Response to Angel Rodriguez,

“Evaluation of the Arguments Used by Those Opposing the Ordination of Women to the Ministry” (TOSC January 2014, Baltimore, MD).

Ingo Sorke
2014-04-14
My Dear Brother Angel:

Having respected you as a teacher and administrator for a long time, I attentively listened to your spirited presentation and I carefully read your response paper “Evaluation of the Arguments Used by Those Opposing the Ordination of Women to the Ministry” (TOSC January 2014, Baltimore, MD).

Please allow me to share with you the following observations in a spirit of love and respect. The tone of written communication often conceals such Christian attitudes, especially in a context of disagreement.

The views expressed in this response are my own and do not necessarily reflect a consensus of sorts.

[Note: To facilitate the readability for a larger audience I refer to the author of the above paper in the third person as “Rodriguez.”]

Summary of Concerns

1. An artificial separation of home and church, undermining explicit gender roles in both
2. A false accusation of fear tactics in the face of a serious assault on gender definitions
3. An inadequate, philosophical approach to eternal submission
4. A questionable utilization of unreliable contextual reconstructions, at the expense of explicit biblical contexts
5. An insufficient reading of Ellen White, at the expense of key Spirit of Prophecy data
6. An unbiblical approach to the understanding of Phoebe as “diakoness”
7. An undermining of biblical manhood, especially in regard to Adam’s pre- and post-fall role
8. An undermining of biblical womanhood
9. Gender-inclusive quoting of Ellen White materials that are originally gender-specific
10. A general disregard for explicit gender-specificity in biblical texts
Detailed Response

1. Male headship in the home and in the church

“It is not clear how they methodologically move from the universal and exclusive male headship over women to male headship in the church.” (Rodriguez, pp. 2, lines 8-19)

This move from home to church is made by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:5, where the apostle asks the rhetorical question “for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God? (1Timothy 3:5 NKJV).”

The positive nature of “ruling” via the parallel of “taking care of” the church of God is aptly defined in the life-saving incident of the Good Samaritan, where the identical term [ἐπιμελέωμαι epimeleomai] is employed:

So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you’ (Luke 10:34, 35).

Paul’s idea of male leadership in the church and in the home allows for no abuse of power, love-less governance, or any other form of corrupt conduct. The very list of character attributes that the apostle introduces for eligibility of eldership would dependably filter out unqualified candidates.

This connection between home and church is addressed and delineated in my paper (“Adam, Where Are You?” —TOSC July 2013) on pp. 16ff.

Ironically, proponents of women’s ordination persistently argue for the Garden of Eden—Adam and Eve’s first home---being a sanctuary. In this sense, Rodriguez’ concern here is unwarranted:
“I have to wonder whether when the couple goes to church the husband stops being the head of the wife. The question may sound silly but it raises the issue of the logistics of this arrangement” (Rodriguez, p. 49 fn 101).

Surely a minimal degree of common sense will govern husband-wife relationships at home and at church. A couple and churches will figure out the appropriate dynamics between husband-wife vs elder-married female church member.

Interestingly, Jesus rebuked the Sadducees when they denied the veracity of the resurrection on mere practical grounds (Matthew 22:23-33). Their perceived reality (a woman cannot be the wife of seven husbands) created an artificial conundrum (the resurrection would result in the illogical scenario in which said woman would become the wife of seven husbands) that would not allow for the veracity of the resurrection---a fallacious approach to Scripture that Jesus effectively dismantled. Practical concerns do not alter biblical truths. Truth dictates practice.

Earlier Jesus had already refused to get cornered by case scenarios in regards to marriage and divorce. Instead, He pointed the Pharisees back to the creation concept (Matthew 19:3-12, esp. 8b).

When I became an Adventist as a teenager, no one had to explain to me how to keep the Sabbath holy even if I didn’t own any cattle (Exodus 20:10), nor did my neighbor have to acquire a donkey so I could avoid coveting the animal according to the 10th commandment (Exodus 20:17). The Bible does not have to spell out every minute detail of faith and practice. We don’t want to repeat the experience of first-century casuistry that caused Jesus so many problems.

2. Fear Tactics

Rodriguez rejects Bohr’s method of “fear” as a reasonable hermeneutical method, and critiques Bohr’s use of Grudem. After all, Grudem has not accepted the Sabbath (see Rodriguez, p. 3). Based on this approach we could not cite any human outside of OrdinationTruth.com Committed to Scripture // Subordinate to Jesus // Called to Unity page 4
Scripture or Ellen White. Luther did not accept baptism by immersion nor the Sabbath, yet we cite Luther freely in our scholarly and devotional writing. This is an unfair and inconsistent restriction of scholarly appeal. Authors quoted in papers supporting women’s ordination also espouse theologies that are incongruent with Adventist theology.

(On a personal note, the TOSC process might have benefited if we had indeed started with a *Sola Scriptura* methodology, and only then added Ellen White, long before consulting and including secondary literature. This highly academic, paper-based approach muddied the waters considerably. Prayer and Bible study should have been our initial, pioneer-modeled approach from the beginning).

At the same time I maintain that the consequences of women’s ordination bode a fearful future for the remnant church. Bohr does not engage in irresponsible fear mongering. In this debate I detect a reasonable cause for fearful concern: Why do we find proponents of gay marriage more likely in the pro-ordination camp than in the anti-ordination camp? (I suspect an *ad hoc* anonymous survey of the TOSC committee would indeed confirm this!). Is this a mere coincidence? We do not need to statistically prove that all denominations who promote women’s ordination end up with a gay-inclusive theology (and practice). The trend has been established (see Holmes, *Tip of the Iceberg*, et al). Thus contrary to Rodriguez’ claim (p. 3, fn 2), the warning has been on the table all along: mis-applying Scripture in this area will open the floodgates to a torrent of equally unscriptural practices. It is difficult to understand his claim that “There is no way to establish any valid correlation between these and ordaining women to the ministry” (Rodriguez, p. 3 fn 2). A casual perusal of websites such as [www.spectrummagazine.org](http://www.spectrummagazine.org) will prove contrary to Rodriguez’ denial of this linkage. In short, my fear remains, and I, for one, will continue to articulate this fear to stem the tide.
Consequently I have not been convinced to retract my footnote 211 of my July 2013 TOSC paper, which I shall reproduce here for convenience:


In short, if the ordination of women as elders or pastors is not biblical, implementing such a practice by the Adventist church would naturally open the door to other unbiblical practices. Error breeds error. Therefore the legitimate inclusion of fear, in the full biblical depth of the term, is not fear-mongering but the voicing of a legitimate concern. Abandonment of simple biblical standards should be a genuine cause of concern among our church members.

