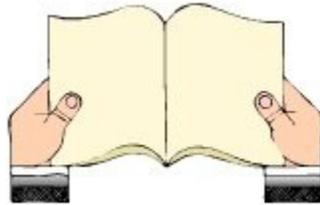


The Ordination of Women

The Priesthood of all Believers
and other Aspects



By
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Introduction

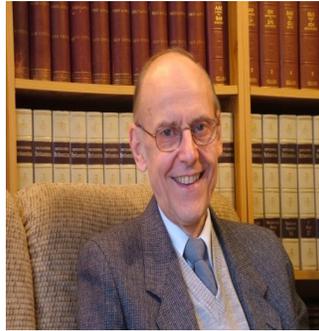
God’s holy Word is for every Christian the ultimate source and standard to which all things he believes and teaches should be tested. The Scriptures are based upon God’s authority and reveal to us His holy and unerring will. Never should God’s children regard it to be their duty to try to explain the Scriptures in such a way that harmony will be reached with contemporary social and cultural views. The

Scriptures should not be adjusted and adapted to popular principles. No, modern society should adjust and modify itself according to God's holy and unchanging word. The rules and principles of the Bible are normative and far elevated above every society and above any culture.

Thus, when we study a subject as the ordination of women, we should not be guided by social or cultural prevailing standards which could noticeably differ from place to place. Only the unchanging word of God is our safe and reliable Guide to understand God's purpose with men and women. It is true that we do not always find in the Bible a direct and straightforward answer on all our questions. Nowhere in the Scriptures do we read a plain: *'Thou shalt not baptize little children'* or *'Thou shalt keep the Saturday as God's Sabbath.'* Neither do we read: *'Thou shalt not ordain women.'* However, to the sincere and willing seekers for truth, who with reverence and awe search and study God's holy word, the revealed principles will lead to a clear and convincing biblical point of view. Says Proverbs 3:5 *"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."*

As a church we were brave enough to defend our biblical viewpoint against the opinion of the great majority regarding the day of rest, the mortality of the soul, the millennium and other important biblical truths. The courage to stay apart, on basis of our love to God and to the truth of His word, is an essential, indispensable and holy power which binds us all together. When we would adopt another course by not following exclusively God's word but also giving heed to contemporary insights, customs, habits and social developments, then we, as a church, will irrevocably lose our power and unity, together with our special task and calling in this world.

May God bless us as we study the position and ordination of women in the only true context of God's holy word.



The Ordination of Women

The Priesthood of all Believers and other Aspects

By Pastor Jan

Voerman, Netherlands.

1. A Threefold Foundation

The true church of Christ should be a **Bible based** community of believers rather than a fellowship based in any way on culture or on principles and habits of modern society.

After careful study it turns out to be impossible to defend the ordination of women in leadership on the principle of the priesthood of all believers, since there is no hint in that direction whatsoever and besides, there is not one clear example in the Bible of a woman priest, apostle, presbyter, elder, overseer or bishop nor any reference which would justify the appointment of women in those offices. And furthermore the priesthood of all believers does not necessarily, in all aspects, have exactly the same interpretation for men as for women.

As to the position of women, not only the apostle Paul but also the apostle Peter testifies similarly; and since these chosen apostles were inspired workers of God, the biblical statement certainly applies that "*...the testimony of two men is true.*" (John 8:17), and also that "*...in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*" Mat. 18:16. Thus every sincere Christian should take the testimony of

these two apostles as being true and trustworthy without arguing against it.

The apostle Paul, in 1 Cor. 14:34, places himself on the absolute platform of God's law. *"They (women) are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law."* (Authorised KJV) *"They must, as the Law says, take a secondary place."* (Berkeley Version) *"But let them be in subjection, as also saith the law."* (ASV) *"They have no license to speak, but should keep their place as the law directs."* (NEB)

Paul does not refer to cultural or social insight or public opinion. He simply refers to the **Law**. As for man's and woman's position he refers in 1 Cor. 11:8, 9 also to the **Creation**, thus placing himself undeniably on the ground of God's authority as the Creator of mankind.

In 1 Tim. 2:13, 14 Paul again refers to the Creation and also to the **Fall**. So there is a **threefold** immovable foundation on which the position of man and woman rests. Three undeniably fundamental realities: The Law, the Creation and the Fall. It is evident that Paul does not refer to the law of the 10 commandments. The apostle Paul refers here to another law spoken by God at the beginning.

In consequence of the Fall, God spoke to Adam and Eve and specified the rule or law of life. *"Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."* Gen. 3:16.

Here we have a clear **"Thus saith the Lord"**. God Himself spoke to Eve. He did not speak through an angel or another being. This is a **clear** and **direct** personally addressed Word of the Lord. God Himself declared this rule to the woman. God Himself pronounced this law.

Is this law only given to a restricted group of people with a certain culture? Was this law only in operation for a certain period of time and was it perhaps nailed to the cross? Or was it only in force until

Paul wrote to the Galatians: "...*there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ*"? Gal. 3:28.

If that would be true, then there should be also, since that moment, a taking away of the great sorrow of bringing forth children as well as the desire of a woman to the husband. However, there is no evidence for that at all. Or is it perhaps so that **only** this small part - *and he shall rule over thee* - which does not seem to suit many modern people so well these days, has come to an end? How inconsistent that would be!

God has spoken. He has given mankind his law!

"God has made known His will, and it is folly for man to question that which has gone out of His lips. After Infinite Wisdom has spoken, there can be no doubtful questions for man to settle, no wavering possibilities for him to adjust. All that is required of him is a frank, earnest concurrence in the expressed will of God. Obedience is the highest dictate of reason as well as of conscience." AA 506.

To every sincere Christian it should be clear that the Bible does not sanction female ordination on an equal base with a male since any evidence for that is lacking.

It is usually not the great majority of the church members which actually wish or insist on women leadership. It is more the promotion and desire of some leaders in the church. Some churches are even openly against such a move while in other churches this issue creates strife and discord.

In the **Early church** women were **only** ordained as **deaconesses** and church historian Joseph Bingham explains: "*Yet we are not to imagine, that this consecration gave them any power to execute any part of the sacerdotal office, or do the duties of the sacred function.*" Joseph Bingham, *Origines Ecclesiasticae; or the Antiquities of the Christian Church, in eight volumes*, London, 1834, Vol., I, p. 254. Chap. XXII,

Book II, Sect. 7, has the heading: *“Not consecrated to any Office of the Priesthood,”* and Bingham assures: *“Women were always forbidden to perform any such offices as those.”* Ibid.

Only a small **apostate** group had women leaders. Bingham records: *“Epiphanius brings the charge particularly against the Pepuzians, which were a branch of the Montanists, ‘that they made women bishops, and women presbyters, abusing that passage of the Apostle, ‘In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female.’ to put some colour upon their practice.”* Ibid.

Should we follow in their apostate footsteps or walk on the true biblical way?

2. Does Christ’s Priestly Ministry Sanction Women’s Ordination?

As to the priestly ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary we are dependent upon the revelations of God as written down by His servants. Paul in particular, deals with this topic in his epistle to the Hebrews, evidently written before he wrote his epistles to Timothy and Titus. Paul was very accurately instructed.

Paul, in his ministry, *“had taught the people ‘not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.’ The truths that he proclaimed had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit...”* AA 402. *“He had received the truths of the gospel direct from heaven, and throughout his ministry he maintained a vital connection with heavenly agencies. He had been taught by God regarding the binding of unnecessary burdens... Paul knew the mind of the Spirit of God... and took a firm and unyielding position which brought to the churches freedom from Jewish rites and ceremonies.”* Ibid., 200. *“Paul was an inspired apostle. The truths he taught to others he had received ‘by revelation.’”* Ibid., 302. *“He claimed no wisdom of his own, but acknowledged that divine power alone had enabled him to present the truth in a manner pleasing to God. United*

with Christ, the greatest of all teachers, Paul had been enabled to communicate lessons of divine wisdom, which met the necessities of all classes, and which were to apply at all times, in all places, and under all conditions.” Ibid., 303. Paul “had received abundant revelations from God. ” Paulson coll., 243.

Thus, we are assured that the apostle Paul was divinely instructed in the various issues. Therefore, he certainly knew how Christ’s priestly ministry, as well as the New Testament principle of the priesthood of all believers, precisely **relate** to the position and service of women in the church. We should therefore accept his teaching unconditionally and without questioning as being the revealed will and word of God.

If, somehow, we come to a conclusion that is not entirely in harmony with Paul’s teaching, we may be sure that such a conclusion is **against** the revealed will of God.

The apostle Paul was very specific in his teaching about the position of a woman, placing himself on a sure threefold platform of God’s law, the Creation and the Fall. We could be inclined to by-pass this distinct truth because we might feel that Paul’s teaching of subordination of women is not entirely in harmony with Christ’s priestly ministry and the principle of the priesthood of all believers. However, such a feeling does not demonstrate that Paul in this teaching was dubious or culturally influenced, as some would have it, no, it reveals, without doubt, that **our** feeling or understanding is not correct. We should accept, unconditionally, Paul’s teaching as the revealed will of God.

Furthermore, Paul specified clearly the necessary essentials for the position of leadership in the church and there is **no hint**, whatsoever, that the apostle included women in such a position.

if Christ’s priestly ministry would make it also possible for women to minister as leaders in the church, equivalent to the ministry of men, we certainly should find some evidence for such an important issue in

the teachings of Paul, since this apostle in particular deals specifically with both subjects.

Many modern egalitarian (equalitarian) preachers say that there is in the New Testament no difference between men and women with regard to serving the church in any position. These preachers often come boldly forward with their, sometimes much desired, arguments in favor of this point of view. It should, however, be realized that a sincere Christian will demand that such arguments ought to be fully in harmony with the Bible without neglecting certain passages.

If we refer to Christ's priestly ministry to justify this egalitarian position of men and women, we should consider that the inspired and enlightened apostles **well knew** what they wrote about. We may be assured that the apostle Paul, who deals with this subject in his letter to the Hebrews, certainly presented this topic **without** any contradiction with his teaching in his **other** letters. The apostles were the first builders and organizers of the New Testament Church and the Holy Spirit guided them to preach the truth; to reveal the will of God; and to make right decisions.

If we assert that Christ's priestly ministry justifies that women could serve in leading positions of responsibility in the church, equivalent with men, then, certainly, the apostles, including Paul in particular, should be **aware** of this. Or must we perhaps conclude that this is new light not revealed to the apostles? In what sense then can we still regard the Bible as a complete revelation of God's will and as the standard of all teaching for all times?

Thus it should be clear that the apostle Paul certainly knew how Christ's priestly ministry relates to the position and service of women in the church. We can be sure of this since he wrote by divine revelation about Christ's heavenly ministry; the assignment and position of a woman and the requirements of those leading the church. Note how the apostle, under divine inspiration, firstly specified very clearly the responsibility, task and place of a woman

and then he continued to present the necessary qualities of a church leader, elder or bishop.

