), which is His body (v. 23; similarly Col 1:18), and as the “head over all rule and authority” (Col 2:10 NIV). Both passages refer to His supremacy—over the church, as the Chief Shepherd and Overseer of our souls (1 Pet 2:25; 5:4), and over all other authorities and powers that have been made subject to Him (1 Pet 3:22). Parallel to Christ's headship over the church is the husband's headship in relation to his wife (Eph 5:22–24).

27. This has been clearly established by Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “*Kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11:3,” *Int* 47 (1993): 52–59; Wayne Grudem, “The Meaning of κεφαλή (“Head”): An Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged,” *JETS* 44/1 (2001): 25–65, who on 61–64 cites many others reaching this conclusion.

28. See, e.g., Exod 6:14, 25; 18:25; Num 1:16; 7:2; 10:4; Deut 1:15; 5:23; 33:5, 21; Josh 14:1; 19:51; Judg 10:18; 11:8, 11; 1 Sam 15:17, etc. None of these heads were sources in any sense of the word, as indicated by the

Septuagint's translation choices (*archēgoi, archai, chiliarchoi, archontes, hēgeisthai, hēgoumernoι, kepltalē*).

29. Perhaps referring at once to the reverence the angels exhibit in God's presence (covering their faces, Isa 6:2), the high degree of order they exemplify (cherubim, seraphim, etc., vividly described in Rev 4-5), and their presumed presence during church worship.

30. Wives are enjoined to submit to their husbands as to the Lord (Eph 5:21–24). Children are instructed to obey their parents in the Lord (6:1–3). Servants are enjoined to submit to their masters as serving the Lord (6:5-8). In addition, those in positions of authority are enjoined to reciprocate: husbands to love their wives (5:25–28), fathers to deal gently with their children so as not to exasperate them (6:4), and masters to deal gently with their servants, knowing that both serve the same Master, who will not show favoritism of the one over the other in the judgment (6:9). This reciprocation of love and kindness by the authority figure helps make the incumbent submission easy to practice and is akin to the mutual love and submission that all believers are to manifest toward one another (5:21).

31. The word order in each of the three relations places the heads in parallel and prioritizes Christ by placing this relation first, perhaps because He is the connecting link between the other two relational pairs.

32. Jesus likened Himself to the “good Shepherd” promised in the Old Testament (John 10:1-16; Mark 14:27; cf., e.g., Jer 23:4; Eze 34:23; 37:24; Zech 13:7).

**...women are
never seen
functioning as
pastors, even
though some,
like Priscilla
with her
husband Aquila,
were certainly
involved in
the work
of instructing
and making
disciples...**

ordination summary report ➔ **continued** from page 39...

The “no inspiration” side of the continuum represents the idea that the Bible is not divinely inspired and should be regarded as any other literary work. The “biblical inerrancy” side represents the idea that God dictated the precise words of Scripture. The traditional Adventist approach to interpreting Scripture reveals a centrist path of “thought inspiration.”

Since the various hermeneutical approaches can lead to differing interpretations, it follows that approaches designated by more distant points on the continuum—even those within the central portion representing traditional Seventh-day Adventist guidelines—may draw conflicting conclusions about issues for which there is not a clear, unequivocal biblical mandate.

Headship

The decades-old debate about the role of women in Seventh-day Adventist Church leadership is complex and sensitive. Those who disagree with ordaining women to the offices of elder and pastor are usually in harmonious agreement concerning most facets of the discussion—that women, too, are created in God’s image; that they are created of worth equal to men; that they bring equally valuable gifts to the church; and that they also bring exclusively female contributions to the mission of the body of Christ.

The agreement breaks down around passages in Scripture that have been associated with the concept of headship. Generally, those who would stop short of ordaining women to the offices of pastor or elder take issue with appointing women to headship roles, maintaining that a plain reading of Scripture does not allow women to exercise spiritual authority over men. Others believe that biblical headship does not apply to church leadership roles but is limited in application to the husband’s role as servant-leader in the home. Still others contend that headship is not even a biblical concept, but rather a relatively modern term, and that the original Greek word for *head* (*kephalē*), denotes source, not leader. These argue that hierarchical position is not the point, and that correct interpretation of these challenging passages is dependent on understanding the context in which they were written.

The majority of the committee does not view the issue of headship as a barrier to ordaining women to pastoral ministry.

Unity

Some may be concerned that the unity of the worldwide Church is compromised if members in some regions practice the ordination of women while others do not. In its supreme sense, unity is characterized by oneness with God and with each other, as Jesus said in his prayer in John 17. However, unity must be differentiated from uniformity, which implies invariability.

In deference to the unity Jesus identified, our doctrines comprise the common ground upon which our Church denomination is organized. For the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the 28 Fundamental Beliefs are the common doctrines. They are officially adopted and are considered scripturally clear. Other issues not unequivocally outlined in Scripture are subject to varying interpretations. Because a scripturally based, reasonable case may be made in favor of or opposed to the ordination of women to pastoral ministry, a worldwide mandate is neither practical nor necessary.

In recent years, the General Conference has established policies recognizing women in leadership roles: the ordination of deaconesses and elders and the commissioning of pastors. Although these policies are not practiced in all regions of the world, the Church has remained a single, worldwide organization. It is the conclusion of the study committee that differences in opinion and practice on this issue do not constitute disunity in Christ nor in the Church.

Since the first resolution recommending the ordination of women in 1881, members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have intensely debated, without consensus, the advisability of ordaining women to the gospel ministry. In 1973 the General Conference made its first formal appointment of a committee to study the role of women in the Church. Forty years later, it is the recommendation of this North American Division Theology of Ordination Study Committee that ordination to gospel ministry, as an affirmation of the call of God, be conferred by the Seventh-day Adventist Church on men and women. ■

**Submitted by the North American Division
Theology of Ordination Study Committee**

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