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3).
3. Eternal Submission

Although not part of my paper nor the focus of our committee, I shall briefly address the matter of eternal submission within the Godhead. Overall, Rodriguez’ arguments are of philosophical rather than biblical nature. This profound topic would require a careful biblical analysis, along with the testimony of Ellen White, not human logic and speculation.

Rodriguez (p. 9ff.) creates a logical fallacy when he denies the reasonable possibility of simultaneous created submission and voluntary submission. This is precisely where Lucifer fell short: though created in submission to God, he nonetheless had to choose to submit. The two submissions are not mutually exclusive despite Rodriguez’ persistent claims. For example, by nature and divine arrangement (Exodus 20:12) children exist in subordination to their parents but they still need to submit by choice.

Functional and natural subordination can be illustrated by a grammatical peculiarity in Paul’s writings to the Galatians. In Paul’s words, “If we live in the Spirit [reality], let us also walk in the Spirit” [imperative] (Galatians 5:25). We are not robots. Our established status in the Spirit does not render Paul’s mandate for us to act accordingly illogical. A first-class conditional sentence such as Galatians 5:25a, in which the protasis [assumption] “if” can be assumed to be true, can still solicit a pending apodosis (“then”) – in this case a hortatory subjunctive: “Let us.” Simply put, the Galatians, despite their theological status in the Spirit, still have to choose to act upon that status in daily living.

Jesus Christ Himself submitted to the plan of redemption, but what struggle we witness in the Garden of Gethsemane despite His assumed and established status (see, for example, John 8:28; 14:28, 31).

The following quotes are quite insightful in regard to Father-Son submission:
God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds (Hebrews 1:1, 2).

The Son of God had wrought the Father's will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself contrary to God's plan, but would exalt the Father's glory and execute His purposes of beneficence and love (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36).

There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ. Lucifer's envy and misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but this had been the same from the beginning. Many of the angels were, however, blinded by Lucifer's deceptions (Ibid., p. 38).

The Son was seated on the throne with the Father, and the heavenly throng of holy angels was gathered around them. The Father then made known that it was ordained by Himself that Christ, His Son, should be equal with Himself; so that wherever was the presence of His Son, it was as His own presence. The word of the Son was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the Father. His Son He had invested with authority to command the heavenly host (Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 1, pp. 17, 18).

There was contention among the angels. Satan and his sympathizers were striving to reform the government of God. They were discontented and unhappy because they could not look into His unsearchable wisdom and ascertain His purposes in exalting His Son Jesus, and endowing Him with such unlimited power and command. They rebelled against the authority of the Son (Ibid., p. 19).

Three times He was shut in by the glorious light about the Father, and the third time He came from the Father we could see His person. His countenance was calm, free from all perplexity and trouble, and shown with a loveliness which words cannot describe. He then made known to the angelic choir that a way of escape had been made for lost man; that He had been pleading with His Father,
and had obtained permission to give His own life as a ransom for the race (Early Writings, p. 126).

In no way do we diminish the doctrine of the trinity as understood by our Fundamental Beliefs, nor do we introduce unbiblical variations in the nature of the Godhead.

4. First Corinthians 11

Is 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 “notoriously difficult” because of Paul’s difficult style of writing, or because of our resistance to biblical authority and our cultural aversion to hierarchy? I see the claim of difficulty utilized by scholars in relation to a lot of texts, if not the Bible at large. Everything is “difficult” to understand in academia. Does the layperson stand a chance to understand Scripture then?

I am personally convinced the issue is not exclusively a matter of hermeneutics but one of submission to biblical authority, especially a submission that runs counter to the emotions of contemporary culture. It is simply untenable that both sides claim respect for the biblical text, supposedly sharing a common methodology and “high regard for Scripture”, but arriving at such vastly different conclusions. Thus I suspect that the culprit of our differences lies not just in our method of Bible study but also in our willingness to submit to the plain reading of the biblical text.

First Corinthians 11:2-16 follows a principle-application pattern, in which males and females share some privileges while leaving gender-differentiations tightly intact. The thrust of the passage is a creation-based differentiation of human gender based on a divine model and example, with subsequent applications for the life of the church.

(Interestingly, when I merely hinted at the possibility of a cultural aversion by proponents of women’s ordination to some of Paul’s texts, my pro-ordination small group vehemently resisted and did not want to pursue this possibility.)
5. Context and Biblical Interpretation

“It would appear that the fear of over-contextualization does not allow them to take the cultural context seriously” (Rodriguez, p. 4, lines 3-14).

This does not accurately reflect my approach to Scripture.

The question is not just one of over-contextualization but rather the danger of speculative mis-contextualization, especially without scholarly consensus. Such misuse of context ultimately comes at the expense of a reasonable interpretation of the Bible. The cultural context of 1 Timothy does not threaten my interpretation at all. The problem lies in the fact that I find not only a solid scholarly case against the cultural reconstruction by proponents of women’s ordination, but the biblical context does not match the proposed cultural context.

For example, S. M. Baugh’s 1999 article “Cult Prostitution in New Testament Ephesus: A Reappraisal” effectively counters the common Ephesian theory proposed by proponents of women’s ordination. Baugh’s conclusion:

Despite the received opinion to the contrary, I do not believe that cult prostitution was practiced in Greek (and Roman) regions of the NT era. The evidence thought to support this institution in the cities of Corinth and Ephesus was found wanting in our brief survey of Strabo and a few other authors. Finally, we looked at some of the positive evidence from Ephesus to show that the priestesses of Artemis - wrongly thought by many today to be a fertility or mother goddess - were no more than daughters of noble families, whose terms of office involved them in the honorary public roles and the financial obligations which typified priestly offices in Greek state cults. A priestess of Artemis compares better with a Rose Bowl queen or with Miss Teen America than with a cult prostitute. Indeed, there are some hints in the literature (e.g. Xenophon of Ephesus) that the girl-priestesses may have been chosen because they best resembled the chaste maiden-goddess.

