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Back to Creation: Toward a Consistent Adventist Creation — Fall — Re-Creation Hermeneutic (Biblical - Theological Reflections on Basic Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics Applied to the Ordination of Women)

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1 **Back to Creation: Toward a Consistent Adventist Creation—Fall—Re-Creation**
2 **Hermeneutic (Biblical-Theological Reflections on Basic Principles of**
3 **Biblical Hermeneutics Applied to the Ordination of Women)**
4

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10 Theology of Ordination Study Committee
11 Baltimore, Maryland
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13

14
15 **Importance and Need for Hermeneutics**
16

- 17 1. There is no statement in the Bible: “Ordain women to ministry!” Moreover, there is also no
18 command: “Do not ordain women to ministry!” Yet, we want to have a biblical answer to our
19 fundamental question of whether to ordain women to ministry. So we need to reflect on,
20 evaluate, and interpret the biblical data in order to arrive at a sound conclusion about this
21 matter.
22
- 23 2. Two groups of scholars who love the Lord and take the Holy Scriptures seriously as the Word
24 of God come to opposite conclusions from the same Bible on the same subject. How can this
25 be that they come to different results? Let me stress that this is not primarily a theological
26 discussion between liberals and conservatives, between those whose main arguments for
27 ordination of women are based on culture or social justice (even though these arguments
28 need to be also taken seriously) and scholars or theologians who maintain faith in God, but it
29 is a debate among those who strongly uphold the authority of the Holy Bible.
30
- 31 3. Our distance in time and space from the biblical world necessitates the interpretation of the
32 Holy Scriptures. Today we use a different language, have a different culture, thinking, habits,
33 customs, and worldview, and we also deal with different issues and audiences.
34
- 35 4. It is not enough to read or quote the biblical text; it is necessary to explain it. Even though the
36 disciples of Jesus knew many biblical passages by heart, yet they did not understand that the
37 Hebrew Scriptures testified about the Messiah Jesus. “You search the Scriptures, for in them
38 you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not
39 willing to come to Me that you may have life” (John 5:39–40 NKJV). On the resurrection
40 Sunday, two disciples on the way to Emmaus needed to understand the Scriptures regarding
41 the role and mission of the Messiah, so Jesus explained the Old Testament teaching to them:
42 “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted [*diermeneuō*] to them in all
43 the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27 ESV). The correct understanding
44 of the Bible enables the understanding of Jesus, and the understanding of Jesus gives better
45 insights into the Scriptures. The word “interpreted” (*diermeneuō*) points to hermeneutics.
46 The Apostle Paul asks how people can believe, and it is only if someone comes and
47 proclaims the word of God to them: “How then will they call on him in whom they have not

1 believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are
2 they to hear without someone preaching?” (Rom 10:14 ESV). Furthermore, the Ethiopian
3 eunuch answered the question of the evangelist Philip: “Do you understand what you are
4 reading?” by stating “‘How can I, . . . ‘unless someone explains it to me?’ So he invited
5 Philip to come up and sit with him” (Act 8:31 NIV). The verb “explain” is a translation of the
6 Greek word *hodegeō* which means “lead,” “guide,” “explain,” “teach,” or “instruct.”

7 This short overview demonstrates that there is an urgent need for proper hermeneutics—
8 how to interpret the biblical texts in regard to the ordination of women. And it is also evident that
9 the issue of the ordination of women is first of all a hermeneutical issue; it is about how we read
10 and interpret the biblical text in this case and in all our theology. Therefore, establishing
11 principles of interpretation of the Bible are crucial in order to arrive at an accurate meaning of
12 the Scriptures concerning gender relationships in Christ.

13 This paper summarizes and illustrates the hermeneutical principles from an Adventist
14 perspective without going into minute detail and providing substantiation for each point, because
15 other colleagues are presenting specific studies on these raised issues. The goal of the present
16 study is to set a biblical-theological pattern of thinking, a mindset on how to approach and
17 interpret biblical material in regard to the ordination of women.

20 **What Is Biblical Hermeneutics?**

21
22 Biblical hermeneutics is a science of interpreting the Holy Scriptures in order to ascertain
23 its meaning.¹ This science follows principles of interpretation as well as a clear methodology.
24 Hermeneutics does not only deal with understanding of the Bible, but also with the process of
25 thinking about and evaluating biblical interpretation. One cannot manipulate the biblical text to
26 say whatever the interpreter would wish. We need to follow sound principles. Exegesis then
27 applies these principles to particular texts, and exposition in preaching or teaching is the actual
28 communication of God’s message.² One cannot strictly dissect hermeneutics and exegesis. The
29 goal of the hermeneutical-exegetical process is to discover what the message meant to the
30 original audience, and what it means for us today: What does the author mean by what he writes?

31 Biblical hermeneutics is also an art, because putting different texts together and
32 understanding its theology and significance requires special insight into the whole biblical
33 teaching. It must be done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is why it is important that
34 this task is done by a dedicated believer in God. As members of the Seventh-day Adventist
35 Church, we accept the historical grammatical-theological method of interpreting the Bible as a
36 proper tool for understanding the Bible.³ At the same time, we firmly reject the historical-critical

¹ See Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments* (reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 17: “Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation.”

² Hermeneutics is like a cook book, exegesis like a baking process, and exposition (preaching or teaching) like a serving of the freshly baked bread or a cake.

³ As summarized in the “Methods of Bible Study” document voted by the General Conference Committee Annual Council, “Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods,” Rio de Janeiro, October 12, 1986, published in the *Adventist Review*, January 22, 1987 (available online at <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/bible-interpretation-hermeneutics/methods-bible-study>), attached as an appendix to this paper. This method has various names: the historical-grammatical method or historical-grammatical-literary-theological method. For basic treatments of biblical hermeneutics from an Adventist perspective, see also George W. Reid, ed., *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach* (Biblical Research

1 method of the interpretation of the biblical material.⁴ This historical-critical method can only
2 discover the horizontal dimension of the biblical text and uses a distorted methodology of
3 imposing some preconceived patterns on the text, such as reconstructed history (e.g., there was
4 no worldwide flood or Exodus from Egypt; the book of Daniel was written in the time of the
5 Maccabean war around 165 B.C.) and literary compositions (like the JEDP [Jahvist, Elohist,
6 Deuteronomist and Priestly writer] approach to the Pentateuch; Deutero-Isaiah; the book of
7 Deuteronomy being the result of Josiah's reform in the 7th century B.C.; etc.).

8 It is not enough to use the right tools and follow the proper methodology of interpreting
9 the Holy Scriptures; the exegete needs to also have the proper attitude toward the revealed Word:

- 11 1. **To accept the Bible as the Word of God.** It is of high significance to underline that the
12 ultimate Author of Scriptures is God, that the biblical writers were guided by the Holy
13 Spirit, and that the Holy Bible is God's inspired revelation (2 Tim 3:15–17; 2 Pet 1:20–
14 21). As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that the Bible is the Word of God, and we
15 accept the so called “incarnational” or “thought” model of inspiration.⁵
- 16
17 2. **To study the Word of God in a humble and teachable spirit.** The Lord declares:
18 “These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and
19 who tremble at my word” (Isa 66:2b NIV). This is why the first task in doing exegesis is
20 a prayer! Praying for the Holy Spirit and wisdom from above is existentially crucial so
21 the interpreter will be in harmony and in tune with the Author of the Bible in order to
22 understand it. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the interpretation process is
23 limited and in jeopardy. Bible reading is first of all a spiritual discipline and we need to
24 read it with open eyes.
- 25
26 3. **To be willing to obey and follow the revealed Word.** The practice of the discovered
27 meaning of the biblical message is the key element in the interpretation of the Bible. This
28 means that the interpreter must be open to different interpretative options and cannot
29 approach the text with given preconceived ideas. Thus, the proper attitude to the text
30 includes a readiness to follow God's instructions, and not to try beforehand to reject a

Institute Studies, vol. 1; Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005); Richard M. Davidson, “Biblical Interpretation,” in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Series, vol. 12 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 58–104; idem, “Interpreting Scripture: An Hermeneutical Decalogue,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 4/2 (1993): 95–114; and Gordon M. Hyde, ed., *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1974).

For a comprehensive study of Biblical hermeneutics from a general Christian perspective, see Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, revised and expanded ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006); Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 3d rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1970); idem, *Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987); and Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994).

⁴ For the presuppositions, procedures, and methodology of the historical-critical method, see David R. Law, *The Historical-Critical Method: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012); Eryl W. Davies, *Biblical Criticism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013). For the evaluation of this method in comparison to the historical-historical-theological method, see Richard M. Davidson, “The Authority of Scripture: A Personal Pilgrimage,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 1, no. 1 (1990): 39–56.

⁵ See the article by Peter van Bemmelen on “Revelation and Inspiration,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Commentary Reference Series 12; Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association and the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000), 22-57.

1 specific view even if it goes against an established pattern of thinking or *status quo*
2 behavior. Jesus aptly states: “If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning
3 the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority” (John 7:17
4 NKJV).

- 5
- 6 4. **To recognize our human limitations.** The Bible contains propositional truth, but our
7 understanding of it is partial, tentative, never final (1 Cor 13:9-13). The final word
8 always belongs to God. All our statements of faith are under His judgment and authority.
9 This is why we need to carefully study His revelation, tremble at His Word, and
10 attentively listen to each other and study together so that we can advance in the
11 knowledge of His truth.