Paul wrote: *“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.”* 1 Tim. 2:11-15.

Having stated this so clearly and specifically, the apostle Paul then goes on to describe the qualities of a church leader who is to exercise authority over the church with great responsibility. Would the apostle give us an indication that women could also be responsible leaders in the church? That certainly would be contradictory. It is to be expected that with such a preceding description about a woman’s position, the apostle would not include women in a leading responsible position of authority in the church. No wonder then that the apostle speaks only in terms of male church leaders such as *“husband of one wife”* and *“if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?”* There is no hint to a female church leader whatsoever. The apostle writes exclusively several times “he” and never “she” in this important context. 1 Tim. 3:1-7.

In accordance with the instructions given to Timothy, Paul clearly directed also Titus to ordain masculine elders in **every** city. Titus 1:5-9. The Greek word *“presbuterous”* clearly signifies **older men**. A good question we might ask is: Were there in every city able men present to ordain for this office? We should consider that when Paul wrote this to Titus the various churches on Crete were very young and not yet well organized. Things were wanting that needed to be set in order. It is therefore a relevant question whether these young churches on Crete, at that early date, had much choice to appoint able masculine elders. Crete is not a very large island and it is imaginable

that Titus had to care for some small groups as well. Note that Paul does not in any way make clear that in case there may not be an able man in some city, Titus then should look for a dedicated woman to ordain. No, not at all, Paul charged Titus to appoint men and this is clearly in harmony with Paul's inspired teaching in his other letters.

The Bible makes clear that a leading or ruling office in the church, like that of a bishop, overseer, presbyter or elder is attributed to men only. The Biblical context clearly refers to men only. The used Greek words for these officers are masculine. Should we then, as careful and honest Bible students, ignore this fact, or should we take it seriously as the word of God? When we operate faithfully in harmony with Biblical principles, then blessings and appreciation are to be expected. Thus also, when an elder rules well, he will be much honoured and appreciated. *"Let the elders (older men - the Greek is clearly masculine) that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."* 1 Tim. 5:17.

This issue of masculine leaders in the church is important enough as well as **far reaching** in its results, so we should have a **clear insight** and it will not be acceptable to believe that God would leave us in **doubt** or in **ignorance** in this important matter. So we should expect that if women were to be included as leaders of the church, some **clear hint** in that direction would certainly have been given. But that is not the case and as sincere Bible students we have to take God's Word **as it is** and we are not allowed to go beyond that for that would be to our own eternal disadvantage.

Some people try to explain that when men are mentioned, it should be realized that according to the linguistic biblical usage, women are not excluded but also involved without saying, and thus it is no problem to appoint women elders also. As to general or common cases this principle of women being involved as well is sometimes very true, but the appointment of elders or bishops, as leaders in the church, is not at all a common matter that applies to everyone. It is a clear

restricted and **confined** appointment of a **selective** and **specifically qualifying** function, and in a case like that, where clearly characterizing qualities are at stake, women are not without saying involved when men are mentioned. And as we look at the context where behavior and position in the church is addressed, it is usually clear enough that Paul deals with men and women **apart** and not collectively.

With regard to women the apostle states very specifically: *“...she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.”* This is a clear indication as to where a woman’s main responsibilities are.

Note how, for instance, a few commentaries react on this biblical statement:

SDA BC: *“In making provision for the birth and nurture of children God has entrusted a great honor and privilege to womankind. When woman fulfills her trust faithfully, by channeling her energies into the creation of a happy, orderly home, she will not only be called blessed by her husband and children but will also receive the approbation of the Lord. Salvation cannot be separated from a person’s day-by-day relation to the responsibilities of life. To forsake or neglect her God-appointed sphere of activity for other pursuits may result in unhappiness and loss. Paul urges all women to do their duty as faithful mothers and to recognize man’s God-given responsibility of leadership in the home and in the church. God has given to both men and women special qualifications for accomplishing their individual tasks, and both will find their greatest happiness in filling their assigned places with a spirit of love, devotion, and faithful service.”*

Critical, Experimental and Practical Commentary: *“...by her faithfully performing her part in doing and suffering what God has assigned to her -viz., child-bearing and home duties, her sphere, as distinguished from public teaching, not her’s, but man’s (vv. 11, 12). In this home sphere, not ordinarily in public service for the kingdom of*

God, she will be saved on the same terms as all others-viz., by living faith."

NT Word Studies, J. A. Bengel: *"In child-bearing- The woman's office is here described, in the contrast with the duty of teaching and governing: bringing forth and training children."*

The Pulpit Commentary: *"It is here implied that woman is to find her right sphere in the relations of motherhood...Her sphere is in the home life; her destiny lies in the faithful discharge of its duties."*

A Commentary on the Holy Bible, Dummelow: *"In childbearing, i.e. by keeping faithfully and simply to her allotted sphere as wife and mother."*

Popular Commentary of the Bible, Kretzmann: *"The priority of Adam's creation is thus a testimony for the order of God that the man should lead and rule for all times... The woman was and should be in the relation of dependency to the man, from which it follows that her status should not be that of a leader or teacher in the Church... the home, the family, motherhood is woman's proper sphere of activity. Every normal woman should enter holy wedlock, become a mother, and rear her children, if God grants her the gift of babies of her own. That is woman's highest calling; for this God has given her physical and mental gifts."*

The Expositor's Greek Testament, W. Robertson Nicoll: *"... childbearing, rather than public teaching or the direction of affairs, is woman's primary function, duty, privilege and dignity..."*

A New Commentary on Holy Scripture, Gore, Goudge, Guillaume: *"He (Paul) means that God has given to them (women) in place of the Christian ministry reserved for men another office in the Church, in the faithful discharge of which they are to work out their salvation - that of peopling the Church by bearing and training children to be citizens of God's kingdom on earth."*

What are we to think of these commentaries? They are, of course, not on the same authoritative level as the Spirit of Prophecy comments are, but it is interesting to note what they have to say on this issue. Are they all wrong or perhaps outdated or are they in harmony with the will and order of God as revealed by Paul's teaching?

As a church we are richly blessed with the gift of prophecy and we should consider Ellen White's counsel as unique, truthful and inspired.

In harmony with Paul's statement, a few short quotations taken from Ellen White's writings are certainly valuable to consider in this context.

3. Ellen White's Testimony

Many E. G. White passages illuminate the importance of the work and duty of the mother. The following quotes are taken from *Good Health*, Jan., 1, 1880; Feb., 1, 1880; March 1, 1880; April 1, 1880; June 1, 1880; July 1, 1880.

God-appointed work. *But the Christian mother has her God-appointed work, which she will not neglect if she is closely connected with God and imbued with his Spirit... The mother's work is given her of God, to bring up her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

Too many burdens. *The mother is frequently overtaxed; too many burdens are allowed to rest upon her... The constant inquiry of every one should be, What is duty? What shall I do to benefit my children and society, and to glorify God?...*

Influence. *The mother's daily influence upon her children is preparing them for eternal life or death. She exercises a power in her home more decisive than the minister in the desk, or even the king upon his throne.*

Result of faithful lessons. *When Samuel shall receive the crown of glory, he will wave it in honor before the throne, and gladly*

acknowledge that the faithful lessons of his mother, through the merits of Christ, have crowned him with immortal glory.

Strongest power for good. *Next to God, the mother's power for good is the strongest known on earth... I would impress upon mothers that women are accountable for the talents God has entrusted to them. They may engage in missionary work at home, in their families. Their influence is fully equal to that of the husband and father. The most elevated work for woman is the molding of the character of her children after the divine pattern.*

Influence on the church. *The church will bless her because she has educated and developed talent which will be of the highest value. She gives to the church, men and women who will not flinch from duty however taxing. If Christian mothers had always done their work with fidelity, there would not now be so many church trials on account of disorderly members. Mothers are forming the characters which compose the church of God. When I see a church in trial, its members self-willed, heady, high minded, self-sufficient, not subject to the voice of the church, I am led to fear that their mothers were unfaithful in their early training.*

A responsibility, paramount to everything else. *God has given the mother, in the education of her children, a responsibility paramount to everything else... If she does this work to glorify God, she will not follow the popular path, and will have to stand in defiance of popular customs... The mother's nursery is her kingdom... All the tact and cultivated skill of the mother will be called into requisition if she rules with God-fearing wisdom. She will not turn her children over to hired help, or leave them to obtain a street education.*

Meeting God's standard. *Mothers, shall our precious time be worse than wasted in work and hurry...while but a limited time is improved in educating and disciplining our children? Our hands are on the cradle that rocks the world. Shall our children become what they may be, and what God would have them be? Shall we meet God's*

standard, revealed to us in his word, or shall our efforts be employed to meet the world's standard?

Much faithful, earnest, persevering labor. *Little does the mother realize that her influence in the judicious training of her children reaches with such power through the vicissitudes of this life, stretching forward into the future, immortal life. To fashion a character after the heavenly model requires much faithful, earnest, persevering labor; but it will pay, for God is a rewarder of all well-directed labor in securing the salvation of souls.*

The duty of a mother in training her children is, without doubt, a very **serious** matter. Satan knows that when he can keep mothers busy with **other** things at the **expense** of faithfully performing God's appointed work, he will succeed in obtaining control over the children and upset families, churches and society. How important and often undervalued is the right position of the mother!

In these days, where many mothers have a job outside the home, the **proper** education of the children is often neglected and we are to reap the sad results. Why do so many young people leave the church? Why is there among the young people so much criminality and rebellion?

Thus, if mothers aspire to go for making a career for themselves, whether it is in a responsible position of authority in the church or in society, it should be seriously questioned if this really is in harmony with God's will and it should be also remembered that it will not be so beneficial as perhaps might be expected.

Consider the sad story of Brigitte as told in a Dutch daily paper *De Telegraaf*, Dec., 2, 1995. The important catchwords in Brigitte's story are without doubt: *working parents, loneliness, divorce*. Brigitte is a heroin-whore. She explained that she does not use drugs just for fun but to suppress her feelings. What kind of feelings are involved that have influenced her so negatively? She tells that she has always felt

very lonely because both parents were working and she had no brothers or sisters. Her parents had little time for her and they also had insufficient time for each other. There was no happy home and at last her parents divorced. Brigitte was happy to have a horse and she sought comfort with her horse she liked so much. However, as a result of the divorce, the horse had to be sold and so she had to give up that which was so dear to her. Brigitte walked away from home and at last her life ended up in the gutter.

What is the gain that these parents have secured? Would you like to stay in their stead? Was it not wise to be both working? Isn't it a good thing for both parents to build up economic security? But can it be, even if we are apparently successful, that with all we have tried to build up and to win, we are at last forced to submit before God's throne that we have **lost** everything?