Hopefully Ephesian cult prostitutes will soon disappear from our literature and from our pulpits, for these chimera exist only in the minds of people.
today, not in the past. This is particularly desirable, since the issue has moved beyond the realm of purely historical accuracy into that of ecclesiastical controversies over women’s ordination; indeed, the false notion of Ephesian cult prostitutes is a central prop for a radical reinterpretation of 1 Tim 2:9-15 which must now be given serious reexamination.³

I addressed this danger of misinterpretation in my TOSC 7/13 paper especially on pages 13, 17, and 23ff. In short, the Ephesian situation is a) difficult to reconstruct, and b) the relevance of such tentative reconstructions for the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2-3 is questionable.

Early on Rodriguez voices a similar methodological concern when reading our biblical position:

“Once we remove a passage from its immediate context we are hermeneutically on our own, without interpretational controls” (Rodriguez, p. 6, lines 4-5).

I agree! I therefore carefully put the passage in its gender-oscillating context (which Rodriguez minimizes, pp. 58ff.). Rodriguez’ two arguments against my observation of Paul’s specific gender-oscillation are not convincing:

1) Although the indefinite pronoun *tis* could be read generically, in the context of the person seeking eldership needing to be a “husband of one wife”, this pronoun takes on the masculine gender. In Timothy 3, Paul is clearly addressing men, not women.

2) Naturally Paul’s counsel about prayer and jewelry extends beyond men and women, respectively, but Rodriguez is missing the point entirely here. The apostle is addressing specific genders: prayer must have been an issue with the men; jewelry must have been an issue with the women. How else could Paul have spoken gender-specifically? Rodriguez’ reading of the text does not allow for such gender-specific writing. He himself asks “whether we are going to study each passage on its own merits before trying to harmonize them or not” (p. 17 fn 28)? Indeed, Paul’s own merits are
gender-specific here. We have to allow the Bible writers express themselves in a gender-specific manner if they wish to do so.

Again, two observations are in order:

1) What if the immediate cultural context is falsely reconstructed?

2) I provide the immediate context of 1 Timothy 2-3 by carefully delineating a gender-specific structure in the passage (Sorke, TOSC 7/13, pp. 18ff.). Ironically, this gender-specificity is persistently ignored or downplayed by proponents of women’s ordination. How else could Paul have written gender-specifically? Gender-specificity seems impossible under the cultural-contextual model. I find this silencing of the Bible highly problematic—and, coming from an Adventist scholar, surprising.

Cultural-contextual reconstructions end up paralyzing the actual biblical text. In the end, “husband of one wife” becomes “wife of one husband”. Cultural contextualization at the expense of the clear testimony of the text and unwarranted linguistic stretches freely reinterprets the biblical message to the point that the Bible is obscured rather than explained or clarified. Since such interpretations affect the fundamental creation order of gender, this is no small matter, and I have to openly reject it. We are not just dealing with matters of interpretation and opinions, but with a core biblical message of gender-relations and gender-roles in the church.

This approach to Scripture, in which culture trumps the biblical canon, could easily annihilate our trademark rationale for Sabbath-keeping. After all, the cultural dominance of even a secular Sunday renders the Adventist peculiarity of Sabbath-keeping an inconvenient burden at best: Sabbath easily becomes Sunday, then, as the culturally observed day of rest. And Christian denominations have long argued against the specificity of seventh-day Sabbath-keeping based on the resurrection. Artificial reconstructions and reliance on dubious contexts can also render baptism by immersion meaningless. Additionally, our dietary restrictions are reduced (and dismissed) as a
quaint vestige of our Jewish heritage. Scripture must remain our primary voice for the
discernment of God’s will.

6. Phoebe

Rodriguez charges that opponents of women’s ordination argue incoherently in
regard to Phoebe’s status in the Cenchrean church. In his understanding, opponents of
women’s ordination would argue that “the phrase ‘Phoebe, deacon of the church in
Cenchrea’ does not mean what it says because, according to 1 Timothy 3:12, a deacon
must be male” (Rodriguez, p. 7, lines 1-2).

This is a curious accusation, ignoring the semantic spectrum of the term
“deacon” (see Sorke, TOSC 7/13 pp. 42ff.). Suddenly opponents of women’s ordination
are not allowed to use context, word studies, etc. to establish the meaning of a text?
After all, the Greek text does not contain the English word deacon; Greek only contains
Greek words, which offer a variety of translation possibilities: servant, minister, helper,
etc. Phoebe is not a deacon in the Greek; she is a diakonos, which grammatically occupies
both the masculine and feminine gender. As such she could be a deaconess, a servant, a
helper, etc. But as a woman she cannot be a male deacon. By the very definition of the
term a deacon in English is a male.

“We should not place biblical text[s] in opposition to each other but look for a
proper harmonization that respects or honors the contribution of each passage. We need
to listen to each passage on its own terms” (Rodriguez, p. 7 lines 3-5). Which one is it?
Do we seek “harmonization” or do we “listen to each passage on its own terms”? In the
majority of cases, diakonos does not refer to an office, but to the servant-nature of the
person (including Tychicus, Ephesians 6:21, and Timothy himself in 1 Timothy 4:6, both
associated with a local church but not deacons in the sense of the office).
Ironically, Rodriguez commits the same methodological *faux pas* that opponents of ordination are accused of: using one text to silence another. By relegating the phrases “husband of one wife” and “wife of one husband” to the exclusive sphere of character, Rodriguez ignores the key component of gender, silencing the gender-specificity of the text with an interpretation. In effect, Rodriguez preempts the original writer of any chance to express himself gender-specifically, and consequently we no longer “listen to each passage on its own terms.” This is not *Sola Scriptura*, but interpretation based on assumptions.

I therefore do not understand Rodriguez’ suggestion that Phoebe’s depiction as a *deacon* creates an untenable contradiction (Rodriguez, p. 61, esp. fn 135) for opponents of women’s ordination. This charge hinges on a profound misunderstanding of Greek lexical grammar: again the term *diakonos* is both masculine and feminine. Since Phoebe is a woman, she cannot be a male deacon—a logical impossibility. She can be a deaconess, of course, but Phoebe cannot be a male deacon, just as she cannot be the husband of one wife. This is not silencing one text with another (Rodriguez, p. 7, line 2), but taken the biblical record seriously.

### 7. The Role of Ellen White in the Interpretation of Scripture

Some pro-ordination presenters at the July 2013 TOSC publicly omitted Ellen White altogether and *underlined the reason for their intentional omission*. In this they ignored White’s explicit perspective on a particular subject matter. In other words, her prophetic voice was excluded from an investigation *even though she had direct comments on texts/topics under consideration*, comments which were contrary to the view expressed by these presenters.$^5$ This omission led to contrary interpretations, which, in my mind, is not an acceptable Adventist method of interpretation: it ignores, even silences, the
prophetic voice in the remnant church. If Ellen White has said something on a specific
text or topic we must pay attention to it and take that existing data into consideration.