12

13 As time progresses, believers can better discern and understand the meaning of God’s
14 revelation:

- 15
- 16 1. Jesus declared to His disciples: “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken
17 of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let
18 those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Matt 24:15–16 ESV). When Jesus’s
19 followers saw the “abomination of desolation” (fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy of 9:27),
20 they were to flee from Jerusalem.
- 21
- 22 2. Jesus proclaimed that his followers could understand and remember His Word better after
23 certain things were fulfilled: “And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does
24 come to pass, you may believe” (John 14:29 NKJV; see also 13:19, 16:4).
- 25
- 26 3. The New Testament church’s radical discovery of the inclusion of Gentiles only became
27 gradually clear for the Christian church (see Acts 10-11 and 15; Gal 2:11-16).
- 28
- 29

30 **Hermeneutical Principles for Interpreting the Holy Scriptures**

31

32 The Bible is normative and has the ultimate authority in doctrine and practice. As
33 Adventists, we believe in the self-testimony of Scriptures, and we accept the general principles
34 of *sola scriptura* (Scriptures alone determines matters of faith and ethics) and *tota scriptura* (the
35 use of Scriptures in its totality/entirety). The whole biblical canon needs to be seriously studied.
36 We adhere to the principle of *scriptura sui ipsius interpretres* (Scripture interprets itself); however,
37 this does not mean that the student of the Bible will not look at the historical background, the
38 context of the studied verse(s), and the intent of the biblical passage. On the contrary, this
39 principle requires the study of the historical and literary context in order to know to what issue(s)
40 the particular text responds and thus avoid misapplying it.

41 We need to let the biblical text speak! Exegesis is not a luxury or a necessary evil. It is
42 not a mere playing with words and sentences, but it is a diligent work with the biblical text in
43 order to discover its meaning. This process includes biblical theology as an inseparable part.
44 Questions of relevancy and practical applications cannot be separated from the exegetical
45 process. It may also prove useful to the entire hermeneutical process to know the history of the
46 interpretation of the studied biblical text(s) up to the present time in order to be informed by it,

1 understand the current debate, and avoid the pitfalls of interpretation by not repeating the same
2 mistakes (e.g., the Trinitarian and Christological discussions; understanding of the structure, role,
3 mission, and authority of the church; debates on revelation and inspiration; the doctrine of the
4 nature of humanity; interpretation of ordination and the role of women in the Old Testament and
5 the Christian church; etc.).

6 The historical-grammatical-theological method of interpreting the Bible uses the
7 following main hermeneutical principles:
8
9

10 **I. Historical Background—The Basic Six “Ws”**

11 To understand the meaning of the biblical message, one needs to discover the basic
12 historical background. Six “Ws” can help in this regard.
13
14

15 **1. Who**

16 A. Who wrote or said it? Deciding on the authorship of the book may radically affect
17 the understanding of the book (e.g., Job, Isaiah, or Daniel). To know the authorship
18 of some biblical books is very crucial for their interpretation. For examples, we
19 accept that Genesis was authored by Moses in spite of the claim of the historical–
20 critical scholars that it is not the case; we accept Paul’s authorship of 1–2 Timothy
21 even though they belong among the Pastoral Epistles which some critical scholars
22 regard as written later than Paul’s time.
23

24 B. Who are the main protagonists, figures, or players in the studied text? What can be
25 known about them (for example, see Junia, the Apostle in Rom 16:7)?⁶
26

27 **2. When**

28 When was the book written, when did the event happen, and/or on what occasion was
29 the mentioned speech/message given? For the majority of the biblical books, it is very
30 important to know when events took place. For example, see the background of the
31 book of Deuteronomy (were they speeches delivered by Moses in 1410 B.C. or were
32 they only fabricated around 622 B.C.?) or the events in the beginning of the book of
33 Daniel (a real besiegement of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. or only a made-up story from the
34 Maccabean time?).
35

36 **3. Where**

37 Where was it written or said? The historical place and what happened there may play a
38 key role in the understanding of the biblical message (e.g., the book of Joshua) or even
39 prophecy (e.g., the fall of Babylon and the drying up of the Euphrates river in Rev 16).
40 Study of the historical background includes the knowledge of language, culture, habits,
41 worldview, etc. (e.g., the extra-biblical creation and flood narratives). The value of
42 historical documents and archaeology for an understanding of the biblical world is
43 indispensable, because it helps to better understand the ancient world and their
44 worldview in which biblical history and polemic took place (e.g., understanding the cult

⁶ See Nancy Vyhmeister, “Junia the Apostle,” *Ministry* (July 2013): 6–9.

1 of Artemis or Diana and other cultural movements afoot in Ephesus at the time of Paul
2 helps one to better understand Acts 19:23-41 and 1 Tim 2).

3
4 **4. To Whom**

5 Discovering the original audience determines its understanding and application (e.g.,
6 the audience of three speeches of Moses according to the book of Deuteronomy; or the
7 audience of Ezekiel or Daniel). With regard to 1 Tim 2, what was the makeup of the
8 believing community in Ephesus in Paul's day; in particular, who were the false
9 teachers in Ephesus concerning whom the epistle gives counsel?

10
11 **5. Why**

12 Why was it written or said? The author's purpose or intention reveals the main focus of
13 the message. Discerning the intended drive of the biblical book is of utmost importance
14 (e.g., the intent of the first and the second Creation accounts points to the Sabbath and
15 Marriage as their focus, i.e., vertical and horizontal relationships and dimensions of our
16 life; the purpose of the Fall account is to demonstrate God's grace in the midst of His
17 judgments; etc.). Again regarding 1 Timothy, what was the particular problem or
18 problems that Paul was addressing in the epistle?

19
20 **6. What**

21 What was written or said? To summarize the message into one sentence or short
22 paragraph helps to discover the content, basic message, main teaching, and principal
23 thought(s).

24
25
26 **II. Grammatical or Literary Study**

27
28 **1. Literary Study**

29
30 **A. Word Study**

31 The careful study of words is necessary, because their meaning may change in
32 time. The meaning of the biblical phrases is always determined by the context in
33 which they are used.

34 For example, consider the different meanings of the words "head" or
35 "authority." The immediate context should decide the particular meaning of these
36 terms. So for example, in 1 Cor 11:3, does the expression "head" (*kephalē*) mean
37 "authority" or does it mean "source"⁷ or something else? Does it carry the same
38 meaning in vv. 4-7, 10? What is the meaning of *exousia* ("authority") in v. 10?
39 Does it have the same meaning here as elsewhere in the NT? There are all good and
40 legitimate questions.

41 In 1 Tim 2:12, does the word *authentēin* mean "to have authority" or does it
42 mean "to domineer over" or some other negative connotation? And what about the
43 meaning of *hēsychia* in the same verse: does it mean that a woman must be totally
44 "in silence, silent" (KJV, NKJV, NIV), or does it refer to her overall demeanor

⁷ For further study, see Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 113-139.

1 which should be “at peace” (CJB), acting “quietly” (NLT), as this same root word
2 means just a few verses earlier with regard to all Christians (vs. 2)?

3 For OT examples, in the Genesis creation narratives, does the word “man”
4 (*'adam*) in Gen 1:26-28 and elsewhere imply male gender (and thus hint at male
5 headship) or is it a gender-inclusive word that means “human” with no implication
6 of maleness? Does the word “helper” ((Heb. *'ezer*) in Gen 2:18, 20 imply a
7 subordinate status for Eve, or is this term more neutral by having no reference to
8 relative status since even God is referred to as “*'ezer*” (Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7, 26,
9 29; 1 Chr 12:19; Pss 20:3; 33:20; 70:6; 89:20; 115:7-11; 121:2; 124:8; 146:5; Hos
10 13:9)? The title *'ezer* for Eve in Gen 2 is actually a great compliment!

11 12 **B. Grammar and Syntax**

13 Martin Luther already said that theology is grammar because on it depends the
14 understanding of the text. Grammar, for example, helps to determine which time is
15 involved in the text—past, present, or future (e.g., the eternity of the Word which
16 became flesh in a precise moment of time according to the use of the Greek past
17 tenses [like imperfect and aorist] in John 1:1–3, 14). The study of syntax is very
18 important in discerning the relationship of words and sentences to each other. For
19 example, “naming” of animals (Gen 2:20) and Eve (3:20) in contrast to “calling”
20 the newly formed woman a “woman” (2:23), i.e., recognizing the closeness and
21 unity between Adam and his wife (received as a gift from God).

22 Another example: Paul’s list of qualification for elders in the masculine
23 gender “**husband of one wife**” (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). This can be explained
24 on the basis of understanding the biblical languages, how they express their
25 thoughts. An important feature of biblical languages is the simple recognition that
26 when both genders are included in a biblical text, they are described in the
27 masculine gender. Also Phoebe is described as *diakonos* (but also *adelphē* [sister
28 {fem.}] in Rom 16:1). The masculine gender is used throughout the Decalogue, but
29 it does not exclude women from obedience too (the wife is not even mentioned, but
30 is included in “YOU”). Jesus proclaimed: “I tell you that anyone who looks at a
31 woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt 5:28
32 NIV). However, it does not mean that women can look lustfully at men.

33 34 **C. Statistics**

35 Biblical statistics will help to determine the importance of words or phrases, and to
36 discover key, rare, or unique words (*hapax legomena*). So, for example, the
37 meaning of the Hebrew word *teshuqah* in Gen 3:16. Since it appears only three
38 times in the Hebrew Bible, it is important to note the only other time where it
39 occurs in the context of a man-woman relationship, i.e. Song of Songs 7:11
40 (English v. 10), where it clearly has a positive connotation of “[romantic, sexual]
41 desire.”

42 In 1 Tim 2:12, it is important to realize that the word *authentein* (to govern,
43 have authority) in 1 Tim 2:12 is a *hapax legomenon*. Thus it is crucial to
44 understand the meaning of this word in light of the current meaning of the Greek in
45 the time of Paul, and not to import a meaning only current several centuries later
46 into the text.

1
2 **D. Different literary features**

3 Literary study helps to discover special literary features like puns, grammatical
4 anomalies, ironies, figures of speech, Hebrew parallelism, inclusio (envelope
5 construction), metaphors, etc. For example, the inclusio in Gen 2 makes clear that
6 the man and the woman are presented as equals in this chapter, and the flow of the
7 passage from incomplete to complete is just the opposite of those who claim that
8 this chapter emphasizes the priority of the man in creation. Again, the Hebrew
9 parallelism of Gen 3:16 helps to explain the meaning of the divine judgments given
10 upon the woman.

11
12 **2. Contextual Study**

13 It is of utmost importance to study the particular biblical word, phrase, or sentence in its
14 immediate and larger context, because the context decides its meaning.