4. Parental Crisis

A few years ago an Adventist couple visited us complaining about their two children. They did not listen, were unruly, self-willed, and followed their own way. But is it any wonder that these children were so unmanageable? Father and mother both worked and when their two children came home from school there was no one to guide them. They could take what they wanted and do what they liked and so they were to a great deal used to follow their own way. And when both parents came home in the evening they were busy preparing food and doing some other necessary home duties. It is quite clear that their two children did not receive the attention they needed so urgently. How true and important are Paul's and Ellen White's inspired words concerning the position and duty of women. How beneficial it would be if these words were taken to heart and more closely followed.

In September 1991 "*The Guardian*" published some interesting articles about the crisis of parenthood. Richard Whitfield, president of the "*National Family Trust*" explained that there is a great crisis in parental care. There is an alarming crumbling away of unconditional

love. He spoke with a number of school principals who told him that the children with problems were usually those who did not receive sufficient attention because both parents worked. These children often felt lonely, were rebellious and showed antisocial and disorderly behavior.

In a radio program (January 18, 1996) entitled "*I or my child,*" a number of people told their story. The opening words were: "*It looks so attractive, a young woman with husband, children and a job. She looks charming and she divides her time so well, but the combination of all tasks often result in prostration. A working mother has to deal with many problems.*" A University Chief of Staff of Social Sciences explained that the results of full time work of women are disastrous. Problems, including criminality among young people, have greatly risen. There's a great parental crisis in the education of their children. They do not receive sufficient attention and the quality of love they need because both parents are working and too busy.

How urgent and relevant in this modern age is Paul's teaching as well as Ellen White's counsel regarding the position and duties of a woman. Should we, as a church, follow in the footsteps of this world by promoting women leadership in the church, thus investing them with a twofold heavy responsibility - that of the church and that of their family? Or should we be **courageous** enough to return to the biblical rule and encourage women according to the will of God to fulfill faithfully their God-given duties of responsibility in the home, educating their children for eternity?

5. Double Task

Is it a small and easy task to educate children in the ways of the Lord? Not at all. It is a work of **great** responsibility paramount to everything else which requires much faithful, earnest, persevering labor. Is it a small and easy task to be in a position of leadership in the church? Not at all. It is a work of great responsibility which, **equally**, requires much patience and faithful, earnest, persevering labor.

Ellen White warns: *“The mother is frequently overtaxed; too many burdens are allowed to rest upon her.”* Good Health, Appeal to Mothers, Feb., 1, 1880. Is it fair to overburden a woman with a **double** task of great responsibility? Would that not be at the expense of health as well as of either the one or the other task?

We should be most **thankful** to our all-wise heavenly Father that He inspired the apostle Paul by his Holy Spirit to specify that women are not called to positions of authority and leadership in the church.

If it is God’s appointed work that a woman should faithfully train and educate her children and perform her duties in the family circle, could we then **expect** the Holy Spirit to call women and provide them with gifts to be leaders in the church with full ecclesiastical authority?

Was it a matter of chance when in the upper room, where men and women assembled, again a man was chosen in the place of Judas, or was it according to the Holy Spirit’s leading? The Bible informs us that the number of names together were about 120. Here was a real and good opportunity to appoint a dedicated woman, but not so; two men were appointed and not one man and one woman. Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias were appointed and the assembly prayed and asked God: *“shew whether of these two thou hast chosen... and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles ”* Acts 1:13-26.

However, when a woman is without children, because she is not married or cannot, for some reason, give birth to a child, would it be possible then, if she is a talented and dedicated woman, to be an authoritative leader in the church? We should consider that such cases are not to be regarded as being the general rule. The rule is that the desire of a woman shall be to a husband. Gen. 3:16.

And if there are women who, for some reason, cannot bear children, this again should not be regarded as being a general rule but rather as an exception because God said to the first human couple: *“Be*

fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.” In consequence of sin, this process was pronounced to be accompanied with much sorrow and so we might expect some problems now and then in this area. Gen 1:28; 3:16.

The Bible, however, does not make clear anywhere that women, being single or married but without children, will qualify somehow to be ordained leaders in the church.

If the teachings of the Bible apply to all men in all ages and when the position and duty of women is clearly specified and when there is **only** evidence that men are called and chosen to be leaders in the church, it will be **against** the will of God and thus of no avail to explain the Scriptures otherwise, in some way.

6. The Biblical Principle of Priesthood of all Believers

Does the New Testament principle of the *‘priesthood of all believers’* somehow justify that women, just like men, are called to positions of authority and leadership in the church?

The apostle Peter states in his first letter: *“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious... ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people...”* 1 Peter 2:7, 9. The apostle repeats here in fact the words that were spoken to the Israelites when they were led out of Egypt and had pitched their tents at Sinai. We read: *“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me... And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”* Ex. 19:5, 6.

The Israelites were promised to be a *‘kingdom of priests’*. In ancient times not everyone was, in the literal sense, a priest who offered animal sacrifices unto the Lord. Only the head of the family or tribe usually served as its priest.

When Israel was organized as a nation the tribe of Levi was chosen to serve in the tabernacle in place of the firstborn or head of each family. The tribe of Levi remained loyal to God when the golden calf was worshiped and the Levites were now chosen to serve the Lord and Aaron and his sons were set apart to the priestly office.

Although the whole nation was called a *'kingdom of priests,'* this clearly could not mean that every Israelite was to be a priest serving in the tabernacle or temple. Only the sons of Aaron of the tribe of Levi were, according to the law, allowed to minister in the Lord's house as priests. Cf., Hebrews 7:11-14. There is no reason, nor any indication, to believe that others or any woman were ever called to serve as such in the House of the Lord.

A Spiritual Priesthood. But it was not only the tribe of Levi which was called a *'kingdom of priests.'* No, these words were addressed to **all** Israelites. Since the priesthood was reserved only for the Levitical male offspring of Aaron's house, this priesthood could not be in view as being the right meaning or application of the words, *'kingdom of priests.'* There must be **another** meaning which applies to all Israelites, male and female, for the entire congregation was included in the plan of God. In what sense then, were all the Israelites called to be a *'kingdom of priests'?*

The previous verse, Exodus 19:4 says: *"You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself."*

The Israelites had been in Egypt in a state of servitude and bondage, and they were now, according to God's promise, to be erected into a kingdom; a free state governed by the laws which God would give them. They were to be a kingdom unto God; a Theocracy with God as their King. And God purposed this kingdom to consist of people that were priests, devoted to the worship and service of God. People who had access to God; served Him; offered sacrifice to Him; obeyed His voice and kept His covenant. By faith in the promised Messiah they

were to enter God's kingdom of grace and gain the victory over sin, over Satan and over the world. They were, as a peculiar treasure; as a kingdom of priests and as a holy and separate nation, to draw nigh to God to present themselves, souls and bodies, a holy and living sacrifice and offer to God the sacrifices of prayer and praise. Such was the elevated priestly calling of the Israelites. God had chosen them to reflect His character and be the light of the world. They were to be priests in a spiritual sense.

The Kingdom given to the Gentiles who would share the same blessing. When the Israelites would have obeyed the divine instructions they would have been the world's object lesson of health and prosperity. The Israelites, however, failed to fulfill God's purpose, and thus failed to receive the rich blessings that might have been theirs. They rejected their King and the kingdom was taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Mat. 21:43.

From the olive tree, as a presentation of the house of Israel, branches were broken off and believing Gentiles were grafted in their place and made to share the root and richness of the olive tree. Romans 11:17. Could this mean that the Gentiles were made to share **other** blessings than the Israelites were to receive? Is there any difference? No, the Gentiles, through faith were made to share the **same** root with the same richness. They are blessed with faithful Abraham and **not** blessed *apart* from Abraham with *another* blessing. Gal. 3:9.

Thus the apostle Peter repeats the same blessed elevated priestly calling and applies it to the New Testament believers: "*ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people...*" 1 Peter 2:9.

Does this mean that all believers are to be priests in a literal sense? That has never been God's order. In Old Testament times only the Levites ministered in the house of the Lord and they were sustained by the tithes of the other tribes. In a similar sense are in New Testament times the ministers of the Gospel sustained by the tithes of

the other believers who are not called to be ministers in God's Church. (1 Cor. 9:13, 14.)

Christ is our great High Priest, and because he abideth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Hebrews 7:24. Goodspeed uses the word "*untransferable.*" Weymouth's translation says: "*which does not pass to any successor.*" And Williams' translation says: "*(He) enjoys the only priesthood that has no successors in office.*" Thus it is clear that there is **no** place for a literal human priesthood in New Testament times.

Spiritual Kings and Priests. The meaning of the believers being 'a *royal priesthood*' cannot be taken literally and must be taken in **another** sense. In the Old Testament, the whole congregation of Israel was called 'a *kingdom of priests*' and similarly, in the New Testament, the whole congregation of believers is called 'a *royal priesthood.*' Thus the **same** principle applies with the same meaning also in the New Testament.

The Israelites were called out of the servitude and bondage of Egypt into God's royal kingdom of grace to reveal God's character to the other nations. The New Testament believers are **similarly** called out of this world from the servitude and bondage of sin and set free in God's kingdom. Through the cleansing blood of Christ they are all kings and priests and have the right to all its privileges, since God's kingdom of grace is set up within the obedient and faithful believer. Through Christ's priestly ministry they are anointed with the Holy Spirit and sanctified by His grace.

Spiritual sacrifices. As spiritual priests they are entreated to offer up the sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit and present their bodies as a living sacrifice. They are invited to come near to God and offer up their spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise. Grace is the reigning principle implanted in their lives revealed in righteousness, true holiness, peace and joy. They have the power of kings over sin, Satan, and the world. They reveal the graceful riches of kings in this

life and are entitled to receive the riches of glory in the life to come. They live like kings, wearing the royal robe of Christ's righteousness. They sit at the king's table and eat from the bread of life and are attended on as kings by angels as their life-guards and ministering spirits. And as heirs of God's kingdom of glory they will sit with Christ in His throne and they will reign with Him as kings and as priests.

Ambassadors for Christ with different roles. Since the atoning death of Christ there are no priests to offer sacrifices in the temple. And since there is but one heavenly Mediator between God and man there is no need of a human priest serving as such. However, the word and ministry of reconciliation has been committed to all believers, and they are, as ambassadors for Christ, to beseech people to be reconciled to God. 2 Cor. 5:18-20. All true believers are part of the royal priesthood to shew forth the praises of Him Who called them into His marvellous light. 1 Peter 2:9. They are to proclaim God's character, His abounding love and gracious plan of salvation.

All believers, men and women, are ambassadors for Christ, proclaiming His everlasting gospel of salvation. This does not mean, however, complete functional equality of men and women.

In the church different roles apply to men and women (1 Tim 2:8-15; 3:1-5; Titus 1:5-9), while the father still retains his priestly aspect of the household. *"In a sense the father is the priest of the household, laying upon the family altar the morning and evening sacrifice. But the wife and children should unite in prayer and join in the song of praise."* My Life Today, p. 203.