   No methodology has to be explicated in regard to the use of Ellen White, and no
   “canon within a canon” (Rodriguez, p. 9) is being introduced. We quote Ellen White
   when she provides specific data on a particular text or topic. A certain quantity of
   quotes betrays no disregard for the biblical text but seeks to do justice to the plethora of
   data available from our prophetic heritage.⁶ It is in this sense that her statement on the
   relation between Scripture and her Testimonies is to be understood: “The Bible must be
   your counselor. Study it and the testimonies God has given; for they never contradict
   his Word” (Letter 106, 1907; Selected Messages, vol. 3, p. 32).

   The following quotes are particularly insightful as to the role of Ellen White for
   our understanding of truth. Her writings certainly exceed mere devotional
   supplementation:

   As the points of our faith were thus established, our feet were placed upon a
   solid foundation. We accepted the truth point by point, under the demonstration
   of the Holy Spirit. I would be taken off in vision, and explanations would be
   given me. I was given illustrations of heavenly things, and of the sanctuary, so
   that we were placed where light was shining on us in clear, distinct rays

   I have kept in all my journeys that should come before the people if essential,
   even if I did not write another line. I want that which is deemed worthy to
   appear, for the Lord has given me much light that I want the people to have;
   for there is instruction that the Lord has given me for his people. It is light that
   they should have, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a
   little. This is now to come before the people, because it has been given to
   correct specious errors and to specify what is truth. The Lord has revealed
   many things pointing out the truth, thus saying, ‘This is the way, walk ye in it’
Serious errors in doctrine and practice were cherished, and some were ready to condemn all who would not accept their views. God revealed these errors to me in vision and sent me to His erring children to declare them; but in performing this duty I met with bitter opposition and reproach (Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 655).

In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the testimonies of His Spirit. There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will and the course that He would have them pursue (Testimonies, vol. 4, pp. 147, 148 (1876); Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 661).

I have been looking over the Testimonies given for Sabbathkeepers and I am astonished at the mercy of God and His care for His people in giving them so many warnings, pointing out their dangers, and presenting before them the exalted position which He would have them occupy (Ibid.).

Much is at stake here, because . . .

If they would keep themselves in His love and separate from the world, He would cause His special blessings to rest upon them and His light to shine round about them. Their influence for good might be felt in every branch of the work and in every part of the gospel field. But if they fail to meet the mind of God, if they continue to have so little sense of the exalted character of the work as they have had in the past, their influence and example will prove a terrible curse. They will do harm and only harm. The blood of precious souls will be found upon their garments (Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 662).

Brother J would confuse the mind by seeking to make it appear that the light God has given through the Testimonies is an addition to the word of God, but in this he presents the matter in a false light. God has seen fit in this manner to bring the minds of His people to His word, to give them a clearer understanding of it." [Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 246 (1876).] The word of God is sufficient to enlighten the most beclouded mind and may be understood by those who have any desire to understand it. But notwithstanding all this, some who profess to make the word of God their study are found living in direct opposition...
to its plainest teachings. Then, to leave men and women without excuse, God
gives plain and pointed testimonies, bringing them back to the word that they
have neglected to follow” (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 455). The word of God
abounds in general principles for the formation of correct habits of living, and
the testimonies, general and personal, have been calculated to call their
attention more especially to these principles” (*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 323; cf.
*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 663).

My accompanying angel presented before me some of the errors of those present,
and also the truth in contrast with their errors. That these discordant views,
which they claimed to be according to the Bible, were only according to their
opinion of the Bible, and that their errors must be yielded, and they unite
upon the third angel’s message. Our meeting ended victoriously. Truth gained
the victory (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 98).

Finally, it should be pointed out that *Testimonies* vol. 8 succinctly---and
sufficiently---clarifies her role:

I have a work of great responsibility to do---to impart by pen and voice the
instruction given me, not alone to Seventh-day Adventists, but to the world. I
have published many books, large and small, and some of these have been
translated into several languages. This is my work---to open the Scriptures to
others as God has opened them to me (*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 236).

White continues, “I am not to appear before the people as holding any other
position than that of a messenger with a message” (*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 237).
Interestingly, Ellen White was never called Elder or Pastor White. In Adventist parlance
this would refer to James White.

8. The Pre-Fall Headship of Adam

“The arguments used by the opponents to women’s ordination to support the
pre-fall headship of Adam are under the influence of evangelical scholars”
(Rodriguez, p. 17 lines 4-5).
This is a feeble assumption at best and a false accusation at worst. On my part I can attest that most of my time in preparation of my paper was spent in Bible study, not secondary (including evangelical) sources. Those were only incorporated later to respond to specific pro-ordination arguments. I thought from the start that the biblical record was sufficient and sufficiently clear, supported by Ellen White statements.

Denying a pre-fall headship reveals a blind spot: a limited reading of Genesis 1-2 which does not allow the New Testament to speak informatively and conclusively about the meaning of the Old Testament, including a curious indifference to 1 Timothy 2:13. During one small group session (TOSC 1/14) a proponent of women’s ordination repeatedly attempted to place 1 Timothy 2:13a in the post-fall realm of Genesis 3 because he just could not accept Paul correctly explaining Genesis. This is forcing a square peg into a round hole, as there is just no way around the fact that Paul appeals to a pre-fall function of Adam in relation to Eve in 1 Timothy 2:13. Additionally,

-- Adam “mourned that he had permitted Eve to wander from his side”
(Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 56)

-- Angels had warned Eve of wandering from her husband’s side (Ibid., p. 53)

-- God addressed Adam first (Genesis 3:9), even though both hid together
(Genesis 3:8)

-- God explicitly expelled Adam from the Garden (Genesis 3:23-24), although both were banned of course

-- Paul posits the theological blame on Adam, not Eve (Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:22)

The undeniable focus of the Bible expresses gender differentiation in creation, articulating a male headship based on sequence, and a corresponding theological priority (as in Romans 5:12-14). In this thinking no one argues for male superiority or
excuses abuse in any form; the status of males is one of God-ordained responsibility, not domineering privilege.