15 For example, Adam’s wife is created as “helper suitable to him [Adam]” (NIV).
16 The Hebrew phrase *‘ezer kedegdo* literally translated is “help as opposite to him” or
17 “help as corresponding to him” meaning that they are equal partners in life, even though
18 they are sexually different (the biblical Creation text stresses the sexuality of both of
19 them). Thus, even though they have different physical functions, there is no subordinate
20 or superordinate hierarchical status in their relationship. Their difference is good, and
21 only because they are different can they be a contribution to each other.

22 Another example is that there is no causative connection between vv. 12 and 13
23 in 1 Tim 2: “And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but
24 to be in silence. For [Gr. *gar*] Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1Tim 2:12 NKJV).
25 The Greek conjunction *gar* in the beginning of v. 13 is explicative (as it is in v. 5) and
26 needs to be translated as “for,” and not as causative “therefore or because.” Paul’s
27 reasoning apparently does not make sense: Why should a woman or a wife be
28 silent/quiet in Ephesian church, because Adam was created first and Eve second? In
29 reality, to be silent or quiet has nothing to do with the sequence of the creation of the
30 first pair! This puzzle makes sense only if Paul is responding to a specific claim of his
31 opponents, namely their claim that a woman—the goddess Artemis—was created first,
32 and from her everyone else. Paul is difficult to understand because he is very polemic;
33 **he reacts to a special proto-gnostic heresy which uplifted the woman to cosmic**
34 **supremacy built on the cult of Artemis (Diana).** This woman’s supremacy claimed
35 that woman was created first, and everyone (including men) should submit to this
36 goddess Mother. Due to worshipping this mother-goddess, women (especially the
37 wives) were probably domineering over the men (including their husbands) in public
38 meetings. The myth of Cybele and Attis, from which the Ephesian Artemis sprang,
39 emphasized the creation of the goddess first, then her male consort.⁸ Paul simply argues
40 in reference to the Creation account that Adam was created first (Paul does not explain

⁸ For the historical background of the cult of Artemis (Diana), proto-gnosticism, and other cultural movements in Ephesus in the time of Paul, see especially Sharon Hodgkin Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus: A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century* (New York: University of America, 1991). For further information on this and other issues related to 1 Timothy 2, see Carl Cosaert, “Paul, Women, and the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy 2:8-15” (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, July 22-24, 2013).

1 the Creation account). On that basis, he urges that such noisy women teachers must be
2 silent, because their teaching is disruptive and their claims do not confer with the
3 biblical Creation account. So he categorically states that he does not permit them to
4 teach.

6 **3. Literary Genre**

7 Is the text under scrutiny history, prophecy, parable, song, genealogy, polemic, law,
8 prayer, etc.? This is an extremely important point because on this recognition depends
9 the whole approach to and the interpretation of the text. A different set of rules applies
10 to the interpretation of parables, and again different ones apply to prophecies. The kind
11 of literature determines the application of various interpretative rules. For example, if 1
12 Timothy is a polemical letter then one needs to know the arguments to which Paul is
13 responding, and then interpret the text accordingly. In this polemical epistle Paul reacts
14 to serious problems and writes against incipient Gnosticism, false teachers refusal of the
15 Creation order and their defense of multiple mediators, asceticism, and the women's
16 cult of Artemis's supremacy (see 1 Tim 1:3-7; 2:3-6; 2:11-15; 4:1-5).

18 **4. The Literary Structure**

19 The literary structure of the book and the selected passage is very crucial for
20 understanding the message of the Bible. This will determine the literary units and
21 delimitate them in order to know which verses belong together. It also shows the main
22 flow of thoughts and helps to understand the principal points and the purpose of the
23 biblical text (e.g., see the first and second Genesis Creation accounts; the Flood story;
24 the books of Ezekiel; Daniel, and Revelation). For example, the chiasmic structure of
25 Gen 3 helps to explain the order in which God addresses the ones under judgment in
26 this chapter. Again, the symmetrical macrostructure of the Song of Songs underscores
27 the egalitarian relationship between Solomon and the Shulammitte.

30 **III. Theological Study**

31 **1. Understand the Big Picture of Biblical Revelation**

32 The most important issue in our life is how we think about God because everything in
33 our life depends upon it. A proper understanding of God's character, the Great
34 Controversy, and the Plan of Salvation are the key entry points to the interpretation of
35 the Bible.⁹ The goal of interpreting the Holy Scriptures is to know God and His plans,
36 and understand how we should live. Our discussion about the ordination of women is
37 related to the big theological picture of how we view God, but comes down first of all to
38 the basic issue of what is our—men—attitude toward women and toward our sisters in
39 the church. How do we think, perceive, and talk about them? How do we relate and
40 behave toward them? What kind of jokes do we say about them? Our studies on the
41 ministry of women are not a mere theological exercise; at stake is how we treat women
42 in general. In this context, we need to ask additional pertinent questions: What is God's

⁹ See, e.g., Richard M. Davidson, "Back to the Beginning: Genesis 1–3 and the Theological Center of Scripture," In *Christ, Salvation, and the Eschaton*, ed. Daniel Heinz, Jiří Moskala, and Peter M. van Bemmelen (Berrien Springs, MI: Old Testament Publications, 2009), 5-29.

1 view of women and how does He value them? How should the relationship between
2 men and women be cultivated among believers in Christ? This set of issues leads to the
3 other two specific theological questions closely related to our discussion: What kind of
4 picture of God will be presented in my/our interpretation in favor of the ordination of
5 women? What kind of picture of God will be painted by my/our denial of women's
6 ordination?
7

8 **2. From the Clear to the Unclear Texts, From the Known to the Unknown, From the** 9 **Plain to the Problematic Verses**

10 For example, the texts about Jesus as the beginning (*archē*) of God's creation, to be the
11 begotten (*monogenēs*) Son of God, or to be the firstborn (*prototokos*), etc. Some have
12 taken these passages to mean that Jesus is not fully God, or that He has eternally been
13 subordinate to the Father. Others further the argument, based upon these kinds/ of
14 passages, that if Jesus was subordinate to the Father, then this provides a model of
15 female subordination to males in the home and the church. Such argumentation fails to
16 start with the clear texts about the relationships in the Trinity, and interpret the unclear
17 in light of the clear.

18 Another example is the need to proceed from Moses (Gen 1–3) to Paul (1 Tim
19 2) and not to try to obscure the clear statements in Genesis by beginning with Paul and
20 pressing this meaning upon the Genesis text in order to explain the difficult verses of
21 the Apostle Paul. To read Paul's statement "Adam was not the one deceived; it was the
22 woman, who was deceived and *became a sinner*" is very incomplete, because Adam
23 also sinned and *became a sinner*, not only Eve. Yet, Paul does not say one word here
24 about Adam's fall and sinfulness. This verse makes sense only if Paul (while referring
25 to the Genesis Creation story) reacts to the specific heretical claims of his opponents
26 who try to make the cult of Woman (Artemis) and the primacy of women dominant.
27 Paul in Romans explains and proves that we are all sinners and points to Adam only. Is
28 he contradicting himself? Not at all, because each text needs to be explained in its
29 proper context! Romans is a doctrinal epistle which teaches about true faith and how to
30 be saved in Christ Jesus, but 1 Timothy is a polemical letter.
31

32 **3. Literal or Spiritual/Figurative Meaning?**

33 How should we read the biblical text? Does the Bible have *sensus literalis*, i.e., a literal
34 meaning, or *sensus spiritualis*, i.e., spiritual meaning? Is it possible to speak also about
35 *sensus plenior*, i.e., a deeper meaning? Our guiding principle is that we read the biblical
36 text literally unless the context demands otherwise, because we encounter parables,
37 symbols, songs, prophecy, metaphors, etc. For example, Gen 2:4 characterizes the
38 Creation account as "genealogy," i.e., as a historical, factual account as are nine other
39 genealogies in the book of Genesis, including the genealogy of Adam, Noah, Terah, and
40 Jacob (5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2). If the genealogies of
41 these patriarchs are historical and really happened in a literal way, so must also "the
42 genealogy of the heavens and the earth" be historical.

43 There is a difference between the literal and literalistic meaning of the text.
44 "Literal" means that one reads the biblical text in its context with its intended message
45 meanwhile "literalistic" reading means that the biblical text is taken in a very narrow
46 dogmatic way without applying its contextual and larger theological considerations. For

1 example, some have read 1 Cor 14:34 (“Let your women/wives keep silent in the
2 churches, for they are not permitted to speak”) literalistically, to mean that women are
3 not to speak at all in public worship services. But information in this same epistle of 1
4 Corinthians indicates that women were indeed speaking in worship services (11:5), with
5 Paul’s blessing! Certainly this passage is not to be taken as a literal ban on all female
6 speaking in church!¹⁰

7 As Seventh-day Adventists we realize the complexity of the biblical message.
8 We have never interpreted the biblical text in a literalistic or simplistic way. For
9 examples: (1) We do not accept that texts like Rev 14:10-11 and 20:10 teach eternal
10 conscious torture in fire even though they explicitly claim that; our reading of these
11 texts is not literalistic or simplistic. (2) We refuse to believe that texts like Mal 4:2-3
12 and Rom 9:15-24 speaks about double predestination. (3) We do not believe in a
13 literalistic way that after death we go immediately to heaven to be with Jesus, even
14 though Paul sounds like he is claiming it (see Phil 1:23; 2 Cor 5:6-9). (4) We do not
15 accept dichotomy between law and grace (that they are against each other) in spite of
16 texts like Rom 6:14 and Gal 2:16-17. As Adventist we always seriously study the
17 historical background, immediate and larger context, audience, theology, purpose, and
18 intention of the text. Otherwise it is easy to be misled and come to false conclusions. In
19 other words, the safeguard of the balanced interpretation does not lie in a simple
20 quotation of the Bible, but in finding principles which need to be rightly applied.