A living relation with God. The expression 'a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people' focuses on faithful believers who have a living relation with God which will result in a life of victory over sin and in revealing the character of Christ, who is their Priest and King.

Such a victorious life of dedicated, faithful men and women, will be the most powerful witness to the world and that is what the apostle

Peter aimed at in calling the believers *'a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.'*

Ellen White states: *"The early Christians were indeed a peculiar people. Their blameless deportment and unswerving faith were a continual reproof that disturbed the sinner's peace. Though few in numbers, without wealth, position, or honorary titles, they were a terror to evildoers wherever their character and doctrine were known."* GC p. 46.

The main theme of the Gospel. To reflect Christ's character is in fact the **main** theme of the Gospel for **every** faithful believer. Ellen White writes: *"Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own."* COL p. 69.

In calling the believers *'a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people'* this high purpose of perfectly reproducing Christ's character, clearly is in full focus. It certainly is the **real** impact of Peter's words.

Peter does not focus on offices in the church. It is true that Peter's words in chapter 2:5 may be seen as a reference to God's Church on earth where the apostle states: *"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."*

It should be clear, however, that Peter is here not speaking about offices in the church and therefore does not focus on occupying a responsible position of leadership and authority in the church. No, that is not Peter's point here at all. He clearly focuses on a personal, living relationship with God which results in offering up spiritual sacrifices and reflecting His character.

To conclude then that the biblical principle of the priesthood of all believers, as presented by Peter, justifies that women could be chosen to occupy in the church responsible positions of leadership and

authority, is therefore, in this context, a move that is **without** biblical support.

No change. There is no contradiction among the Bible writers. They were all inspired by the Holy Spirit, and Paul, speaking about the order in the church, clearly testifies: *“the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”* Thus we should not in any way doubt that the counsel he presented was a clear word from the Lord and not a reflection of his own ideas. Therefore, we should take Paul’s teaching most seriously and remember that the inspired apostle communicated divine wisdom *“applying at all times, in all places, and under all conditions.”* AA p. 303. Human beings may change their attitude, views and ideas but the Lord God never changes. Mal. 3:6. There *“is no variableness, neither shadow of turning”* with our heavenly Father. He testifies: I will *“not alter the thing that has gone out of my lips.”* Psalms 89:34. And Jesus Christ is: *“the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”* Hebrews 13:8.

Thus, If Paul wrote the word of God, as we firmly believe, then we can be absolutely **sure** that Paul’s inspired teachings are just as true in his days as they are in this modern age. Therefore, we should not muddle in any way with the clear words he wrote in all his epistles to the various churches.

Different rights and relations. Ellen White wrote: *“The Scriptures are plain upon the relations and rights of men and women.”* 1 T 421. Thus the Bible does not egalize men and women but presents their different rights and relations. In relation to each other the Bible clearly points out their different position.

The man was first formed and he was not created for the woman but the woman for the man. She was made from the rib of the man as an help meet for him. The man was not deceived, but the woman was. And after the Fall God said unto the woman that her desire shall be to her husband and he shall rule over thee. Wives should submit themselves unto their own husbands. The husband is the head of the

wife. Wives should be in subjection to their husbands. As the church is subject unto Christ, so wives should be to their husbands in every thing. Husbands should love their wives and wives should reverence their husbands. Sara, for example, obeyed Abraham and called him master. Gen. 2:20; 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:3, 7, 8; Eph. 5:22, 23, 24, 33; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:11, 13, 14; 1 Peter 3:1, 4- 6. Although not in line with modern cultural principles, these texts must be taken seriously as God's sure and abiding word.

7. Not a Teacher

The apostle Paul is very clear on the position of a woman. She cannot be a teacher. As an authoritative apostle of Jesus Christ he plainly declared: *"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve."* 1 Tim. 2:12.

So a woman is not allowed to be a teacher (a 'didaskalos' - from 'didaskoo,' to teach). A 'didaskalos' is in the bible also frequently rendered 'Master' and in the Gospels as a title of address to Christ. (Matt. 8:19; 17:24; 26:18; Mark 4:38; 5:35; 14:14; Luke 8:49; 22:11; John 11:28 etc.) And in John 1:38, where it interprets 'Rabbi' and John 20:16, where it interprets 'Rabboni.' In John 3:10 it is used in addressing Nicodemus, the master (teacher) of Israel. In Luke 2:46 it designates the 'doctors' (teachers) in the temple.

'Didaskalos' corresponds to the title 'rabbei' - *"an Aramaic word signifying 'my master,' a title of respectful address to Jewish teachers."* The word *"epistates' denotes a chief, a commander, overseer, master... The form 'epistata'... alongside of the commoner 'didaskale' is... a Greek synonym for the latter, and both are to be traced back to the Aramaic 'rabbei'."* W.E. Vine, *A Comprehensive Dictionary of the Original Greek Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers*, pp. 729, 925.

“Didaskalos’ corresponds to the title rabbi and is used as a title of respect. It is used of John the Baptist. Lk 3:12. Of Jewish learned men. Lk 2:46 Joh 3:10. As an official of the Christian church. Ac 13:1; 1 Cor 12:28f; Eph 4:11; 2 Ti 1:11; Js 3:1.” Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 190.

Another Lexicon states that ‘Didaskalos’ is used (among others) *“of the teachers of the Jewish religion; of those who by their great power as teachers drew crowds about them; of the apostles; of Paul, 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11; of those who in the religious assemblies of Christians undertook the work of teaching, with the special assistance of the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor 12:28sq.; Eph 4:11; Acts 13:1; cf. Jas 3:1.” Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis, Novi Testamenti, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, translated, revised and enlarged by Joseph Henry Thayer, p. 144.*

Thus the office of a teacher connotes **influence, dignity, authority and leadership**. A teacher was regarded as a **chief** and **master** and addressed as **Rabbi**. Paul makes clear that a woman is not allowed to occupy such a position of influence and leadership in the church. She should not usurp or exercise authority. Her special divinely appointed work is to care for her family and to teach and educate her children in the ways of the Lord. *“But if a woman does not care for those of hers, even those of her own house, then she has denied her faith and she is worse than an unbeliever.”* 1 Tim. 5:8. (Dutch NV translation)

In the Bible the position and duty of a woman is clearly indicated. Consider also in this context the following quotation: *“Paul indicates that certain specified officers are expected to exercise the function of teaching the congregation. He here is urging women to be careful neither to interrupt the worship nor to assume the place of public official teachers in the Christian Church... Paul does not mean that a woman is mentally or morally or spiritually inferior to a man. Both men and women have the defects of their qualities. However, both are on the same plain before God and are heirs to his eternal salvation.*

Therefore, Paul adds that, while a woman need not assume the official duties of a Christian pastor, nevertheless she may enjoy all the benefits of salvation, in her own more natural sphere of wife and mother, if she continues to be faithful and loving and holy, as well as modest and womanly in her demeanor... If he does, however, in passages like this, distinguish between the respective duties of men and of women, it appears to many that this distinction 'lies deep down in the facts of human nature as originally constituted.'" Charles R. Erdman, *The Pastoral Epistles of Paul*, pp. 35, 36.

Although the service of women in the time of Christ and in the apostolic church was very **valuable** and much **appreciated**, it is clear that they were and are not called to occupy positions of leadership and authority in the church. Women are welcome to teach, but not in the position of being a ruling leader, like a rabbi.

With reference to the law, the Creation and the Fall, Paul made clear that by divine appointment, the chief duty of a woman is to be a faithful mother and not to rule the church and exercise authority but to recognize that God has given to man the responsibility of leadership. This principle applies as much today as in the days of the apostles. God is not changed and that which has gone out of His mouth has not changed and will not be altered. All Christians in all places of this world can, notwithstanding cultural differences, safely rely on this sure biblical foundation and build their faith and insight harmoniously upon it and act accordingly.

8. Leaders in the Church

The apostles, realizing the solemn and heavy impact of ruling God's church, chose **able men** with a good reputation in responsible positions of leadership. They followed carefully the divine instructions.

"Solemn are the responsibilities resting upon those who are called to act as leaders in the church of God on earth. In the days of the theocracy, when Moses was endeavoring to carry alone burdens so

heavy that he would soon have worn away... was counseled by Jethro... that men be appointed to act as rulers... These were to be 'able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.'... In harmony with this plan, 'Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers... And they judged the people at all seasons ... Exodus 18:19-26.'" AA p. 93, 94.

"Later, when choosing seventy elders to share with him the responsibilities of leadership, Moses was careful to select, as his helpers, men possessing dignity, sound judgment, and experience. In his charge to these elders at the time of their ordination, he outlined some of the qualifications that fit a man to be a wise ruler in the church... Deut. 1:16, 17." AA p. 94.

"King David, toward the close of his reign, delivered a solemn charge to those bearing the burden of the work of God in his day. Summoning to Jerusalem 'all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains... and the stewards... with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men,' the aged king solemnly charged them, 'in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of our God,' to 'keep and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God.' 1 Chron. 26:1, 8." AA p. 94.

It is clear that in the Old Testament times **only** able men were chosen in positions of leadership and authority. It is in accordance with God's unchanging rule that the same principles apply also in New Testament times.

"The same principles of piety and justice that were to guide the rulers among God's people in the time of Moses and of David, were also to be followed by those given the oversight of the newly organized church of God in the gospel dispensation. In the work of setting things in order in all the churches, and ordaining suitable men to act as officers, the apostles held to the high standards of leadership outlined in the Old Testament Scriptures. They maintained that he who is called to stand in a position of leading responsibility in the church

'must be blameless... holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.' Titus 1:7-9." AA p. 95.

Thus, according to the inspired word of God as well as Ellen White's writing, women were **not** chosen to stand in a leading position of authority and responsibility. And in the unfailing providence of God this should be regarded as a wise decision.

9. A Solemn Responsibility

A very important and solemn responsibility of a church leader is to **reprove sin**. Note Ellen White's words: *"Those whom God has set apart as ministers of righteousness have solemn responsibilities laid upon them to reprove the sins of the people. Paul commanded Titus: 'These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.'* There are ever those who will despise the one who dares to reprove sin; but there are times when reproof must be given. Paul directs Titus to rebuke a certain class sharply, that they may be sound in the faith. Men and women who, with their different organizations, are brought together in church capacity have peculiarities and faults. As these are developed, they will require reproof. If those who are placed in important positions never reprove, never rebuked, there would soon be a demoralized condition of things that would greatly dishonor God." 3 T p. 358.

Will this solemn responsibility of reproofing sin be an **easy** matter to exercise? It is very true that there are many who will **despise** the one who dares to reprove their sins. The pastor who faithfully preaches God's word, thereby condemning the sins of the people, too often incurs their hatred but this **solemn** work **must** be **done**. What if a woman was set in authority and would have to rebuke a **man**? Is it according to the will of God that a woman should carry the burden of rebuking with all authority a man or would this be against God's order? Would men easily accept reproof given by a woman? If this is a very **hard** responsibility for a minister to perform how **much more**

difficult then would this be if a woman was set apart as such in the church and would have to perform faithfully with all authority this necessary and solemn responsibility? Would it be unthinkable that this could create great problems in the church?