In Ephesians 5 (esp. with its climax of Ephesians 5:23), Paul processes these dynamics most succinctly and practically in his explanation of marriage and the husband’s Christ-like role in relation to his wife. This is male headship par excellence, and so expressed by Paul: “For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:23). Translating “head” as “source” here would not make sense. The biblical teaching of male headship flows from the headship of Christ, both painting a beautifully salvific picture of loving care. Dictatorial abuse and oppression are equally absent in this depiction of gender-specificity.

9. Gender Considerations

“Maleness and femaleness are not functions but who we are” (Rodriguez, p. 23 l6).

Can we realistically differentiate between function and being? Being leads inherently to vastly differentiated functionality, beginning with anatomical and procreative differences and continuing with theological responsibilities (such as the aforementioned fact of Adam, not Eve, being blamed for the fall in Romans 5:14).

“This is not about the leading role of the husband within the differentiation” (Rodriguez, p. 23 line 9).

We will have to differ on this. Overwhelming evidence by Ellen White, in agreement with Paul’s theology, supports the opposite of Rodriguez’ assertion here. A few examples shall suffice in illustrating the symbiosis between being and functionality:
God prepared for Adam and Eve a beautiful garden. He provided for them everything their wants required. He planted for them trees of every variety, bearing fruit. With a liberal hand he surrounded them with his bounties—the trees for usefulness and beauty, and the lovely flowers which sprung up spontaneously, and flourished in rich profusion around them, were to know nothing of decay. Adam and Eve were rich indeed. They possessed beautiful Eden. Adam was monarch in this beautiful domain. None can question the fact that Adam was rich. But God knew that Adam could not be happy unless he had employment. Therefore he gave him something to do. He was to dress the garden (Signs of the Times, April 29, 1875).

This quote is difficult to reconcile with Rodriguez’ attempt to make both Adam and Eve monarchs of Eden, with Adam remaining as exclusive monarch after the fall before he himself sinned (see Rodriguez, pp. 31ff.). Of course Adam functioned as monarch with Eve as a partner, but the term monarch itself indicates a role differential.

The husband and father is the head of the household. The wife looks to him for love and sympathy and for aid in the training of the children; and this is right. The children are his as well as hers, and he is equally interested in their welfare. The children look to the father for support and guidance; he needs to have a right conception of life and of the influences and associations that should surround his family; above all, he should be controlled by the love and fear of God and by the teaching of His word, that he may guide the feet of his children in the right way. . . . The father should do his part toward making home happy. Whatever his cares and business perplexities, they should not be permitted to overshadow his family; he should enter his home with smiles and pleasant words. All members of the family center in the father. He is the lawmaker, illustrating in his own manly bearing the sterner virtues: energy, integrity, honesty, patience, courage, diligence, and practical usefulness. The father is in one sense the priest of the household, laying upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice (Adventist Home, pp. 211, 212).

To this end, Adam was created taller than Eve (White, Signs of the Times, January 9, 1879, Art. B, par. 13); and similarly commanding angels are physically taller than their subordinates (Early Writings, p. 145). This speaks of pre-fall headship, even in the
physical sense of being. Rodriguez does not accept my post-fall example (of Cain and Abel), but then dismisses pre-fall examples without any explanation (p. 56 line 21)!

In this context, Rodriguez assumes that opponents of women’s ordination read something into the biblical text that is not there: “Consequently they do not even try to demonstrate that this is the case; they simply assume that this is so” (Rodriguez, p. 37 lines 12-13).

This statement reveals that we define “demonstrate” and “assume” differently, along with many other terms we read differently. I do not think Ratsara’s/Bediako’s (nor Peters’) papers are mere assumptions at all. They systematically demonstrate that Adam received a headship role upon creation.

Thus when Rodriguez concludes that “we search in vain for clear evidence in favor of a pre-fall headship in Genesis 1-3,” and opponents of ordination are “importing” headship “into the text from their reading and interpretation of other biblical texts” I humbly disagree. I do not understand how “the suggestion of a pre-fall headship of Adam over Eve creates more theological and doctrinal problems than it seeks to solve and is incompatible with the law of love and service that rules the cosmic kingdom of God” (Rodriguez, p. 40, lines 12-14). As previously mentioned, Ephesians 5 puts such claims to rest; headship does not preclude love and service but assumes and demands it to the point of sacrificial love, like Christ. Under the paradigm of gender-differentiation the Bible paints a beautiful picture of harmony, self-sacrificing love, and relational priorities. Departing from the biblical model has not resulted in harmonious families in particular, nor in a healthy society at large.

10. The meaning of kephalē in 1 Corinthians 11

The meaning of kephalē as “source” in 1 Cor 11 is highly questionable. Ellen White does not use “head” as “source” in Adventist Home, p. 215:
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.

Here White certainly uses “head” not in the sense of source, but authority, both for Christ and for Adam.

Lexica do not identify *kephalē* as “source” except for fountainheads of rivers, nor does the term lend itself to matters of origin in Ephesians 5:23f. Likewise Colossians 1:18 articulates preeminence, not origin.

Schreiner clarifies: “Even if the word *kephalē* should be defined as ‘source,’ the thrust of Paul’s argument does not change dramatically. For if the term means ‘source,’ women must still wear their hair a certain way or have a head covering because their origin lies in Adam.” In short, “The woman must show that she is ‘the glory of the man’ (1 Corinthians 11:7).”

Church members reading 1 Corinthians 11 will naturally perceive that the metaphoric use of the term “head” is at work in Paul’s writings. I do not think that linguistic and lexical stretches help in understanding the biblical text here.

11. The Ephesian Theory of False Teachers

Rodriguez’ critique that my paper ignores the context and impact of false teachers on Timothy’s church is unfounded (Rodriguez, pp. 47-48). See Sorke, TOSC 7/13 pp. 11-14, which analyzes culture, context, and key words in this regard.

Most significantly, however, is the oversight of the positive term *didaskō* (“I teach”). This word does not routinely communicate false teaching in the Bible (Greek employed other terms for false teaching) but conveys teaching in the positive sense, as
its usages throughout Paul’s letters confirm (Romans 2:21; 12:7; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 11:14; Galatians 1:12; Ephesians 4:21; Colossians 1:28; 2:7; 3:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Timothy 2:12; 4:11; 6:2; 2 Timothy 2:2). The only exception is Titus 1:11—thus 15 out of 16 occurrences of “teaching” [didaskō] are positive.

(In Revelation 2:20 didaskō does occur in a negative context: that of the woman Jezebel teaching the Israelites in immorality and idol worship).