21 22 **4. Prescriptive or Descriptive Texts?**

23 Does the biblical text only describe what happened (e.g., the behavior of people; the
24 consequences of sin) or does it prescribe a certain behavior in stories, parables, or legal
25 texts? Examples include Noah’s drunkenness, David’s adultery, Nehemiah’s beating of
26 people for not knowing Hebrew and for intermarriage with unbelievers/idolaters, etc.
27 Regarding Gen 3:16, is it a permanent prescription of male headship or a remedial
28 redemptive provision to facilitate the return to the Creation ideal (see Gal 3:26–29; Eph
29 5:21–33; similar to the “painful toil” for Adam in Gen 3:17b, NIV)?¹¹

30 Additional questions need to be always carefully studied: To whom does the
31 prescription apply? Is it temporal or universal? Does it apply to an individual or to all
32 people? To Israel only or also to all nations? The scope of the biblical instruction is
33 important. For example, in 1 Tim 2:11-15 Paul uses the ambiguous vocabulary (*anēr-*
34 *gynē*) which may refer to “man-woman” or “husband-wife” relationship.¹² Does Paul’s
35 counsel in 1 Tim 2:11-15 apply to all women everywhere for all time, or does it apply
36 only to those in the specific situation in Ephesus (or similar situations which might
37 occur elsewhere and/or later), in which women/wives domineer over men/their

¹⁰ For discussion of this and other relevant New Testament passages, see Teresa Reeve, “Ordination and Women Pastors: The Witness of the New Testament” (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, July 22-24, 2013).

¹¹ For work being a blessing, see for example, Ellen G. White, *Adventist Home*, 142; and Ellen G. White, *Patriarch and Prophets*, 60.

¹² In the Greek language the term *anēr* can mean either “man” or “husband,” and the word *gynē* signifies “woman” or “wife.” Always the literary context determines the meaning of these expressions. The same is true in Hebrew: the term *’ish* can mean either “man” or “husband,” and the word *’ishshah* has as well two meanings “woman” or “wife,” and also the context decides their precise meaning. Can a biblical author play with these words and switch their meaning in the near context?

1 husbands in the worship service? Does Paul speak about men-women relationship or
2 only about husbands-wives relationship, or has he in mind both relationships? Similarly,
3 In 1 Cor 14:34, does the counsel regarding “women/wives” (*gynē*) apply to the men-
4 women relationship in general in society and/or the church or to the marriage
5 relationship between husband-wife only?

6 **5. First Indicative and then Imperative of the Gospel**

7 Grace always comes first and then the law follows. Faith and obedience go hand to
8 hand, but faith is always the root of salvation and an ethical life is its fruit. The Spirit of
9 the law, i.e., its intention, has priority over its literalistic application (e.g., the six
10 antitheses of Matt 5:21–48 in the Sermon on the Mount). The act of ordination needs to
11 be understood as the result of experiencing God’s grace and the power of His Spirit in
12 life.

13
14 **6. Importance of the Study Within the Overall Biblical Teaching**

15 Not all things are equally important that are taught in the Bible. For example, the death
16 of Jesus on the cross is the great center truth of the Bible around which all other biblical
17 teachings clusters.¹³ We need to ask what place ordination has in God’s system of truth,
18 how it belongs in the plan of salvation, and how it fits into the great controversy issues.
19 Is the ordination of men or women a central or more peripheral teaching of the Bible?
20 As a matter of fact, it is not something directly prescribed or repeatedly taught by
21 biblical authors. Is it telling that Ellen White never once refers to the crucial passages
22 like 1 Tim 2:8-14 and 1 Cor 11:3, which provide the foundational argument for those
23 who oppose women’s ordination?
24

25 **7. Intra- and Inter-Textuality**

26 How do the same and then later biblical authors use the previously revealed biblical
27 material? Is it used in a dogmatic, ethical, exhortative, or polemical way? All related
28 texts need to be a part of the conversation. At the same time, we need to be careful not
29 to put together texts that do not belong together even though at first glimpse it may
30 suggest so.

31 For example, the use of Mark 7:19 or Acts 10 as a denial of the biblical teaching
32 on the clean and unclean food of Lev 11. Another example, Peter actually gives the
33 right interpretation of Paul (because he is so easily misinterpreted) in order to show the
34 true meaning of the husband-wife relationship (compare 1 Tim 2:8–15 with 1 Pet 3:1–
35 7).

¹³ “The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption,—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers” (Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 315).

“Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. The proclamation of the third angel's message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath truth. This truth, with others included in the message, is to be proclaimed; but the great center of attraction, Christ Jesus, must not be left out. It is at the cross of Christ that mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. The sinner must be led to look to Calvary; with the simple faith of a little child he must trust in the merits of the Saviour, accepting His righteousness, believing in His mercy” (Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 156-157).

1 As another example, the Song of Songs has been widely recognized as an
2 inspired commentary on gender relations in Gen 1-2. There are numerous intertextual
3 links between the Song and Gen 1-2. Furthermore, the Song links with Gen 3:16, and
4 explicitly reverses the remedial provision of male headship and female submission as it
5 underscores the possibility of returning to the Creation ideal for marriage as in Gen
6 2:24. One cannot overlook this crucial inspired testimony in interpreting the
7 relationships between men and women in the early chapters of Genesis.
8

9 **8. Unity of the Bible**

10 The biblical authors do not contradict themselves. The analogy of faith is an important
11 principle and needs to be maintained, because it is supported by the inner biblical
12 evidence. For examples, the harmony between Moses, the prophets, Jesus, Paul, and
13 James on justification by faith; the attitude toward women in the Old and New
14 Testaments.

15 With regard to the role of women in the church, one cannot set Paul against
16 Paul: one cannot interpret 1 Tim 2:8-14 in a way that contradicts Paul's numerous
17 statements affirming women in positions of leadership in the church, and his basic
18 principled statement regarding gender relations in Gal 3:28. One cannot set Paul against
19 Moses and Solomon, by interpreting 1 Tim 2:8-14 in such a way that contradicts the
20 exegesis of Gen 1-3 and the inspired OT commentary on this passage in the Song of
21 Solomon.

22 Therefore, we need to read the Bible wisely, i.e., prayerfully, humbly, under the
23 guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in its historical, grammatical, literary and theological
24 context.
25

26 **Dangers and Fallacies in Interpreting the Scriptures**

27 **1. Selectivity**

28 We need to **avoid being selective—choosing only some texts which fit our own**
29 **interpretative construct.**

30 For example, the Rabbinic identification of the Messiah in the time of Jesus focused
31 on the righteous King (Isa 11) while ignoring another Messianic figure, namely the
32 Suffering Servant or the Servant of the Lord of Isa 53. When Jesus Christ came as the
33 Suffering Servant, they rejected Him because He did not fit into their interpretative category.
34 What a tragedy due to the misunderstanding the Scriptures!

35 One needs to be willing to deal with a complexity of issues and to not avoid some
36 tough problems, because what criteria we apply to interpret one problem may affect other
37 issues. For example, we cannot speak only about the silence of women during worship in the
38 church (1 Cor 14:34–35; 1 Tim 2:11–12) but avoid dealing with other closely related issues
39 pertaining to women in the church—the head covering of women (1 Cor 11:5–6, 13) or their
40 obligation to have long hair (1 Cor 11:6). We need to have a good reason for why we take so
41 seriously 1 Tim 2 about women's silence (quietness), but ignore applying Paul's instructions
42 about women's long hair or their head cover. These two other practices are not advocated in
43 our church even by those who argue against the ordination of women. Why not? It seems
44 that Paul does not use different reasons for defending these three practices; he advocates all
45
46

1 of them with references to the Genesis Creation order (1 Cor 11:3–16; 14:34; 1 Tim 2:11–
2 15). Can the knowledge of specific social habits, circumstances, or problems in the churches
3 in Corinth and Ephesus help us to discern if these practices are or are not relevant to us?
4

5 **2. Inconsistency**

6 To speak about the silence of women in the church and to not allow them to teach according
7 to 1 Tim 2:11–12, and then to apply it only to the ordination of women and/or to the work of
8 an ordained pastor is very arbitrary and inconsistent. Generally speaking, in our churches
9 this rule is not applied to women as they are teachers in schools and churches, they are Bible
10 workers, preachers, elders, deaconesses, Sabbath School teachers, etc. They are not silent in
11 the church, they sing, pray, make announcements, teach, preach, etc. We need to be
12 consistent in the interpretation and application of the Bible.
13

14 **3. Eisegesis**

15 Eisegesis is imposing on the text a meaning which is foreign to the whole thrust of the text.
16 Thoughts coming from outside are pushed onto the meaning of the passage without
17 substantive support or textual evidence. This imposition ignores the historical background,
18 audience, the immediate and larger context, and the author’s intention of what truth he really
19 wants to communicate.

20 For example, the Bible testifies that we were created to the image of God (Gen 1:26–
21 27). Some people would like to deduce from this fact that Adam and Eve were created with
22 different functions, as there are different functions among the Godhead—one Person of the
23 Deity cannot do what another Person is doing—so the Son and Spirit must submit to the will
24 of the Father. Therefore, they claim that women have different functions from men, and they
25 must submit to the authority of men. These interpreters are violating a basic theological
26 assumption of the equality of the divine Persons and the equality of their different functions.
27 This reasoning is absolutely theologically wrong because it makes God in our image and
28 tries from this theological construct to build our human relationships.

29 This is more a philosophical approach to the biblical text, good for some gnostic
30 esoteric speculations, but absolutely out of place in the issues about the subordination of
31 women to men. We cannot compare the incomparable. For example, it is absolutely
32 unsustainable in biblical-theological thinking to develop a hierarchy among angels with their
33 different functions and subordinations, and then transfer or compare it to the relationship
34 between men and women. Humans were not created in the image of angels! We know
35 absolutely nothing about angels’ sexuality, their marriage or family life (see Matt 22:29-30).
36 There is evidently no analogy between angels’ hierarchy and man-woman or husband-wife
37 relationships, because there is no gender relationship between angels (at least it is not
38 revealed in the Bible). We cannot project our own wishes or ideas onto the biblical text and
39 its overall message.

40 Ellen G. White warns: “It is true that many theories and doctrines popularly
41 supposed to be derived from the Bible have no foundation in its teaching, and indeed are
42 *contrary to the whole tenor of inspiration.*”¹⁴
43

44 **4. Not Recognizing and Defining Personal Presuppositions**

¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 108–109.