Is it any wonder that Paul writes by divine inspiration that a woman should not usurp or exercise authority over the man? Is it any wonder that in the all-wise order of God a woman is not called to occupy in the church a leading position of solemn responsibilities and authority?

What then is precisely the function and ministry of women in the church?

10. Ministry of Women

The apostle Paul, after having listed the necessary qualifications of a leader, or bishop in the church, proceeds to list those of deacons. 1 Timothy 3:8-13. And in verse 11 we read: *“The women likewise must be serious, no slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things.”* RSV. The Twentieth Cent., N.T. says: *“It should be the same with the women. They should be serious, not gossips, sober, and trustworthy in all respects.”* If we compare different translations on this text, we notice that several have the word “women”; some have “wives,” while a few others have the word “deaconesses,” such as for example The Centenary Translation by H. B. Montgomery and the N. T. Translation in the Language of the People, by C. B. Williams. The Expositor’s Greek Testament, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll, explains: *“These are the deaconesses, ministrae (Pliny, Ep. X . 97.) of whom Phoebe (Rom. xvi. 1) is an undoubted example. They performed for the women of the early church the same sort of ministrations that the deacons did for the men.”* p. 115. J. A. Bengel states: *“The meaning is women deacons, deaconesses...”* New Testament Word Studies, p. 519.

There are, however, a few other Bible translations that have the word “their” added, which is not in the Greek and which would interpret the women as being the wives of the deacons. The Translator’s New

Testament has the note: *“There is no word for ‘their’ in the Greek text here; the Greek word ‘guné’ means either ‘wife’ or ‘woman’ , and it is not certain which is intended here. If it is ‘woman’, the reference will be to women church workers or ‘deaconesses ’, parallel to the deacons in the same paragraph.”* p. 515.

Since the word ‘their’ is not in the Greek and since we know that women were active as deaconesses in the apostolic church, we may well regard this Bible passage as referring to deaconesses. They can do a special work that is not fitted for men. Thus, there is no perfect equality. Ellen White makes clear that in some respects a different role applies to men and women.

A work not appointed to men. Ellen White makes clear that deaconesses have a work in the church, not appointed to men. Writing to a Conference president she urged him: *“You are not to set such an example that women will feel at liberty to tell you the grievances of their home life, and to draw upon your sympathies. When a woman comes to you with her troubles, tell her plainly to go to her sisters, to tell her troubles to the deaconesses of the church. Tell her that she is out of place in opening her troubles to any man, for men are easily beguiled and tempted. Tell the one who has thrown her case upon you that God has not placed this burden upon any man. You are not wise to take these burdens upon yourself. It is not your appointed work.”* MR vol., 21, p. 97, 98.

Women’s ministry is greatly needed. *“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.”* RH July 12, 1906.

Home missionary work for women that men cannot do. *“The Lord has a work for women as well as for men ... The Saviour will*

reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of His countenance and will give them a power that exceeds 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.” RH Aug. 26, 1902.

Women were helping Christ and labored with Paul. *“Christ speaks of women who helped Him in presenting the truth before others, and Paul also speaks of women who labored with him in the gospel. But how very limited is the work done by those who could do a large work if they would.” Letter 31, 1894.*

A wide field of service for women. *“In the various branches of the work of God’s cause, there is a wide field in which our sisters may do good service for the Master. Many lines of missionary work are neglected... Through various lines of home missionary effort they can reach a class that is not reached by our ministers. Among the noble women who have had the moral courage to decide in favor of the truth for this time are many who have tact, perception, and good ability, and who may make successful workers. The labors of such Christian women are needed.” RH Dec. 10, 1914.*

Equality with men in several respects. *“Woman, if she wisely improves her time and her faculties, relying upon God for wisdom and strength, may stand on an equality with her husband as adviser, counselor, companion, and co-worker, and yet lose none of her womanly grace or modesty. She may elevate her own character, and just as she does this she is elevating and ennobling the characters of her family, and exerting a powerful though unconscious influence upon others around her.” Good Health, June, 1880.*

Successful Bible instructors. *“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. They become a great blessing in reaching mothers and their*

daughters. This is a sacred work, and those engaged in it should receive encouragement." Letter 108, 1910.

The refining softening influence of women is needed in preaching the truth. *"Women can be the instruments of righteousness, rendering holy service. It was Mary that first preached a risen Jesus... The refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth."* RH Jan. 2, 1879.

Laboring in the gospel ministry - Visiting the flock. *"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."* Manuscript 43a, 1898.

Addressing the congregation when ministers are away. *"Sister R and Sister W are doing just as efficient work as the ministers; and some meetings when the ministers are all called away, Sister W takes the Bible and addresses the congregation."* Letter 169, 1900.

Holding Bible classes. *"Intelligent women, if truly converted, can act a part in this work of holding Bible classes. There is a wide field of service for women as well as for men."* Letter 84, 1910.

Set apart by prayer and laying on of hands. *"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."* RH July 9, 1895.

Note that in this last quotation the context makes clear that women are not set apart or ordained as leaders in the church with full ecclesiastical authority. No, they are set apart to serve in the church along womanly lines agreeable with the work of deaconesses.

Although there is **no** reference nor **any** evidence that a woman should be ordained occupying a responsible, leading position in the church with full ecclesiastical authority, it is clear that the Bible and Ellen White point out that there is in the church a **great** and **important** work to be done by women with a reference that they should be set apart for their special work by prayer and laying on of hands.

If this '*laying on of hands*' is not an ordination how are we then to understand this act?

11. Ordination and laying on of Hands

The term "ordination" as such, does not occur in the Bible. In the Old and New Testament different words are used for "to set apart" or "designate" or "appoint" for a special function or office.

(Some examples where mostly the word 'ordain' is translated are: '*sim, sum,*' Ps 81:5; Hab 1:12; '*shapath*', Is 26:12; '*poieo*', Mk 3:14; '*krinein*', Ac 16:4; '*horizein*', Ac 10:42; '*cheirotonein*' Ac 14:23; '*proorizein*', 1 Co 2:7; '*tassein*,' Ac 13:48; '*prographein*,' Jude:4; And "to install" in office, or "consecrate", when the office is viewed as sacred, '*kathistemi*,' He 5:1; Ti 1:5; '*diatasso*,' 1 Co 7:17)

Every solemn imposition of hands is **not** an act of ordination. When the mothers brought their children to Christ "*that He should put His hands on them, and pray*" (Mt. 19:13), does not mean that they were ordained, but simply blessed.

The early church practised the imposition of hands upon the catechumens - upon the baptized in confirmation - upon the penitents, in order to reconcile them - upon the sick, in order to their cure - upon any persons to give them a common benediction. All these acts are not an ordination in the sense as we understand it. The imposition of hands upon the deaconesses was and is something different than all these; for it is a **consecration** of them to a certain task in the Church, which sort of imposition of hands, joined with a prayer of benediction, for grace to discharge that task aright, is what the Church has always meant. It should be clear then that the

imposition of hands upon deaconesses is not an ordination providing full ecclesiastical authority.

Ellen White, commenting on Acts 13:2, gives us good insight as to the ordination of ministers of the Gospel. *“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”* Before being sent forth as missionaries to the heathen world, these apostles were solemnly dedicated to God by fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands. Thus they were authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority.” AA 160, 161.

Note that the apostles were invested with **full** ecclesiastical authority. They were authorized by the church **beyond** teaching the truth, which is, as we understand teaching, a prerogative of **every** common faithful believer. They were **authorized** beyond that to baptize and organize churches. That the apostle Paul does not suffer women to teach can be understood that a teacher in his days was a **leader** or **rabbi**, a man with ecclesiastical **authority** and such a position is not agreeable for women.

Ellen White further informs us: *“He (God) instructed the church by revelation to set them apart publicly to the work of the ministry. Their ordination was a public recognition of their divine appointment... Both Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God Himself, and the ceremony of the laying on of hands added no new grace or virtual qualification. It was an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office and a recognition of one’s authority in that office. By it the seal of the church was set upon the work of God.”*Ibid., 162.

God calls, through the Holy Spirit, people in His service. The Holy Spirit does this **in line** with the revealed principles of God’s holy Word, while the church recognizes their divine appointment and places her seal on God’s work. It is the responsibility of the church to be very

careful not to place her seal on that which is not sanctified as being the work of God.

Women are not excluded from teaching and doing service in the church nor to labour in the Gospel Ministry. Their services and labours are most welcome and much appreciated. However, there is no mandate that they should serve as such in a position of ordained leadership with full ecclesiastical authority.

Genuine gifts of the Spirit should be encouraged to be used and should never be ignored or even suppressed. However, in this area, caution is very appropriate. The church cannot encourage nor sanctify any gift which is somehow not in line with the Biblical rule and teaching.

In the parable of the talents Jesus rewards the faithful worker with the words: *“Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou in the joy of thy Lord.”* Mat. 25:23. But to those with **supposed** or **usurped** gifts of the Spirit, although they have been very active and done great things, Jesus will say: *“I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* Mat. 7:22, 23.

This makes claiming a spiritual gift a very serious matter and therefore it should be carefully studied in the light of God’s Word and seriously considered if it matches the Biblical standard. Any deviation from the Biblical rule or teaching will only result in loss and disaster. Those who are not according to the Biblical standard justified to lead and rule the church, how successful they might be, will eventually only reap disappointment.

The Bible teaches us many important lessons indicating that unconditional obedience to God’s commands and unreserved acceptance of His policy will bring about peace and happiness.

A dramatic story that happened when Israel was on the way to the promised land was the rebellion of Korah who aspired to the dignity of

the priesthood. Why was this impressive story recorded in the Bible? What is the lesson for later generations?

It is a penetrating warning to God's people, "*especially those who live on the earth near the close of time.*" CD 428. It is remarkable that a number of aspects of this story, as presented in the Bible and expressed in the Spirit of Prophecy, match several characteristics of the contemporary movement to ordain women leaders in the church. It certainly is for our own good to contemplate the valuable lesson that is kept before us this way.

The next thought-provoking comparative aspects are put together on base of Numbers 16 and Spirit of Prophecy expressions in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 395-405.

12. A Striking Parallel

The Priesthood Movement

1. Korah, though appointed to the service of the tabernacle had become dissatisfied with his position and aspired to the dignity of the priesthood.

The Ordination Movement

1. Though women are welcome to serve in the church, many are dissatisfied and aspire to the pastoral dignity of being ordained with full authority.