But rather than reviewing Köstenberger’s detailed rebuttal of an Ephesian Theory of false teachers, I will voice a philosophical concern with the interpretation of Scripture based on speculative reconstructions of context. Such reconstructions of a perceived background render the Protestant principle of Sola Scriptura void. Even informed laypersons are no longer able to discern the true meaning of the Bible by themselves. Scripture no longer interprets Scripture; instead, reliance on the expert theologian becomes necessary since the text no longer means what it says. We do not suggest a wooden literalistic reading of the text, slavishly constricted by isolated phrases out of context, as is so often insinuated. But a de-sophisticated reading of the text does submit to the authority of Scripture, which routinely challenges conventional wisdom and contemporary sensitivities. A “plain reading” of the text will often confront the reader with counter-cultural mandates and uncomfortable implications, contrary to established secular paradigms.

12. Male Headship in the Home and in the Church

“The author does not explain how he moved from male universal headship to the specific headship of the elder in the church, who, by the way, is not mentioned in the passage” (Rodriguez, p. 48 lines 7-9). “Male headship in the church is not found in Scripture.” (Rodriguez, p. 49 line 10)

This is an astonishing statement in light of these texts:
I urge you, brethren—you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints—\textbf{that you also submit to such}, and to everyone who works and labors with us (1 Corinthians 16:15, 16).

\textbf{Let the elders who rule well} be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine (1 Timothy 5:17).

Speak these things, exhort, \textbf{and rebuke with all authority} (Titus 2:15).

\textbf{Obey those who rule over you}, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you (Hebrews 13:17).

If Galatians 3:28 is the most misapplied text in this debate, 1 Timothy 3:5 has to be the most overlooked: “For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?” (1Timothy 3:5).

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, \textbf{and are over you in the Lord} and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. (1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13)

Rodriguez quotes Ellen White here, “The husband is the head of the family, as Christ is the head of the church” (Testimonies, vol. 1, p. 307). Her admonition that “Christ, not the minister, is the head of the church” (Signs of the Times, January 27, 1890) requires more analysis than Rodriguez offers. In context, White speaks against members depending on ministers for doing the bulk of the work, for relying on the minister in matters that should be accomplished by members. It is in this sense that “the members of the body of Christ have a part to act,” and conversely, ministers should not “boss around” church members in the abusive sense of the term.
The fact that Christ is our one priest in Heaven does not negate the priestly function of husbands in the home. Singular quotes require the full counsel of inspiration for proper understanding.

Furthermore, is there no headship function in Paul’s description of elder responsibility in Titus 1:5-16?

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you (Titus 1:5).

Rodriguez’ concise claim also ignores the origin of the church and its leadership in the 12 (male) apostles. One should note the use of the term “authority” in Ellen White’s perspective below:

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.** The Christian church was at this time entering upon an important era. The work of proclaiming the gospel message among the Gentiles was now to be prosecuted with vigor; and as a result the church was to be strengthened by a great ingathering of souls. The apostles who had been appointed to lead out in this work would be exposed to suspicion, prejudice, and jealousy. Their teachings concerning the breaking down of ‘the middle wall of partition’ (Ephesians 2:14) that had so long separated the Jewish and the Gentile world, would naturally subject them to the charge of heresy, and their authority as ministers of the gospel would be questioned by many zealous, believing Jews. God foresaw the difficulties that His servants would be called to meet, and, in order that their work should be above challenge, He instructed the church by revelation to set them apart publicly to the work of the ministry. Their ordination was a public recognition of their divine appointment to bear to the Gentiles the glad tidings of the gospel. 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 (Acts of the Apostles, p. 161).

But Rodriguez persistently returns to speak against a headship theology: “Paul mentions the priority of Adam but he does not interpret it. He simply states a biblical fact, Adam was created before Eve. He does not explicitly develop an argument using the phrase” (Rodriguez, p. 55 lines 16-18).

The careful Bible student will come to a different conclusion: Paul does not interpret his statement of Adam’s priority since that statement is the interpretive rationale for women’s silence. He explicitly states the obvious as his argument. Does Paul’s brevity betray an assumed understanding on the part of his audience? In any case, Paul’s comment on Adam’s priority is not just simply stating a biblical fact. Isolating Paul’s simple explanation in a tightly knit construction (“for”) is problematic and robs the Bible of its logical flow and impact.

One more item should be addressed in this context. Paul reasons that Adam’s creation prior to Eve has consequences for the life and practice of the church. Proponents of women’s ordination persistently criticize this reasoning. Concluding, however, that since animals were created before Adam they should therefore rule over humans is an argument that should be laid to rest (see Rodriguez, p. 17 line 4) for the simple reason that humans are of a different created order: God spoke twice on day six (Genesis 1:24, 26), separating the two biological orders from each other. Paul clearly has the creation sequence of Adam and Eve in mind, not intra-cosmological sequences. Schreiner agrees that the fact “that animals were different from human beings was apparent to any Jewish reader, and hence their creation before human beings is irrelevant.”

8
In short, Paul clearly addresses the order *within the creation of Adam and Eve*; others who go beyond the text immediately create logical fallacies that are not apparent from the Bible itself.

13. “A woman should learn”

Contrary to Rodriguez’ claim (p. 52), the arbitrarily truncated phrase “a woman should learn” is *not* the main idea of the passage. This is a surprising example of pressing the Scriptures into a meaning clearly not intended or expressed. The thrust of the passage is *how* a woman should learn—the verse must be cited in entirety. The completion of the phrase “a woman should learn” yields an entirely different reading than Rodriguez suggests. Paul introduces a restriction, not a veiled nod to a Western wish for equality and women’s rights. Reading our biases into the text is eisegesis (“reading into the text what is not there”) to be avoided on the most basic level. The totality of the biblical record speaks clearly on this.

14. “Silence”

“The paper lacks a careful study of the term ‘silence’” (Rodriguez, p. 53).

See Sorke, TOSC 7/13 pp. 15ff., in which I define “silence” based on its few NT occurrences. I do note that an expansion would be helpful, but I did address the terms. In all contexts, positive or negative, someone ceases to speak when someone else is speaking or should be speaking. Most teachers can identify with students who “hog” a presentation with sermonic comments. They should learn “in silence”. But in the immediate context of 1 Timothy 2, women are specifically asked to remain silent not based on circumstances but based on gender. Paul frames his prohibition with universal terms (“I do not permit”; “as in all the churches”), not situationally.
15. The definition of authenteō

*Hapax legomena* (words only used once in the Bible) are notoriously difficult to define. It is for this reason that I did not expand on its meaning. Extra-biblical occurrences are insightful but can lead to false definitions, just as speculations in regard to culture and wider context can lead to fanciful interpretations (that do not always agree with each other).