1 It is impossible to come to the biblical text without cultural, theological, and other
2 presuppositions. We cannot pretend to come with a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, and interpret
3 the text purely objectively without any bias. Though we cannot avoid coming with
4 presuppositions, we can seek to recognize and define what presuppositions,
5 preunderstandings, and assumptions we bring to the text. We can ask the Holy Spirit to
6 show us our presuppositions, and to help us evaluate these assumptions in light of Scripture,
7 to see if they are truly biblical.

8 In discussing with some individuals regarding the ordination of women, when they
9 have heard all the exegetical arguments, finally they have made the statement which
10 revealed their unexamined presupposition: “Everyone knows that it is part of human nature:
11 men lead and women follow.” Such reveals a cultural bias that colors the interpretation of
12 all the relevant texts. Others come to the subject of women’s ordination with presuppositions
13 based upon liberal feminism or western concepts of social justice rather than the biblical
14 understanding. These unconscious assumptions need to be recognized, defined, and then the
15 Bible student needs to be open to the possibility for Scripture to verify, change, or correct
16 one’s presuppositions in harmony with the biblical teaching.

18 5. Circular Reasoning

19 In our interpretation of the Bible we need to avoid circular reasoning. The exegete needs to
20 be keenly aware of this trap because it is so easy to fall into this danger. Each text needs to
21 be interpreted in its proper historical, grammatical, literary, and theological context, and
22 only then can it be put into dialogue with other texts (analogy of faith). An interpreter cannot
23 import into the studied text the meaning taken from another text in order to “fit” these two
24 seemingly contradictory passages together, and then claim that these two biblical texts
25 confirm each other. In reality this is reading into the studied text foreign ideas which are
26 contrary to its intention and flow of thoughts.

27 For example, some interpreters are reading into Moses’s Creation Story (Gen 1-2)
28 their own thoughts about the headship of man and submission of Eve to Adam as they think
29 Paul is stating it in 1 Tim 2:11–14 (thus projecting the idea of headship and the submission
30 of Eve to Adam into the Genesis accounts), and then they interpret 1 Tim 2 and argue that
31 this is what Paul says since it is consistent with the teaching of Moses. In order to do this,
32 they need to impose on the Genesis text their own philosophical construct of ontological
33 equality but functional hierarchy (in matter of leadership) in Gen 2,¹⁵ take things out of their

¹⁵ This false philosophical concept contradicts the biblical Hebrew teaching on the unity and harmony of human nature and the complexity of all relationships. The dichotomy between “existence” and “function” is a “strange fire” in our Adventist circles (transported from the evangelical hierarchicalists or subordinationists). We cannot split a person into an ontological dimension on the one side and a functional dimension on the other side. The biblical teaching on the nature of humanity is that a human person is a unit. We are “made” of different functions and these functions characterize us as persons and reveal who we are. A person can have different functions, but these functions go always closely together with our very existence, with who we are! As we cannot split body and spirit, so we cannot dissect ontology and functions. Our functions and relationships define what kind of human beings we are. As Seventh-day Adventist we firmly stand on the platform of biblical monism.

Gen 1 and Gen 2 form two complementary Creation accounts and do not contradict each other. See my article, “A Fresh Look at Two Genesis Creation Accounts: Contradictions?” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 49 (2011):45-65. The Hebrew language uses for Adam and Eve the same term *'adam* (“humanity”) to designate them as human persons – see Gen 1:27. They are physically different but form a harmonious unit. They are perfectly united and are both spiritual leaders. There is no room in Genesis 2 for the headship of Adam over Eve before sin!

1 immediate context, and severely violate the biblical concept of the original harmony and
2 unity of the first human pair. Thus the intention of Gen 2 is ignored and the idea of male
3 headship is introduced even though not once is this concept or category mentioned in this
4 chapter.
5

6 **6. Dismissing All Difficulties, Tensions, and Problems**

7 The student of the Bible needs to recognize that he/she will not solve all the problems
8 related to the biblical text. However, these textual discrepancies have no power to overthrow
9 the main thrust and teaching of the Bible. It will not diminish the certainty of the biblical
10 message in its totality.

11 For example, 1 Tim 2:15 reads that women will be saved by bearing children. This
12 statement presents a huge problem for interpreters to understand; however, we may know
13 and be sure what Paul does not want to say through this statement: he is not advocating
14 salvation by works, salvation by having children, because this thought runs completely
15 contrary to what he teaches in his epistles. Otherwise, women with many children would be
16 automatically saved as having babies would be the cause of their salvation. So, we know
17 what Paul does not mean by it but to be exactly sure what Paul wanted to say is a matter of
18 interpretation, and several compelling theories have been presented. I think it should be
19 understood in the context of Paul's sharp polemic against those who advocated a woman's
20 supremacy and the gnostic teaching about despising physical and bodily activities and
21 rejected marriage (1 Tim 4:3). He probably encourages believers in Christ to have children
22 and tells wives that bringing children into the world does not endanger their salvation in
23 Christ Jesus, they need only to continue in their "faith, love and holiness with propriety."

24 Apparent discrepancies and contradictions may help us to carefully study given
25 passages, avoid simplicity, and find a better solution. For example, compare the story about

Moreover, one cannot take examples from the "work" realm of our sinful world where the "leader" (director, president, dean, boss, ministerial secretary, etc.) can be considered as the "first among equals," and transfer this dynamic into the relationship between husband and wife in the sinless life of the Garden of Eden. This is a logical error.

Consider also the following explanation of the Spirit of Prophecy. Ellen G. White explicitly states that "harmony" between Adam and Eve was lost only after the Fall, and Eve's submission to Adam was the result of sin. Ellen White does not hint at all that there was a "functional spiritual male leadership" and submission of Eve to her husband before sin: "Eve was told of the sorrow and pain that must henceforth be her portion. And the Lord said, 'Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.' In the creation God had made her the **equal** of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God--in harmony with His great law of love--**they would ever have been in harmony** with each other; **but sin** had brought discord, and **now** their union could be maintained and harmony **preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other**. Eve had been the first in transgression; and she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was now placed in subjection to her husband" (Ellen G. White, *Patriarch and Prophets*, 58; emphasis is mine). Ellen G. White never once differentiates between the "ontological equality" of Adam and Eve and "functional submission" of Eve to the "leadership or spiritual headship" of Adam before the Fall! She is not using this kind of vocabulary.

This misleading and false dichotomy was introduced into the evangelical discussion in the mid 1970's by George Knight III ("The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Male and Female with Special Attention to the Teaching/Ruling Functions in the Church," *JETS* 18 [1975]: 83-84; idem, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women: New Testament Teaching* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1985], 7-9), was popularized in the book edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1991), and unfortunately has been adopted by many Adventists who oppose the ordination of women pastors and elders.

1 sending the spies into the Promised Land: Did God or the people initiate it? See the apparent
2 contradictory statements in Num 13:1–3 and Deut 1:22–23.

3 Another example: Are Paul and James in contradiction about justification by faith?
4 No, if you know (1) how differently they define the two terms of faith and works; (2) what is
5 the purpose of their statements (to what problem were each of them responding); and (3)
6 who were their opponents (their different audiences). The harmony between both of them
7 can then be established.¹⁶

8 Another example is where Paul is apparently contradicting himself when, on the one
9 hand, he allows women to pray and prophecy publicly, as it is explicitly stated in 1 Cor 11:5:
10 “**But every woman who prays or prophesies** with *her* head uncovered dishonors her head,
11 for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved” (1Cor 11:5 NKJV; for Paul to
12 prophecy means to edify the church, strengthen, encourage, and comfort people, see 1 Cor
13 14:3-4), and on the other hand, forbids women to speak in the church (1 Cor 14:34–35; 1
14 Tim 2:11–12). We should not put Paul against Paul! This must be a hermeneutical key for
15 us. Only in two cities were there such big problems that Paul did not permit women to speak
16 publicly in worship; this happened in Corinth (see 1 Cor 11:3-16 and 14:34–35) and Ephesus
17 (1 Tim 2:11–12). Both cities were pagan centers with immense populations and many moral
18 and syncretistic problems in the church. In Corinth, there was a disruption of worship by
19 women through uncontrollable speaking in tongues, and there was a disturbing of worship in
20 Ephesus by women who were still adhering to the cult of Artemis. So what Paul is really
21 forbidding the women in those cities is disorderly speaking in worship (1 Cor 14:29–33, 40),
22 because Paul is only in favor of orderly, decent, fitting, and honorable worship.

23 24 25 **Acts 15: Jerusalem Council—A Hermeneutical Key**

26
27 What are we to do as believers in Christ when we are seriously challenged in our practice
28 or belief? The Apostolic Council in Jerusalem may serve as a pattern and the key on how to
29 approach such difficulties.

30 The early church faced a huge new problem: the acceptance of believing Gentiles into the
31 church. So far, it had only been a Jewish-Christian church. Gentiles were coming to the Jewish-
32 Christian church, and believers in Jesus were growing in number. But the early church was not
33 ready to open their arms to the uncircumcised Gentile believers because for centuries the
34 uncircumcised Gentiles had been excluded from the community of believers. God had to
35 dramatically intervene with dreams and with the gift of the Holy Spirit before the church was
36 willing to baptize and accept Gentile believers (see Acts 10–11).

37 The Jerusalem Council was called, because two main questions had arisen:

- 38
39 1. Do Gentiles need to first become Jews in order to become Christians? Do they need
40 to be circumcised as the Abrahamic covenant requires?
41 2. What do Gentile Christians need to keep from the Mosaic Law?
42

43 How were these questions decided? On what basis? By studying the Holy Scriptures, by
44 going back to the Hebrew Bible, the apostles discovered biblical-theological principles.

¹⁶ Pedrito Maynard-Reid, “Does James Teach Righteousness by Works?” in *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, ed. Gerhard Pfandl (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010), 416–417.