2. Aaron and Moses were not entitled to distinction above others in Israel; they were no more holy than the people, and it should be enough for them to be on a level with their brethren, who were equally favored with God's special presence and protection.
 3. Although they had no clear word of the Lord that justified their aspiration to the priesthood, yet they were sure that they followed a right course.
 4. God had entrusted the priesthood to Aaron and his sons. They alone were chosen to administer this office.
 5. Korah and his company felt confident to make a radical change in the government to achieve their goal.
2. No one in God's church is entitled to distinction above others. All are one in Christ, blessed and holy. No difference. Neither male nor female. Women are, like men, called in leading positions of authority in the church. Ordination should be without gender difference.
 3. Although there is no clear Biblical evidence that women should be ordained, many feel sure that they are right to promote such a move.
 4. God has revealed in His word that only able men in the church are called as ordained leaders with full authority.
 5. Many feel confident to vote for a change in the constitution and bylaws to pave the way to ordain women.

6. They professed a great interest in the people. Prosperity would be certain if their scheme was followed. They really believed themselves to be actuated by a zeal for God.

7. Korah and his associates were more moved by feelings of dissatisfaction and the influence of circumstances than by the clear facts of truth.

8. The movement was led by 250 princes, men of renown, who gained the attention and enlisted the support of the congregation.

9. The princes felt confident that they were equally called with Aaron to the priesthood and they presented themselves with their censers.

6. A great interest is revealed in the church which will be more prosperous when women would be ordained equally with men. They believe that the Holy Spirit is leading them.

7. Those in favor of women's ordination are more moved by feelings and the influence of popular opinion than by convincing biblical facts.

8. The leaders in the church are more the ones who set the tone in the ordination movement and they seek to influence the church members.

9. Gifted women are equally called with able men to be ordained as leaders in the church with full authority and they move boldly forward.

10. Since there was no divine support for this movement, it was styled *rebellion* which resulted in a dramatic disaster. Their stubborn persistence sealed their doom.

10. If there is no biblical base to ordain women, a stubborn persistent move to do so will be an act of rebellion which will eventually end up in a great and terrible loss.

It is of great importance to consider these aspects carefully. Would it not be possible that the same evils still exist that lay at the foundation of Korah's ruin? When we cherish pride and ambition, and try to reach positions which God has not appointed for us, the soul will be alienated from God. It is the right of God not to call us all equally in His service. There are differences of role and position between men and women, apparent even before the fall.

13. Differences

Before the Fall there were some marked differences between Adam and Eve. Although Eve was cautioned for her own safety to beware of separating from her husband (PP 53), there was no need of imposed subjection of the one to the other. Both were perfectly united under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Through the Fall a great change came in. Ellen White writes: "*...sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other... she (Eve) was now placed in subjection to her husband.*" PP 58. Before the Fall there was a perfect unity of perfect love and harmony without any discord. After the Fall discord came in and union could be maintained and harmony preserved **only** by submission, and subjection was imposed. "*Thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee.*" Gen. 3:16. That is God's law that should rule mankind after the Fall. Thus there is a clear difference before and after

the Fall. The entrance of discord made subjection a necessary feature to maintain union and harmony.

The apostle Paul refers to the Creation and makes clear that the man was first formed and that he was not created for the woman but the woman for the man. She was made from the rib of the man as *“an help meet for him.”* These inspired words of the apostle reveal a pre-eminence of man in some sense although we should regard it as a pre-eminence of perfect love and harmony.

Does the Bible explicitly say that Adam and Eve were equal? Where does the Bible use that word and say that? Is the fact that both were addressed to have dominion over every living thing (Gen. 1:28), a clear indication of their mutual relationship of equality? In what sense were Adam and Eve equal? It is clear that Gen. 1:28 applies to both, Adam and Eve: *“And have dominion over the fish... and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth...”* If we want to have the Bible explain itself and have a clear understanding we should compare this text with the more detailed information given us in Gen. 2.

We read in verse 5 *“..and there was not a man to till the ground.”* Note that the Bible does not say: there was not a man and a woman to till the ground. Then the Bible says in verse 7 *“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground...”* Note that there is no reference yet to a woman. We then read in verse 8 that God planted a garden *“and there he put the man whom He had formed.”* Note that it does not say: and there He put the man and the woman. No, there was not yet a woman. Adam was introduced into the garden while he was **alone**, without a woman. In verse 15 the **role** of man is clearly stated: *“And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.”* Note that Ellen White says: *“When God made man He made him ruler over the earth and all living creatures.”* PP 59. In the following two verses the Lord God commanded the man that he may freely eat of every tree but not of the tree of good and evil *“for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou*

shalt surely die.” Thus, man was placed into the garden and acquainted with God’s purpose and will, while he was still alone, without a woman.

Then the Lord God says in verse 18: *“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.”* God placed man in the garden to dress and keep it and He gave him His instructions and then God purposed to provide man with a help meet for him. However, before doing so, God brought every living creature unto Adam *“to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof... but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.”* It was then that the Lord God took from man a rib and made a woman to be an help meet for him.

Thus it is clear that Adam was created first and acquainted with God’s purpose and commands and given the privilege to provide all creatures with a name in which the woman had **no share** since she was formed after that. The woman was not created like man from the dust of the ground but from a rib of the man and she was almost a head shorter than man. CC 11.

Eve was not formed as a man with a body, equal to Adam, but as a woman with a different body. God created them *‘male and female.’* Gen. 1:27. Their bodies were fitted for **different** roles. Thus, as we read in the next verse that God blessed them and said unto them: *“Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth...”* we know and understand that each party plays a different role in this process as a *father* and a *mother*.

Thus the Bible notes some differences instead of presenting perfect equality between both. Adam was on the scene before Eve and he was to till the ground; he was placed in the garden to cultivate it and he named every living creature while the woman was given to him afterwards as an **helpmate**. Eve, being Adam’s helpmate clearly suggests that Adam was the head.

Note that after the fall God said to Adam: *"...cursed is the ground for thy sake... Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee... In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread..."* Gen. 2:17-19. Thus, after the fall, man's task, the tilling of the ground, was, because of the curse, made more difficult. Did the Lord God pronounce to the woman the same **equal** rule? No, God said to Eve: *"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children..."*

Thus, we note certain differences while we observe that the **role** of a man and a woman is **not** in all aspects identical. This is not a matter of groundless insisting something but it is the result of comparing Scripture with Scripture in its proper context.

It is clear that Adam and Eve were not in all aspects equal. In what sense then calls Ellen White Adam and Eve equal? PP 46.

Note that Ellen White, for instance, says about John the Baptist: *"I saw that the humblest disciples who followed Jesus, witnessed His miracles, and heard the comforting words which fell from His lips, were greater than John the Baptist; that is, they were more exalted and honoured, and had more pleasure in their lives."* SR 198.

This seems to be in direct opposition to the words of Jesus as recorded in Mat. 11:11. *"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist..."*

Ellen White says that some disciples were **greater** than John the Baptist while Jesus said that there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. How can this be?

Was John the Baptist in all aspects great? No, he was not. Ellen White says that his life was sorrowful and lonely and he was not permitted to witness Christ's miracles and enjoy the power manifested by Him. SR 197. Thus in this aspect he was not great but he was, however, great in his mission and nobility of character. Of this Ellen White writes: *"John was great in the sight of the Lord, when, before the messengers from the Sanhedrin, before the people, and before his own disciples,*

he refrained from seeking honor for himself, but pointed all to Jesus as the Promised One. His unselfish joy in the ministry of Christ presents the highest type of nobility ever revealed in man.” DA 219.

And so it is with the equality of Adam and Eve. They were not equal in all aspects but there is equality in creation and in relation. Eve was not of a different species. She was made just as much human as Adam was *“and who could be one with him in love and sympathy.”* PP 46. She was bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh; *“she was taken out of man.”* Gen. 2:23. Ellen White explains: *“she was his second self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation.”* PP 46.

14. Creating a Schism

Some people argue that If we maintain that women cannot be ordained to use certain talents and gifts of organisation and leadership, just because they are women, we may create a schism in the church. The Bible does not allow that but teaches that all should be one and so we should treat men and women alike. This should be viewed not as a question of culture but as being a basic Bible principle and therefore we should ordain women equally with men.

Are we so unique and gifted above the apostle Paul that our supposed ‘advanced thoughts’ are more than he could think of? Do we really know it better? Was the apostle short-sighted or perhaps somehow out of balance and not being able to think of creating a possible schism when he instructed Timothy and Titus to appoint men and not women as elders and leaders in the church?

Should we argue against this instruction with our own thoughts? Should we try to make a different opinion or meaning acceptable, as if we could mould this clear teaching of the Bible as we please? Or should we humbly trust that God inspired and enlightened Paul’s mind when he gave this instruction as being the unerring will of God? Isn’t it infinitely much better to take Paul’s divinely inspired instructions

seriously as being God's holy words, '*purified seven times*' (Ps. 12:6), instead of coming with our own arguments and thoughts?

It is narrow-minded to assert that because a woman cannot be ordained on an equal base with a man, she cannot use her talents in the church. It is short-sighted to conclude that besides the specific pastoral duties, assigned to men in the Bible, there is for a woman no other possibility in the church to use her gifts of organisation and leadership.

There are for women several positions and fields in the church that are in need of good organisation and leadership such as Home missionary work, Bible instructor; counselling; social welfare work; care for the elderly members; the sick and the needy; the youth and children department; the economic and financial policy of the church; public relations; the organisation of various activities etc. Women are more than welcome to use their talents in the church in many areas. They are not excluded from teaching or labouring in the Gospel Ministry. Their services and labours are much appreciated. However, there is no mandate that they should serve as such in a position of ordained leadership with full ecclesiastical authority.

Not so long ago the request of North America for gender-inclusive ordination took center stage at the General Conference session in Utrecht on Wednesday afternoon, July 5, 1995. The request was made by Alfred McClure, president of the SDA church in North America. When the secret ballots were counted, 673 voted in favour, 1481 against. The proposal lost. The issue was clearly decided.

Note Alfred C. McClure's testimony in the August (3) 1995, *Adventist Review*, on page 5: "*Let it only be said that when this church came together in Utrecht around a potentially divisive matter, the Holy Spirit had His way, God made clear His will to the body, and the church came from the debate stronger, better able to accomplish its mission, and more closely united than ever before.*"

Think about these words. The Lord has spoken. Did God speak **only** for a few years? Are we now like Balaam to tempt the Lord and have our own way? This really is a very **serious** matter to contemplate.

15. Home and Church

Other people argue that there is a marked difference in the home and in the church. If we insist on a different status of men and women that exist in the home, as the result of sin, and transfer it to the church organisation, then, it is argued, we are working against the unity in Christ's church for which Christ prayed and gave His life that we may be saved and become all one in Him.

However, is there really such a difference between the home and the church that may threaten church unity if we mix the two on an equal base? If a woman in the family circle is expected to be submissive to her husband and regard him as head, could she then be a responsible and authoritative head and ruler in the church as if different principles and rules apply there? Is there a conflict between home and church or is there harmony between the two?

There should be no conflict between the Christian home and the Christian church. Christ is the head of the church and man is the head of the family and he is to imitate Christ.