In direct context (since “to teach” is a positive term), authenteō does not necessarily “assume a situation of conflict” (Rodriguez, p. 54 lines 3-4). However, when either verb (teaching + assuming authority) is assumed by a person that is not authorized to assume that activity, naturally it becomes a negative activity. I critique Payne on p. 19 of my paper in this regard, who presses Greek syntax too far to support his point. Teaching and assuming authority are two distinct activities; one does not necessarily define the other.

In the immediate textual context of 1 Timothy 3 and Paul’s delineation of eldership, Rodriguez’ claim that “the verb is never used to describe the authority of a church elder” (p. 54 lines 5-6) cannot be sustained. Is Paul not allowed to use the term as he sees fit? Does his usage of the term require an extant, demonstrable parallel? In fact, “totally unfounded” is puzzling language when Paul’s letter puts the concepts in such close proximity. In fact, we find a clear “to be” framework between the restriction of 1 Timothy 2:12 and the context of eldership in 1 Timothy 3:2, along with references to teaching in 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Timothy 3:2.

We must simply state that attempts to define authenteō based on extra-biblical usage remain in the realm of speculation, and such attempts have yielded a broad spectrum of lexical meanings by scholars that do not agree with one another in regard to those meanings. Until a biblical definition can be ascertained I prefer to refrain from such speculation.
16. Universality vs Local Peculiarity

“The implications of the universal, permanent, and absolute nature of the order can only be avoided if Paul was dealing with a particular problem in a particular church or churches” (Rodriguez, p. 54, lines 12-14).

This is partially correct. Paul did address gender and role confusion in a particular context (so already in 1 Timothy 1:19, and later in 1 Timothy 4:3; 5:1ff.). But the issue, first of all, rests more in the definition of teaching and the context of the passage. Cultural considerations will only come into play secondarily. Immediate textual context is what we have available most directly. The analyses of historical and cultural contexts are attempts to reconstruct reality and will routinely fall short as scholars simply do not agree what precisely this history and culture is, let alone to what degree it affected Paul’s writing.

It is at this point that we should be reminded of Paul’s clear appeal to creation when it comes to gender roles. Even if 1 Timothy is read through the lens of a local situation, Paul’s solution does not include accommodation or adaptation, but pre-fall realities as points of reference. Paul appeals to creation and the fall---that is the most direct textual context, and we would do well to take this context seriously and submit to inspired counsel in this regard. The Bible speaks its wisdom in simple, direct terms.

17. The Denigration of Motherhood

“God has blessed woman with talents to be used to His glory in bringing many sons and daughters to God; but many who might be efficient laborers are kept at home to care for their little ones” (Adventist Home, p. 166 [not 165 as stated on p. 57 fn 142]).

It is appropriate for Rodriguez to include this quote for “balance.” But, in the true spirit of his own appeal, in context White speaks of the unique situation of missionary wives. I would hesitate to call an emphasis on motherhood “a minimalist
Ingo Sorke

understanding of the role of women” (Rodriguez, p. 57 lines 6-7). After all, my study
does not suggest that motherhood is the only role of women. But it does seek to recover
the importance of motherhood when children are present in the family.

The cultural revolution of the 60s has reaped a harvest of rampant divorce,
single-parent homes, neglected children, a generation raised by third parties, and the
overall drawback of absentee mothers and fathers. Here Rodriguez is pitting one set of
quotes against another set of quotes while failing to take the context of his balancing
quotes into consideration.

Interestingly, a gentleman from the pro-ordination side thanked me for
highlighting motherhood as a much neglected topic within the current debate. We have
neglected motherhood as a thematic emphasis and point of discussion for fears of
patriarchal overtones. This breach must be repaired.

18. The Use of the Indefinite Pronoun tis

I understand the grammatical use of the indefinite pronoun tis (anyone)
differently from Rodriguez, Cosaert, Reeves, et al. Since Paul is gender-specific in 1
Timothy 2-3, and since he addresses potential elders who should be certain kinds of
husbands, reading tis with a male parsing is not only a possible but a natural reading of
the text. Tis has two genders: male and female, but within the context of a sentence tis
can be male or female. The pronoun tis can be gender-specific and, in direct context,
read in the sense of “any male.” In context, it does no injustice to the text when we read
“If any man desires the office of a bishop/elder” (1 Timothy 3:1). After all, tis in the
sense of anyone is quickly reduced to a handful of qualifying individuals. Even if
eldership can be sought by anyone, it quickly becomes evident that it is not for
everyone.
19. Gender-Oscillation in 1 Timothy 2:8 - 3:13

Rodriguez dismisses the gender-oscillation of 1 Timothy 2:8 - 3:13 by pointing out that Paul speaks to the whole congregation (Rodriguez, p. 59f). He does not. While the characteristics of eldership should be expected to be present in the entire congregation, he specifically lists the criteria for elders. The text is gender-specific and audience-specific. I do not see how this gender-specificity can be so easily dismissed.

20. “Wife of one husband”---1 Timothy 5:9

Rodriguez dismisses the gender-specific nature of 1 Timothy 5:9 on grounds I cannot follow. He previously established that the focus is not gender, but character. Therefore the phrase “a one-man woman” is not an unnecessary repetition that states the obvious, but harkens at the character of a widow—who, by definition, would be and has to be a woman. Since Paul had a specific feminine phrase at his disposal to describe widows eligible for church support, the phrase “husband of one wife” would appear gender-specific as well. One refers to a male, the other to a woman. They are not interchangeable. While character is certainly in sight (a view not denied by opponents of women’s ordination), gender is part of the communicative package here. Ignoring gender here would result in ignoring biblical counsel.

21. Incorrect quotation of an Ellen White source

Rodriguez quotes Manuscript 163, 1902 as quoted in the devotional CTr (p. 146) incorrectly (I assume inadvertently) as gender-inclusive:

Those placed in positions of responsibility should be men and women who fear God, who realize that they are humans only, not God. They should be people who will rule under God and for Him. Will they give expression to the will of God for His people? Do they allow selfishness to tarnish word and action? Do they, after obtaining the confidence of the people as leaders of wisdom who fear
God and keep His commandments, belittle the exalted position that the people of God should occupy in these days of peril? Will they through self-confidence become false guideposts, pointing the way to friendship with the world instead of the way to heaven?