1 Judaizers, legalistic people, had plenty of “good” reasons and biblical-theological “proofs” to
2 argue for asking Gentiles to be circumcised and keep all the requirements of the Mosaic law.
3 Their arguments sounded good; they were logical. They could build their reasoning on the facts
4 of God’s eternal covenant, clear requirements of the Abrahamic covenant, the validity of God’s
5 laws, the unchangeability of God’s teaching, the categorical language of Gen 17:14, the necessity
6 of faith and obedience to go together, etc. However, the council decided on the basis of Amos
7 9:11–12 (quoted in Acts 15:16-17) that Gentiles should be part of the church without requesting
8 them to become first Jews by circumcision. Then another question arose about what laws from
9 the Law of Moses were they to keep, and their decision was made on the basis of Lev 17–18.¹⁷

10 The apostles studied the already previously known Scriptures, but now with a new
11 comprehension and understanding of the Word of God, they applied them differently. They were
12 willing to restudy familiar texts and to see them under the influence of the Holy Spirit in a new
13 light. In this way they discovered the original intent of these texts that was not clear to them
14 before, and they opened their arms to the Gentiles. This new study of the Word of God under
15 new circumstances and the guidance of the Holy Spirit helped them to discover the right
16 meaning and application of the biblical principles. The apostles could appeal only to few texts,
17 but they could show that in this time after Jesus first coming, God wanted all to be in His church,
18 both Jews and Gentiles. They were not reading into the text, because the meaning they stressed
19 was always there and present in it. **“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden**
20 **you with anything beyond the following requirement:”** (Acts 15:28 NIV). They were not using
21 their apostolic authority, but the authority of the Word of God. They were not appealing to the
22 Holy Spirit apart from the Word but in combination. Moreover, they studied the Scriptures
23 together and submitted to this new and correct interpretation.

24 All their decisions were made on the basis of the Scriptures and under the guidance of the
25 Holy Spirit. What is really important to catch is that, as for circumcision, their decision was
26 made with a difference: Jews could go through this ritual if they wished to do so (because it was
27 their national identity), but Gentiles were not obliged to be circumcised. This double practice
28 was a radical step forward and a wise decision in harmony with the intention and spirit of the
29 biblical text.¹⁸ One decision was limited to the nation (for the Jews) and the other was universal
30 (for the Gentiles)!

31 God intervened and gave them a new and fresh understanding of the Holy Scriptures.
32 They knew the biblical texts before but the meaning was hidden and obscure to them. The

¹⁷ For details, see Jiří Moskala, *The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals in Leviticus 11: Their Nature, Theology, and Rationale (An Intertextual Study)* (Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series 4; Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 2000), 377; cf. references cited in Richard M. Davidson and Paul S. Ratsara, “Dealing with Doctrinal Issues in the Church: Part 1,” *Ministry* (February 2013): 6–7, 9.

It is also very interesting to observe that the Scripture reading in the Synagogue on the Day of Atonement (in the afternoon) is taken from Lev 17-18; Amos 9, and the Book of Jonah. These three portions of the Hebrew Bible have Gentiles in mind. The first two readings (Leviticus and Amos) are definitely reflected in Acts 15, and the church’s openness to non-Jews demonstrates familiarity and alignment with the main thought of the Book of Jonah—the desire and compassion of God to save everyone.

¹⁸ Abraham became the father of all believers including Gentiles, because before he was circumcised, “he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:6 ESV). Thus, the Jewish-Christian church corrected the traditional interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant (only those who were physically circumcised were part of this covenant, see Gen 17; Exod 4:24-26), and by providing a new interpretation, all believing Gentiles were included into the church. Especially Paul helped the young Christian church to see the matter from this new perspective and to discover the intended meaning which was always present in the biblical text (Gen 12:2-3; Rom 4:1-17).

1 apostolic church had to reflect on the same Old Testament material from a new perspective, the
2 first coming of Jesus Christ. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the leaders now saw new
3 hints in the biblical texts and a new light in the original purpose that helped them, led them, and
4 gave new direction to the decision-making process as to what to do in new situations.
5
6

7 **Application to the Seventh-day Adventist Church**

8 **Establishing Biblical Guiding Principles**

9 We need to reflect on the biblical material and extrapolate principles out of texts that can
10 guide us in the process regarding the ordination of women. Ellen G. White states: “We are to
11 stand firm as a rock to the *principles* of the Word of God, remembering that God is with us to
12 give us strength to meet each new experience. Let us ever maintain in our lives the *principles* of
13 righteousness that we may go forward from strength to strength in the name of the Lord.”¹⁹
14 Ekkehardt Muller in his articles in *Ministry* and *BRI Newsletter*²⁰ accurately argues for “using
15 biblical principles to determine how questions on theological issues should be decided.”²¹ This
16 approach I would call “principled hermeneutics” or “principle based hermeneutics.”
17

18 We need to follow sound hermeneutical principles (not a proof-text method or literalistic
19 reading of the Bible). We need a balanced and biblically informed understanding of the biblical
20 text which must be built on solid theological reasoning. We need to reason, seriously reflect on
21 the divine revelation, and cultivate biblical-theological thinking. These guiding principles can be
22 established on the basis of the metanarrative of the Bible, biblical-theological thinking on the
23 recognition of the flow of doctrines and main events, prediction-fulfillments model, and biblical
24 trajectory.

25 If we explained biblical truth simply by proof-texts instead of finding and applying
26 principles (thus work with so called “principled hermeneutics”), we would be not able take a
27 stand against smoking or use of drugs. We would have immense problems to present and defend
28 the doctrine of the Trinity, the sanctuary doctrine, system of tithing, etc. But because we derive
29 principles on the basis of the biblical text, we can build doctrinal positions. As the SDA Church
30 we have never read the Bible simplistically; we do not explain, for examples, such metaphors as
31 “pluck out your eye” (Matt 5:29; 18:9), “cut off your hand” (Matt 5:30; 18:8), “move the
32 mountain” (Matt 17:20), and the story of the rich man and Lazarus” (Luke 16:19-31), in a
33 literalistic way.

34 Creation is the fundamental and overarching principle of biblical teaching. The doctrine
35 of Creation is an article of faith on which the Seventh-day Adventist church stands or falls.
36 Creation is also crucial for our theology because our essential doctrinal points can be directly or

¹⁹ Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, June 12, 1913; emphasis is mine. Consider also the following: “A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend” {Ellen G. White, RH, February 25, 1902 par. 8}.

²⁰ Ekkehardt Muller, “Hermeneutical Guidelines for Dealing with Theological Questions.” *BRI Newsletter* 40 (October 2012): 5-6.

²¹ Ekkehardt Muller, “The Ordination Debate: How to Approach the Theological Issues,” *Ministry* (June 2013): 14-15.

1 indirectly traced to the Creation roots. Each of our 28 Fundamental Beliefs is somehow tied to
2 Creation. Even where SDA teachings on doctrine and lifestyle issues are not unambiguously
3 affirmed by explicit biblical references, these beliefs find their ultimate foundation in the
4 doctrine of Creation. Let us look at a few examples:
5

6 **1. Why do we not as Seventh-day Adventists drink alcohol?** There is no text in the
7 Bible which would explicitly prohibit the drinking of alcohol: “Do not drink alcohol.” On the
8 contrary, there is a legislation to use the (second) tithe for buying wine (*yayin*) and fermented
9 drink (*shekar*)—see Deut 14:26: “. . . buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other
10 fermented drink, or anything you wish . . .” However, there are texts against alcoholism, to drink
11 in moderation. In addition, there are a plenty of examples of drinking alcohol in the Bible, but
12 key stories are negative (see, for example, Noah’s and Nabal’s drunkenness). There are a few
13 texts that present the ideal: Lev 10:8–9; Prov 20:1; 23:20–21, 29–35; 31:4–7; Rechabites—Jer
14 35:6. These few texts point to the real intention of God’s revelation. This is why it is important to
15 know what the biblical trajectory is in this regard. According to my understanding, it is
16 abstinence, even though there is no proof text for it. Because we are in the service of our Lord
17 continually and have received a special call to live for him and represent him well, I think it is
18 proper to abstain from the drinking of alcohol.²² The safeguard lies in the hints of the biblical
19 texts and not behind the texts or outside of them! This recognition is against William Webb’s
20 usage of the trajectory of the Bible, because to him this trajectory is rooted outside of the biblical
21 text.²³ We need to go back to the ideal of God’s Creation when nothing was spoiled but pure.
22

23 **2. Why are many SDAs vegetarians? Why are we vegetarians?** There is no biblical
24 statement: “Be a vegetarian!” You have clear divine regulations for eating clean meat (Lev 11
25 and Deut 14). We theologically reason from Lev 11 back to the ideal of Creation. The main
26 rationale behind the clean and unclean food legislation is the respect for the Creator.²⁴ Genesis 1
27 sets the tone! Behind the Pentateuchal dietary laws is the theological Creation-Fall-New Creation
28 pattern. The main reason is theological: we go back to the **ideal before sin**—to the lifestyle in
29 the Garden of Eden (Gen 1–2).
30

31 **3. Why are we against divorce?** We adhere to Jesus’s principle: “In the beginning it was
32 not so!” We go back to the Creation ideal. Jesus Christ’s opponents argued on the basis of Deut
33 24:1, but he explained that divorce was allowed only because of the stubbornness of man’s heart
34 (*sklerokardia*; see Matt 19:1–9).²⁵ Another important hermeneutical principle is God’s
35 condensation to our level in time of need and sin (see, e.g., the killing animals for food according
36 to Gen 9:3 and divorce as shown in Deut 24:1–4).
37

38 **4. Why do we not practice polygamy? We go back to the ideal of Creation, when the**
39 **marriage relationship was defined between one man and one women (Gen 2:24)! Jesus’s**

²² Jiří Moskala, “Eating and Drinking,” *Shabbat Shalom* (Spring–Summer 1999): 16.

²³ See William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals, Exploring the Hermeneutic of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

²⁴ Moskala, *The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals in Leviticus 11*, 344–348.

²⁵ The same is with the biblical tithe. We pay it because we recognize that God is the Creator: we go back to Creation. The similar reasoning we use for our Adventist lifestyle of simplicity: back to Creation.