Ellen White explains: *"The Lord has constituted the husband the head of the wife to be her protector; he is the house-band of the family, binding the members together, even as Christ is the head of the church and the Saviour of the mystical body. Let every husband who claims to love God, carefully study the requirements of God in his position. Christ's authority is exercised in wisdom, in all kindness and gentleness; so let the husband exercise his power and imitate the great Head of the church."* 13 MR 83.

Thus, when the husband follows Christ as his great example, Who *"placed Himself at the head of the human family"* SD 153; when he as

father and head imitates the great Head of the church, there will be no conflict but **harmony**; the family will be in line with the church.

No wonder that Ellen White calls the family a home church:

“Parents...Train for Him the little church in your home, that on the Sabbath all may be prepared to worship in the Lord’s sanctuary.” 6 T 354 “Every family in the home life should be a church, a beautiful symbol of the church of God in heaven... I speak to fathers and mothers: You can be educators in your home churches; you can be spiritual missionary agencies.” CG 480, 481. “Those who govern their families in the right way will bring into the church an influence of order and reverence.” CG 548. Model homes make a model church. “Every family is a church, over which the parents preside... When the father and mother as priest and teacher of the family take their position fully on the side of Christ, a good influence will be exerted in the home. And this sanctified influence will be felt in the church and will be recognized by every believer... The home is a school where all may learn how they are to act in the church... Let there be peace in the home, and there will be peace in the church.” CG 549

The Christian home is a reflection of the family in heaven and so is God’s church. The home circle is like a little church; a model of the community church. There is no different foundation. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the family church as well as of the community church.

There is rather a parallel between the home and the church instead of some fundamental differences. *“The wife should see in her relation to her husband a reflection, or illustration, of her relation to Christ.” SDA BC vol., 6, p. 1036. “The headship of the husband consists in his ability and responsibility to care for his wife, in the same way that Christ cares for the church... As Christ is the ‘saviour of the body’ the church, so the husband should be the protector and sustainer of his wife and family. No question of inferiority or of headship ever arises in a family where the husband shows the same solicitude for the welfare of his wife that Christ shows for His church... the husband is to imitate*

Christ, giving up personal pleasures and comforts to obtain his wife's happiness, standing by her side in the hour of sickness. Christ gave Himself for the church because she was in desperate need. He did it to save her. Likewise the husband will give himself for the salvation of his wife, ministering to her spiritual needs, and she to his, on a spirit of mutual love." Ibid.

Thus it is clear that there is agreement between the Christian home and God's church. No fundamental difference in status of men and women at home and in the church would, by exchange, be a threat to the unity in Christ's church.

16. Neither Male nor Female

Most people who think that the Bible is not against the ordination of women to a leading responsible position in the church usually refer to the Bible text which says that there is neither male nor female. However, Gal. 3:27, 28 in its context speaks about being baptized into Christ and not about the ordination of men or women in the church. These texts indicate those who accepted Christ in their lives; those who called upon the name of the Lord, and Romans 10:13 says that they will be saved. Thus Gal. 3:27, 28 assures us that salvation in Christ is not restricted to a certain class, nationality or gender. All who call upon the Lord; all who are baptized in His name are all one in Him and will be equally saved. These texts speak about equal **salvation** in Christ for everyone. These texts do not say anything about equally attributing authority to men and women to occupy a leading position in the church.

It should be clear that the unity for which Christ prayed is a unity in spirit but not a unity of equal status and position in the church of men and women.

Right from the beginning Adam was appointed to be the head of the family. This was not the result of sin. *"Under God, Adam was to stand at the head of the earthly family, to maintain the principles of the*

heavenly family." RC 51. "When God made man He made him ruler over the earth and all living creatures." PP 59. Note that this is said of the man and not of the woman, while this refers to the creation, before the fall.

Thus, also before the fall, at their creation, man and woman were not in all points equal. The man was made head and ruler on a base of perfect mutual love, but as a consequence of sin we read that the desire of the woman shall be to her husband who shall rule over her. Gen. 3:16. Thus, after the fall there was a clear **subjection** of the woman to the man.

Another argument, put forward by some people, is that the King James Bible indicates the ordination of many different things, such as for instance *places*, 1 Chron. 17:9; *peace*, Isa. 26:12; *musical instruments*, 2 Chron. 29:27; *feasts*, 1 Kings 12:33; *one's status or condition*, 1 Cor. 7:17. This being so, they conclude that when ordination is applied to a variety of **lesser** things or values, it should be no problem to ordain women who are to be regarded as being on a much **higher** plane. However, it is obvious that the word ordain, as used with regard to these 'lesser' things cannot have the same meaning as it is applied to living human beings set apart as responsible leaders in the church. There is no laying on of hands with the 'lesser' things. There is no investing of full ecclesiastical authority as with men who are authorized by the church to perform all pastoral duties. Therefore, no equal comparison with an equal meaning is possible.

17. A Woman Apostle?

Some people refer to Romans 16:7 where, as they assert, a woman apostle would be indicated: "*Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.*"

This Bible text, undoubtedly, would be a strong help in favour of ordination of women in leadership if it would be true that:

(1) Junias was indeed a woman.

(2) That she was indeed an apostle.

(3) That the word 'apostolos' is used in the sense of including leadership.

However, a wider use of the word *apostolos* usually does **not** include leadership. *"In the NT, (apostolos) can also mean delegate, envoy, messenger... missionary."* Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Chicago, Cambridge, 1959, p. 99.

Alford's Greek Testament, Rivingtons, Fifth ed., 1865, notes that Junias may be feminine from Junia or masculine from Junianus.

Furthermore, as for the second point, two renderings are possible: *"of note among the apostles, so that they themselves are counted among the Apostles... or, noted among the apostles, i.e. well known and spoken of by the Apostles."*

The Expositor's Greek Testament, W. Robertson Nicoll, Editor, Eerdmans, has similar notes, however, with the more specific indication that the name Junias is probably masculine and as for the second point: *"It might mean, well-known to the apostolic circle, or distinguished as apostles."* And about the meaning of *apostolos*, we read: *"It implies, of course, a wide sense of the word Apostle..."* However, *"...scholars like Weiss and Gifford hold that what is meant here is that Andronicus and Junias were honourably known to the Twelve."*

The Translator's New Testament says on Ro. 16:7, *"The Greek is not clear. Either Paul thought of Andronicus and Junias as 'apostles' themselves, or he is stating that the apostles 'thought well of them.'"*

Thus it is clear that it is not at all a solid, straightforward interpretation to assert that Junias was a leading feminine apostle in the early church. It is a very controversial issue with adherents on both sides.

Most commentators take the name to be masculine and also several Bible translations clearly bring this out as for instance *The Twentieth Century New Testament*, (“...Andronicus and Junias, my countrymen and once my fellow prisoners, who are men of note among the Apostles...”)

The Revised Standard Version (“...they are men of note among the apostles...”)

Goodspeed (“...they are noted men among the missionaries...”)

Phillipps (“...they are outstanding men among the messengers...”)

Also the Dutch translation (Nieuwe Vertaling) indicates that Andronicus and Junias were both men.

Albert Barnes in his notes on the New Testament, Romans 16:7, explains: “*Among the apostles - This does not mean that they **were** apostles, as has been sometimes supposed. For, (1.) There is no account of their having been appointed as such. (2.) The expression is not one which would have been used if they **had** been. It would have been ‘who were distinguished apostles;’ comp. Rom. i. 1; 1 Cor. i. 1; 2 Cor. i. 1; Phil. i. 1. It by no means implies that they were apostles. All that the expression fairly implies is, that they were known to the other apostles; that they were regarded by them as worthy of their affection and confidence; that they had been known by them, as Paul immediately adds, before **he** was himself converted...*”

The Pulpit Commentary explains: “*These men were in the confidence and esteem of the apostles. Some have inferred from the language used that Andronicus and Junias were numbered among the apostles, in the wider sense of that term. But it is more probable that they are*

mentioned as held in high respect and honour among the apostles generally."

There are several other sources that could be cited which clearly favour Andronicus and Junias as being both men who were highly esteemed by the apostolic circle, instead of being themselves apostles.

Commenting on Romans 16:7, Chrysostom, however, wrote about Junia *"Oh! How great is the devotion of this woman, that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle."* It should be noted that Chrysostom was not supported by everyone for this interpretation.

It is not in harmony with the historical facts of the early church that women would be appointed to ecclesiastical offices that pertain to men and be apostles and leaders in the Church. They were, however, much appreciated as they shared their gifts in serving the church along womanly lines.

"In general, woman's service was naturally along womanly lines, hospitality, care of the poor, the sick, prisoners and orphans, the oversight and instruction of women and children, and the last offices to the dead... In the apostolic period women instructed new converts (Acts xviii. 26), they also spoke in meetings. The daughters of Philip (Acts xxi. 8-9) were not the only prophetesses. Christianity was in the outset charismatic, and women shared in these gifts." The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., New York, London, 1912, p. Vol., XII, p. 414.

"Tertullian (De baptismo, xvii.) allowed laymen to baptize, but expressly forbade women both to baptize and to teach. The Apostolic Constitutions (iii. 9; also Origen, Homily on Isa. vi.) state expressly that deaconesses were not to serve at the altar, and forbid them to teach and baptize or in any wise perform the functions of the priest." Ibid., Vol., III, p. 375.

Also Joseph Bingham clearly points out that women's ministries in the Church were of great value but that they were not allowed the ministerial offices that pertain to men, such as in particular the authority to baptize. *"The next question is concerning the baptism of women, whether they had any authority, or were ever allowed in any case to baptise in the Church? as to ordinary cases, it is agreed on all hands, that they were absolutely forbidden to meddle with any ecclesiastical office, and baptism in particular... Tertullian... forbids it absolutely to be done by women; and he goes upon this principle, that men were called to the sacerdotal office, but not women... He calls it petulancy in women to usurp the power of baptizing... neither might they offer the oblation, nor assume to themselves any office belonging to men, much less those that appertained to the priests only... Nor does St. Jerom, nor St. Austin, nor Gelasius, nor Isidore, grant any authority to women to baptize, as they do to men... Tertullian, Cyprian, and Firmilian... are so peremptory in prohibiting women universally to meddle with the ministerial offices, and this always without exception of any cases whatsoever."* Joseph Bingham, *Origines Ecclesiasticae, or the Antiquities of the Christian Church*, London, 1834, Vol., III, pp. 48-51.

No wonder that officially in the fourth Council of Carthage (Con. Carth. IV. Can. 100), women are absolutely forbidden to baptise, without any exception.

Nevertheless, it is true that a number of the early Church Fathers understood Junias to be a woman or the wife of Andronicus, thus forming a couple, like Prisca and Aquila. This view is still held and advocated by many and often the impression is given that the early church and all Church Fathers unanimously interpreted Junias as being a woman. This, however, is not a truly objective presentation. It should be pointed out that not all Church Fathers agreed on this. Many of them don't even mention this issue at all and so we can't include them in any way. However, Origen as well as Epiphanius, for instance, clearly understood Junias to be a man.