The original manuscript, however, is quite gender-specific:

Those placed in positions of responsibility should be men who fear God, who realize that they are men only, not God. They should be men who rule under God and for Him. Will they give expression to the will of God for His people? Do they allow selfishness to tarnish word and action? Do they, after obtaining the confidence of the people as men of wisdom, who fear God and keep His commandments, belittle the exalted position that the people of God should occupy in these days of peril? Will they through self-confidence become false guide-posts, pointing the way to friendship with the world instead of the way to heaven (MS 163, 1902).

It is a curious fact that this statement would be rendered gender-inclusively by a denominational publisher. In its original form the quote cannot be used in favor of a gender-inclusive agenda. Of course, the term “man” or “men” can refer to both genders, but there are times, contexts, and authorial intents that render these terms gender-specific, as appears to be the case here.

22. Male ecclesiastical authority

Although Jerry Moon might respond to his section of Rodriguez’ paper, one correction is warranted. Rodriguez categorically states, “As far as I know, there is not a statement in Ellen White that restricts the exercise of full ecclesiastical authority to men” (Rodriguez, p. 74 lines 4-6). This is incorrect, and an astounding oversight of available data. Ellen White declares:
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, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; 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 (Acts of the Apostles, p. 95).

Ellen White acknowledges the urgent need for female participation in ministry and the care of the church, while distinguishing the ordained from the unordained:

Some matters have been presented to me in regard to the laborers who are seeking to do all in their power to win souls to Jesus Christ. . . . The ministers are paid for their work, and this is well. And if the Lord gives the wife, as well as the husband, the burden of labor, and if she devotes her time and her strength to visiting from family to family, opening the Scriptures to them, although the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her, she is accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry. Should her labors be counted as nought, and her husband’s salary be no more than that of the servant of God whose wife does not give herself to the work, but remains at home to care for her family? (5 Manuscript Releases, p. 323).

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 (Acts of the Apostles, pp. 160, 161).
This statement qualifies as a description of a full-fledged ordination service. But the most direct hint at male eldership is found in Acts of the Apostles, p. 196; here Ellen White assumed that apostles and elders were exclusively male:

“The apostles and elders, men of influence and judgment, framed and issued the decree, which was thereupon generally accepted by the Christian churches.”

Interestingly, the adaptation (of The Desire of Ages) called Humble Hero leaves out the phrase “men of influence and judgment” (Humble Hero, p. 73), rendering an originally gender-specific sentence into a gender-generic statement. This violates the intent of the author.

If “no statement restricts the exercise of full ecclesiastical authority to men,” why did Ellen White never endorse this authority for women? Why was her counsel so gender-specific?

23. Authority

“No one has been called by God to have authority over other believers, males or females, but to serve them by revealing a Christ-like character” (Rodriguez, p. 76 lines 12-13).

I concur with the latter affirmation but must reject the alleged contradiction that authority and Christ-like character are mutually exclusive, as the aforementioned texts so transparently express (here repeated for convenience):

I urge you, brethren—-you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints—-that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us (1 Corinthians 16:15, 16).

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine (1 Timothy 5:17).
Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority (Titus 2:15).

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you (Hebrews 13:17).

These examples do not authorize men to act in a dictatorial fashion, but the do establish male headship in the church for the sake of the health and survival of the church.

Conclusion

The method of Bible interpretation proposed by proponents of women’s ordination is as puzzling as it is dangerous. A “new thing” is being proposed where words no longer mean what they mean, where statements can mean the opposite of their apparent meaning, where Scripture is robbed of all gender-specificity. Under this paradigm it is difficult to perceive how the Bible could be allowed to communicate any gender-specificity, even if its writers wanted to express such gender-specificity. The overall thrust of Scripture is silenced, as is the testimony of Ellen White. In the end, this promotes a role perplexity among genders that only mirrors the devastating gender confusion so prevalent in contemporary society. It runs the risk of insubordination to Scripture and the Lord of Scripture. We would do well to follow biblical injunctions rather than cultural and humanistically-motivated inclinations.

May God find us faithful, and grant the church His grace and foresight for the days ahead.

Ingo Sorke
Joshua, TX
March 23, 2014
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Ingo Sorke was born in Marburg, Germany, and grew up in Bavaria and Stuttgart. He arrived in the United States in 1985 as an exchange student where he encountered Seventh-day Adventists for the first time. After a traumatic death in his host family, the attraction of a loving community, and much Bible study, Ingo was baptized before his return to Germany in 1986. He has studied theology in Germany and in the U.S. and has pastored several churches in Texas. He currently teaches Bible courses at Southwestern Adventist University, inspiring students to integrate the particular Adventist message into their personal and professional life.
Unless otherwise noted, Scripture references are taken from the *New King James Version* of the Bible (NKJV), 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Bold emphases here and elsewhere are mine.

For example, Rodriguez categorically stated during the TOSC January 2014 presentation that “God does not have a Son.” Such statements fall outside the realm of careful biblical analysis.


His example of an inconsistent “plain reading of a text” (1 Corinthians 14:33-34 and 1 Timothy 2:11) among opponents of women’s ordination proves insufficient. In this striking oversimplification of our hermeneutic Rodriguez ignores that we recognize the hermeneutical principle of canonical totality---taking the whole Scripture into consideration, not just an isolated verse. First Corinthians 14:33-34 can easily be taken as an absolute statement from the perspective of Paul and for a particular situation: when the service is under way and the speaker is speaking, no woman should be speaking. Of course, there are times when men should not be speaking either, as expressed in 1 Corinthians 14:28. But if women are talking when they shouldn’t then they should be called to silence in the context of a worship service. The context of 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 is that someone is speaking already.

For example the abandonment of ordination altogether was suggested, in direct contradiction to Ellen White’s description of ordination and her defined explications of its function (see esp. *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 160, 161, and “He Ordained the Twelve,” in *The Desire of Ages*, ch. 25), based on the ordination of the Twelve.

According to Rodriguez, “Their main hermeneutical problem is to a large extent their desire to prove their point and to undermine the arguments of those who support the ordination of women to the ministry” (p. 9, lines 10-12). This is a case of confusing method with outcome---of course a hermeneutic that yields vastly different interpretative results will challenge “the arguments of those who support the ordination of women,” and, in the context of the TOSC, will seek “to prove their point.” Since two viewpoints prevail, this was necessarily practiced by both sides, including Rodriguez’ own paper.


Schreiner, p. 409.