1 **principle** (when discussing divorce): “But it was not this way from the beginning” (Matt 19:8),
2 should be applied here also.
3

4 **5. Why are we against slavery?** There are plenty of texts which regulate the relationship
5 between masters and slaves in the Old and New Testaments (see Exod 21:2–11; Eph 6:5–9; Col
6 3:22; 1 Tim 6:1)!. But study Paul’s letter to **Philemon** about how he urged him to have a new
7 relationship with **Onesimus** (his fugitive slave) and how to treat him differently: “no longer as a
8 slave but better than a slave, as a dear brother” . . . “welcome him as you would welcome me”
9 (Philemon 1:16, 17). This is the direction to follow, it is the biblical trajectory! We are against
10 slavery on the basis of the equality of all people created in the image of God (*imago Dei*, Gen
11 1:27). We go back to the ideal of Creation.
12

13 **The Distinctive Adventist Hermeneutic: Creation—Fall—Re-Creation**

14 We need to see the big picture of God’s revelation, the unity of the Scriptures, and the
15 ultimate intention of the biblical material as a whole (a canonical approach) in order to discern
16 correctly the meaning of God’s message. The biblical trajectory, built on the biblical
17 metanarrative, from creation, to de-creation (the Fall, sin) and to re-creation presents for us
18 Adventists the crucial pattern. We do not go beyond the biblical text; all is firmly rooted in it. It
19 is Adventist hermeneutics that is reflected also in our name: we are Seventh-day (Creation)
20 Adventists (Re-Creation), so the whole plan of salvation or story of redemption is included!
21 Adventist hermeneutics moves from Creation to the Fall and from the Fall to the Plan of
22 Salvation and to Re-Creation (from Gen 1–2 to Rev 21–22). “In the beginning it was not so.”
23 Our hermeneutic is built against the background of the Adventist understanding of the Great
24 Controversy.²⁶

25 Adam and Eve are representative of all humanity, and they were both priests in their
26 position of responsibility as head of humanity. Thus, the ministry of women is rooted in Creation
27 (see below).²⁷

28 This principled hermeneutics, tracing its roots back to Creation, is consistent, for
29 example, with our Adventist stand against approving homosexuality as a lifestyle, because the
30 biblical account of Creation provides the fundamental reasoning for a total opposition to the
31 practice of homosexuality. Biblical teaching against homosexuality is rooted in the Creation
32 legislation, is universal, not temporal, never changed, and is valid in all times (see Gen 1:26-28;
33 2:24; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:26-27). It is consistent with biblical trajectory built on the pattern
34 from Creation through the Fall to the Re-Creation.²⁸
35
36

37 **Rereading the Biblical Text and Discovering a New Emphasis:** 38 **Some Old and New Testament Hints for Ordination** 39

²⁶ See Ellen G. White’s 5-volume *Drama of the Ages* illustrating the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan: PP, PK, DA, AA, and GC.

²⁷ For substantiation of this and other points dealing with the Old Testament material in this paper, see the study by Richard Davidson, “Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations,” paper for the General Conference Theology of Ordination Study Committee, July 22-24, 2013), 1-88.

²⁸ See, e.g., Richard M. Davidson, “Homosexuality in the Old Testament,” in *Homosexuality, Marriage, and the Church: Biblical, Counseling, and Religious Liberty Issues* ed. Roy E. Gane, Nicholas P. Miller, and H. Peter Swanson (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2012), 5-52.

1 **What are the “new” texts which speak in favor of the ordination of women?**

2 We are not reading back into the biblical text something which is not there, nor are we
3 imposing on the text an external pattern. The truth was always present in the text, but it was
4 simply not acknowledged or was forgotten. What we are doing is merely recognizing the
5 “hidden” truth; we are rediscovering and reapplying it. The intention of the text is in harmony
6 with the overall metanarrative of the Bible and the character of God. We reflect on this revelation
7 of God from the perspective of the first coming of Christ, from the revelation which shines from
8 the cross, the perspective of the plan of salvation, and the Creation-Fall-Re-Creation pattern.
9 This is a consistent Adventist paradigm!

10
11 **1. Both Equally, Man and Women, Created in God’s Image**

12 “So God created mankind [*ha’adam*] in his own image, in the image of God he created
13 them [object marker with suffix 3rd person sg.]; male and female he created them [suf. 3rd pl]”
14 (**Gen 1:27** NIV).

15 Note carefully that both, male and female, are created in the **image of God!** They are
16 **equal** and what is one is also the other—the image of God; and they together form it too! What
17 is different is only their sexuality and with it their particular role in it (like parenting and
18 motherhood). To be a woman is not to be subordinate to men or imperfect or wrong (or even
19 evil)!

20
21 **2. Adam and Eve Were Priests in the Garden of Eden**

22 “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take
23 care of it [*le’abdah uleshomrah*]. (**Gen 2:15** NIV)

24 The Garden of Eden was a sanctuary, and Adam and Eve were priests in this garden!
25 They should “work it and keep it” (ESV) and these are activities of priests (see Num 3:8–9;
26 18:3–7). In the Garden of Eden, the work assigned to man was actually to “serve” (*abad* =
27 serve, till) and “keep” (*shamar*) the garden (2:15), and it is more than coincidence that these are
28 the very terms used to describe the work of the priests and Levites in the sanctuary (Num 3:7–8;
29 18:3–7). That the Garden of Eden was a sanctuary was discovered by non-Adventist scholars and
30 is well established among scholars.²⁹

²⁹ See Richard M. Davidson, “Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium,” *JATS* 11, nos. 1 & 2 (Spring–Autumn 2000): 108–111; for a longer list of thirty lines of biblical evidence, see idem, *Song for the Sanctuary: SDA Textbook* (Silver Spring, MD: SDA Biblical Research Institute, forthcoming), chap. 6. (draft copy available upon request from davidson@andrews.edu). For non-Adventist scholars who have laid the exegetical foundation for these insights, see Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991), 68–103; G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (NSBT 17; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 66–80; Meridith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (South Hampton, Mass.: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1989), 31–32, 54–56; Eric Bolger, “The Compositional Role of the Eden Narrative in the Pentateuch” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1993); William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning* (Homebush, New South Wales: Lancer, 1985), 35–76; Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 12–13; Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 142–145; S. Dean McBride Jr., “Divine Protocol: Genesis 1:1–2:3 as Prologue to the Pentateuch,” in *God Who Creates* (ed. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2000), 11–15; Donald W. Parry, “Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary,” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism* (ed. Donald W. Parry; Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret, 1994), 126–151; Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (CBET 25; Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2000), 111–138; and Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 9 (1986): 19–25; repr. in *“I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood”: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary and*

3. Partnership and Equality

Gen 2:18 – *ezer kenegdo* (“help as against him” or “as corresponding to him”). They are different but **equal**, they contribute to each other; they are **partners**.

4. Belonging Together

Gen 2:23-24 is a poetic statement of surprise and appreciation on the part of Adam to receive this special gift from God: a beautiful wife. Adam uses a recognition formula, they belong together; they form a unity; it is not a naming formula (word *shem* does not occur in 2:23 as it is present in the text of 2:19 and 3:20).

Adam names Eve only after sin (see **Gen 3:20**).

5. Gen 3:16

To the woman he said, “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire [longing for love, support, safety, affections and care] will be for your husband, and he will rule over you” (NIV). How to understand **Gen 3:16**? It does not prescribe a husband to subdue and rule over his wife (Hebrew word is *mashal*; this term ultimately focuses on the servant leadership); a different Hebrew word is used here than in Gen 1:28 (Hebrew words *kabash* and *radah* are employed).

God’s punishing statement does not prescribe that humans be passive and not try to help. These complications come as the result and consequence of sin, so this divine judgment about the pain in having a baby, in giving birth, and raising children should not hinder us in doing everything possible within our human power to ease the pain of the women in delivery.

In the same way, the verse describes the difficulties in the husband-wife relationship, and it obliges us to overcome it by God’s grace and through true conversion (see Eph 5:21–33; 1 Pet 3:1–7). This is impossible without God’s help. So both husband and wife (the Lord is not talking about a general relationship between men and women!) need to dedicate their lives to God and live in a personal relationship with God so there is harmony in the marriage, a mutual submission and love! Truly a beautiful marriage may be possible only for converted people.

Ellen G. White powerfully explains: “Eve had been the first in transgression; and she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was now placed in subjection to her husband. Had the principles joined in the law of God been cherished by the fallen race, **this sentence, though growing out of the results of sin, would have proved a blessing to them**; but man’s abuse of the supremacy thus given him has too often rendered the lot of woman very bitter and made her life a burden.”³⁰ “When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that in all things she should be his equal. The holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other; and yet each had an individuality in thinking and acting. But after Eve’s sin, as she was first in the transgression, the Lord told her that Adam should rule over her. She was to be in subjection to her husband, and this was a part of the curse. In many cases the curse has made the lot of woman very grievous and her life a burden. The superiority which God has given man he has abused in many respects by exercising arbitrary power. *Infinite*

Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11 (eds., Richard S. Hess and David T. Tsumara; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399–404.

³⁰ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 58–59; emphasis is mine.

1 *wisdom devised the plan of redemption, which places the race on a second probation by giving*
2 *them another trial.*³¹

3 4 **6. Both Are Priests even After Sin**

5 “The LORD God made garments [*kotnot*] of skin [‘*or*] for Adam and his wife and clothed
6 [*labash*] them” (Gen 3:21 NIV).

7 God **clothed** (*labash*) Adam and his wife with “**coats**” (*ketonet*, pl. *kotnot*). These are the
8 very terms used to describe the clothing of Aaron and his sons (Lev 8:7, 13; Num 20:28; cf. Exod
9 28:4; 29:5; 40:14).

10 11 **7. Believers, Both Men and Women, Are the Kingdom of Priests**

12 “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my
13 treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a **kingdom of priests**
14 **and a holy nation**. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites” (Exod 19:5–6 NIV).

15 Because of Israel’s unfaithfulness an alternate plan was given: **only one family from one**
16 **tribe of Israel** would be “a kingdom of priests.” However, Peter in 1 Pet 2:9 is applying Exod
17 19:5–6 to the priesthood of all believers in Christ.