Origen, one of the earliest Church Fathers (ca.185-252), was one of the most proficient scholars of the ancient world and his presentation should be regarded as valuable. In his Latin commentary on Romans, he writes the name Junias in a masculine form. J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol., 14, col. 1289. The name Junias, being presented by Origen as a Latin masculine singular nominative, indicates that he believed Junias to be a man.

Epiphanius (315-403), early church historian and bishop of Salamis, wrote very specifically: "*Junias, of whom Paul makes mention, became bishop of Apameia of Syria.*" *Index Discipulorum*, 125, 19-20. It is without doubt that Epiphanius identified Junias as a man since the nominative form of the name as well as the relative pronoun is masculine.

However, it is argued that Epiphanius identified Prisca incorrectly as being a man and because of this mistake, his information about Junias should be dismissed as being unreliable. But is it fair when a mistake is detected to regard everything else as being mistaken as well? This does not seem to be a well balanced attitude. Epiphanius has not the general pretention of being untrustworthy and there is no particular reason to believe that he made many mistakes and thus conclude that he must be also wrong with his male identification of Junias.

Another fact to consider in relation to Junias is that most Church Fathers wrote in Latin, several centuries after Paul wrote his letter in Greek to the Romans. This difference of time and language may possibly have resulted in some misunderstanding as to the right gender of Junias.

Furthermore, there is some evidence that often information is borrowed from earlier sources. Thus, if this is also the case with this issue, which is clearly suspected, then there is no possible ground to regard the later Church Fathers as being separate witnesses, since they only reflected the view of an earlier author. And it is accepted as being quite certain that they borrowed their information about Junias

from Chrysostom, who understood Junias to be a woman. R. R. Schulz, "Romans 16:7, Junia or Junias?" Expository Times, vol., 98 (1987) p. 108-110.

Origen, Epiphanius and Chrysostom, should receive due attention since their testimony concerning Junias is more original than that of the other Church Fathers. To our knowledge, Origen should be regarded as the **earliest** source and therefore as **valuable**, while the other two were the first ones who wrote in Greek about Junias.

Chrysostom, however, wrote rather **late**, some 350 years after Paul wrote his letter to the Romans when the Greek language in the West was not popular anymore. As mentioned earlier, because of this, Chrysostom could possibly have mistaken the name to be feminine and if that is indeed the case, then he wrongly influenced later writers accordingly.

In any case, some valid questions remain. Was Chrysostom well informed about Junias? Did he consult all possible sources that were available? Was he aware of what Origen and Epiphanius had written? Chrysostom does not provide us with any more information except only that he understood Junias to be Junia, a female apostle. He does not give us any explanation for this point of view.

It is believed, however, that Chrysostom understood Junia's apostleship in a **wider** sense and not in a position of influence and leadership in the church.

Another important fact that should be stressed is that the older Greek miniscule manuscripts, which were provided with accents in the ninth century, denote, without exception, that the name Junias is masculine. This clearly suggests that Junia's masculine gender must have been settled at a rather earlier date.

Thus, with Junia, who possibly might have been a woman apostle, it is clear that those in favour of the ordination of women, have with this

argument only a very **weak** and **doubtful** case at hand, which could be better dismissed because it cannot be substantiated.

We therefore must conclude that since this dubious issue furthermore has become, and still is, a matter of great controversy, it is not wise nor convincing to try to build upon Romans 16:7 a strong point in favour of the ordination of women in positions of leadership and authority in the church.

18. Bible Truth or Cultural Values?

With regard to fundamental Bible truth, we always refer, as good students of the Bible, rightfully and consequently to events, circumstances and situations as existing at the beginning of this world. A few clear examples may illustrate this:

- a. As for the Sabbath we refer to the Creation week when the Sabbath was instituted. Gen. 2:1, 2.
- b. As we explain the mortality of the soul we go to Gen. 2:17.
- c. For the atonement through the law of offering, we also go to the beginning to Gen. 3:21.
- d. We refer to the Creation for the institution of marriage between man and woman Gen. 2:22.
- e. As for the great controversy between good and evil – Christ and Satan- we go again to the beginning to Gen. 3:15.
- f. To illustrate true and false forms of worship we go to the beginning and refer to the offering of Cain and Abel Gen. 4:4, 5.
- g. In presenting our health message we go to the beginning when God prescribed our original diet. Gen. 1:29.
- h. As we talk about the kingdom of grace we go back to the beginning when it was instituted right after the fall. Gen. 3. GC 347.

- i. We go to the beginning as we are confronted with the subject of evolution. Gen. 1, 2.
- j. To proclaim the three angels message we refer to the beginning to call on people to worship the Creator. Gen. 1, 2.
- k. To understand the power of temptation and to discern rightfully Satan's sophistry, we turn to the beginning to contemplate how Eve was misled. Gen. 3:1-6.
- l. To determine the future of this world and the purpose of life we go back to the beginning to consider God's original plan with the human race and with the world. Gen. 1-3.
- m. As we study God's plan of redemption we refer back to the beginning when it was set in operation after the fall. Gen 3:15.

Thus, if we really want to obtain a correct Biblical understanding of several important subjects, we should go back to the **beginning**. Remember that the bulk of God's last day message of salvation and our way of life to make ready for the Lord to come is **rooted** in the beginning.

However, when, in the context of ordination, the position of women is at stake and we go for insight to the beginning and see that Eve was formed from Adam to be an help meet for him and observe that she was not intended to be an head, ruler or authoritative leader with great responsibility, then, many **ignore** Biblical truth and turn round and embrace the egalisation principles of modern culture.

The apostle Paul, in clear contrast with this inconsequent attitude, follows truthfully the right way. He is a consequent and inspired teacher of Bible truth. As for the right position of women and their relation to men, he referred faithfully to the beginning; to the Creation 1 Cor. 11:8, 9; 1 Tim. 2:13; to the Fall 1 Tim. 2:14; and to the law of subordination, pronounced by God Himself to Eve, right after the fall,

in consequence of sin, as a clear and undeniably: *Thus saith the Lord.* 1 Cor. 14:34; Gen. 3:16.

Jesus in His teaching also recognized the authority of the truth as it existed from the beginning Mat. 19:4, 8.

Adam's pre-eminence. Adam was created first. He was placed in the garden of Eden; given instructions and granted the privilege of giving names to every living creature. Then Eve was made, taken out of man to be his **helper**. Gen. 2:7-23. The Hebrew word "ezer", in verse 18, clearly means: **aid, help, succour**. The Septuagint has the Greek word "boèthos" which also means **helper**. So Eve's position is clear, there is no need to have any doubt. Ellen White aptly specified Eve as "*a helper corresponding to him*" (AH 25), while, in another statement, she makes clear that this is an example for all human families. Note what she says: "The Lord calls upon all to study the divine philosophy of sacred history, written by Moses under inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The first family placed upon the earth is a sample of all families which will exist till the close of time." 3 MR 184.

So, the Lord tells us here that the first family, Adam and Eve, serve as a **model** for all families on earth till the close of time. Thus, it is clear that Eve, being created as a **helper** for man, is still a **relevant** positional pattern for every human family. And since there is agreement between the family and the church - 'model homes make a model church' - 'every family is a church...' - (CG 549), it should be realized that the same biblical principles exist in both, in the home and in the church. Thus, when a woman is ordained in the church as elder or as pastor, it will place her in an **inappropriate position** of headship and leadership. Instead of being a helper, she will then be a head and leader.

Note how Eve was cautioned "*to beware of separating herself from her husband.*" PP 53. This counsel is significant. Adam's presence would be to Eve like a protecting influence against temptation. She would be with Adam in less danger than if she were alone. Consider furthermore how Ellen White suggests that there was in Eden, before

the Fall, in fact a difference of position between Adam and Eve. Both possessed Eden with a functional difference between them as Adam was lord: *“Adam and Eve were rich indeed. They possessed Eden. Adam was lord in his beautiful domain.”* FE 38.

King-Sovereign-Vicerent-Father-Representative-Head.

“Adam was crowned as king in Eden... He made Adam the rightful sovereign over all the works of His hands.” RH Feb. 24, 1874. *“... Adam was the vicerent of the Creator.”* DA 129. *“The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the father and representative of the whole human family.”* PP 48. *“Under God, Adam was to stand at the head of the earthly family to maintain the principles of the heavenly family.”* 6 T 236. Thus Adam’s pre-eminence is clearly illustrated.

Before the fall there was no need to specifically declaring Adam’s headship and authority, since there was perfect love and harmony. The first couple in Eden had daily communion with God and with holy angels and they were directed and guided by the Holy Spirit without any sense of envy or competition.

Adam’s primary responsibility. When Adam and Eve had sinned, it is recorded that *“the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?”* Gen. 3:9. Adam was called, although *“Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression,”* 1 Tim. 2:14. Adam, in his fall, was moved by another principle. *“His love for Eve was strong. And in utter discouragement he resolved to share her fate.”* SR 36. In spite of Eve being the first offender, Adam bore the primary responsibility, and thus Paul denotes Adam as the *one man*, who brought sin into the world and Christ as the *one* who brought grace, righteousness and eternal life into the world. Rom. 5:12-21.

Significant factors. It seems important that distinction written in creation itself and the fact that Adam had to take the responsibility for the first sin, rather than Eve, and that Christ is the second Adam, are significant factors not to be neglected.

Note the implication of Adam's position in the context of the Fall and the atoning work of Christ: *"Christ is called the second Adam... He began where the first Adam began. Willingly He passed over the ground where Adam fell, and redeemed Adam's failure."* ML 323. *"But Christ, by His sacrifice paying the penalty of sin, would not only redeem man, but recover the dominion which he had forfeited. All that was lost by the first Adam will be restored by the second."* PP 67.

Adam re-installed. When Christ invites His people to enter the New Jerusalem, *"The two Adams are about to meet. The Son of God is standing with outstretched arms to receive the father of our race... The Son of God redeemed man's failure and fall; and now, through the work of the atonement, Adam is re-installed in his first dominion."* GC 647, 648.

False theory. The theory that it was only after sin that woman was placed under male headship is false. Thus the gospel purpose cannot be to restore a non-headship relation of equality of function and office.

Functional differences. The way Adam and Eve are presented and described, as well as the prominent place Adam occupied in several respects, and the characteristics particularly attributed to him, indicate a distinction with Eve in position, authority and responsibility, resulting in functional differences between them.

This, however, is not in harmony with modern culture where men and women are regarded to be equal without differences and where women, just like men, should have access to any office or function.

We should bear in mind that our message is not in every detail very popular in this world. Some aspects are against the principles of modern society and the culture of today. So in these areas the ultimate choice is Bible culture or secular worldly culture. It's Abel or Cain.

May the Lord help us to make always the right choice.