18 19 **8. Women in Leadership Positions in the Old Testament**

20 See, for example, Miriam (Exod 15:20–21); Deborah (Judg 4–5); Huldah (2 Kgs 22:13–
21 14; 2 Chr 34:22–28); Esther; Exod 38:8; 1 Sam 2:22; 2 Sam 14:2-20; 20:14-22.

22 23 **9. A Host of Women Preachers**

24 “The Lord gives the word; the women who announce the news are a great host” (Ps 68:11
25 ESV, NASB).

26 27 **10. Holy Spirit Given to All Believers at the Time of the End Including Women**

28 “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. **Your sons and daughters** will
29 prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my
30 servants, **both men and women**, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in
31 the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke” (Joel 2:28-30 NIV).

32 33 **11. Practice in the New Testament Church**

34 See, for instance, Phoebe, a deacon (Rom 16:1); Junia, a female apostle (Rom 16:7);
35 leaders of the church in Philippi church were women (Phil 4:2-3). Priscilla assumed an
36 authoritative teaching role (Acts 18; see especially Rom 16:3). The “Elect Lady” (2 John) was
37 probably a church leader in a congregation under her care.

38 39 **12. Gal 3:26-29**

40 “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were
41 baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **There is neither Jew nor Gentile,**
42 **neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.** If
43 you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (NIV).
44 This is not merely a statement on equal access to salvation among various groups (see Gal 2:11–

³¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 3, 484; emphasis is mine.

1 15; Eph 2:14–15). I once understood it only from this perspective, but deeper studies shows
2 more.

3 Paul also speaks about equality in general. He especially focuses on three relationships
4 in which the Jews of his time perverted God’s original plan of Gen 1 by making one group
5 subordinate to another: 1) **Jew-Gentiles Relationship**; 2) **Master-Slave Relationship**; and 3)
6 **Male-Female Relationship**.

7 In regard to the male-female relationship, by using a specific Greek pair vocabulary
8 *arsēn-thēlys* [man-woman] instead of *anēr-gynē* [husband-wife]), Paul establishes a link with
9 Gen 1:27 (LXX employs *arsēn-thēlys* language), and thus shows how the Gospel calls us back to
10 the divine ideal, which has no place for the general subordination of females to males.

11 **Two additional arguments which go beyond the biblical evidence:**

12 **13. Practical Reason in Favor of the Ordination of Women**

13 The Spirit of God gives freely spiritual gifts, including to women (Joel 2). If God gives
14 His spiritual gifts to women, who am I to stop it! If God calls women to ministry we should be
15 able to recognize, accept, and implement it. God’s work can only gain if godly consecrated
16 women will work in leadership positions in His vineyard.

17 This has been demonstrated, for instance, by my mother-in-law who was a Bible worker
18 in Communist Czechoslovakia. She prepared people for baptism and preached with everyone
19 listening carefully, even the children. She was a very wise mother in Israel who had great
20 experiences and witnessed miracles.

21 In **China** women are in practical ministry where they not only preach but also baptize
22 and serve the Lord’s Supper. At least 16 women in China have been ordained to the Gospel
23 Ministry by Seventh-day Adventists there. This ministerial ordination of women pastors is a
24 reality that has arisen in China for very practical reasons, and these women are powerful
25 instruments for sharing the Gospel among the Chinese people.

26 **14. Ellen G. White’s Inspired Support for Women in Pastoral Ministry**

27 “There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry. In many respects they would
28 do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God.”³²

29 “It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and
30 women, to become pastors to the flock of God.”³³

31 The study by Denis Fortin has looked at these and other references by Ellen White in
32 their context, and drawn important implications for the discussion of women’s ordination.³⁴

33 **Conclusion**

34 Even though there is no direct biblical statement that we should ordain women to
35 ministry, there is no theological hindrance to doing so. On the contrary, the biblical-theological
36 analysis points in that ultimate direction, because the Spirit of God tears down all barriers
37 between different groups of people in the church and gives freely His spiritual gifts to all,
38 including women, in order to accomplish the mission God calls all of us to accomplish.

³² Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 472.

³³ Ellen G. White, 6 T 322 (1900).

³⁴ Denis Fortin, “Ellen White, Women in Ministry, and the Ordination of Women” (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, July 22–24, 2013).

1 In this time of the closing of this world's history, God calls His remnant to go back to
2 Creation (see Rev 14:7) and reestablish the ideals of God's original plan of equality between men
3 and women. The Advent movement should be an example of this true human relationship and
4 genuine worship. The last-day people should be a model for the rest of the world and should
5 assume a leadership role in this issue by fully demonstrating the true meaning of the theology of
6 Creation.

7 Even though men and women are biologically different and have thus different
8 physiological functions, the spiritual role for both genders is the same: to be the leaders in God's
9 church today.

10 We need to go back to the Creation ideal in spite of the sin problem, because God's grace
11 is more powerful than evil, and God's grace is a transforming grace, changing the old system
12 into the new in the Church which should be a model of the world to come. From creation to re-
13 creation! This is the biblical pattern built on our denominational name Seventh-day (Creation)
14 Adventists (re-Creation).

15

1 **Appendix I: The Rio de Janeiro Document**

2 **METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY COMMITTEE**

3
4
5 **(GCC-A)—Report**

6
7 Voted, To approve the Methods of Bible Study Committee (GCC-A) report, which reads
8 as follows:

9
10 ***Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods***

11
12 ***1. Preamble***

13 This statement is addressed to all members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the
14 purpose of providing guidelines on how to study the Bible, both the trained biblical scholar and
15 others.

16 Seventh-day Adventists recognize and appreciate the contributions of those biblical
17 scholars throughout history who have developed useful and reliable methods of Bible study
18 consistent with the claims and teachings of Scripture. Adventists are committed to the acceptance
19 of biblical truth and are willing to follow it, using all methods of interpretation consistent with
20 what Scripture says of itself. These are outlined in the presuppositions detailed below.

21 In recent decades the most prominent method in biblical studies has been known as the
22 historical-critical method. Scholars who use this method, as classically formulated, operate on
23 the basis of presuppositions which, prior to studying the biblical text, reject the reliability of
24 accounts of miracles and other supernatural events narrated in the Bible. Even a modified use of
25 this method that retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason
26 is unacceptable to Adventists.

27 The historical-critical method minimizes the need for faith in God and obedience to His
28 commandments. In addition, because such a method deemphasizes the divine element in the
29 Bible as an inspired book (including its resultant unity) and depreciates or misunderstands
30 apocalyptic prophecy and the eschatological portions of the Bible, we urge Adventist Bible
31 students to avoid relying on the use of the presuppositions and the resultant deductions
32 associated with the historical-critical method.

33 By contrast to the historical-critical method and presuppositions, we believe it to be
34 helpful to set forth the principles of Bible study that are consistent with the teachings of the
35 Scriptures themselves, that preserve their unity, and are based upon the premise that the Bible is
36 the word of God. Such an approach will lead us into a satisfying and rewarding experience with
37 God.

38 ***2. Presuppositions Arising From the Claims of Scripture***

39 ***a. Origin***

40 1) The Bible is the word of God and is the primary and authoritative means by which He
41 reveals Himself to human beings.

42 2) The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible writers with thoughts, ideas, and objective
43 information; in turn they expressed these in their own words. Therefore the Scriptures are an
44 indivisible union of human and divine elements, neither of which should be emphasized to the
45 neglect of the other (2 Peter 1:21; cf. *The Great Controversy*, pp. v, vi).

1 3) All Scripture is inspired by God and came through the work of the Holy Spirit.
2 However, it did not come in a continuous chain of unbroken revelations. As the Holy Spirit
3 communicated truth to the Bible writer, each wrote as he was moved by the Holy Spirit,
4 emphasizing the aspect of the truth which he was led to stress. For this reason the student of the
5 Bible will gain a rounded comprehension on any subject by recognizing that the Bible is its own
6 best interpreter and when studied as a whole it depicts a consistent, harmonious truth (2 Tim.
7 3:16; Heb. 1:1, 2; cf. *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 19, 20; *The Great Controversy*, pp. v, vi).

8 4) Although it was given to those who lived in an ancient Near Eastern/Mediterranean
9 context, the Bible transcends its cultural backgrounds to serve as God's word for all cultural,
10 racial, and situational contexts in all ages.

11 **b. Authority**

12 1) The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments are the clear, infallible revelation of
13 God's will and His salvation. The Bible is the word of God, and it alone is the standard by which
14 all teaching and experience must be tested (2 Tim. 3:15–17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20;
15 John 17:17; 2 Thess. 3:14; Heb. 4:12.)

16 2) Scripture is an authentic, reliable record of history and God's acts in history. It
17 provides the normative theological interpretation of those acts. The supernatural acts revealed in
18 Scripture are historically true. For example, chapters 1–11 of Genesis are a factual account of
19 historical events.

20 3) The Bible is not like other books. It is an indivisible blend of the divine and the
21 human. Its record of many details of secular history is integral to its overall purpose to convey
22 salvation history. While at times there may be parallel procedures employed by Bible students to
23 determine historical data, the usual techniques of historical research, based as they are on human
24 presuppositions and focused on the human element, are inadequate for interpreting the
25 Scriptures, which are a blend of the divine and human. Only a method that fully recognizes the
26 indivisible nature of Scripture can avoid a distortion of its message.

27 4) Human reason is subject to the Bible, not equal to or above it. Presuppositions
28 regarding the Scriptures must be in harmony with the claims of the Scriptures and subject to
29 correction by them (1 Cor. 2:1–6). God intends that human reason be used to its fullest extent,
30 but within the context and under the authority of His Word rather than independent of it.

31 5) The revelation of God in all nature, when properly understood, is in harmony with the
32 Written Word, and it is to be interpreted in the light of Scripture.

33 **3. Principles for Approaching the Interpretation of Scripture**

34 **a.** The Spirit enables the believer to accept, understand, and apply the Bible to one's own
35 life as he seeks divine power to render obedience to all scriptural requirements and to appropriate
36 personally all Bible promises. Only those following the light already received can hope to
37 receive further illumination of the Spirit (John 16:13, 14; 1 Cor. 2:10–14).

38 **b.** Scripture cannot be correctly interpreted without the aid of the Holy Spirit, for it is the
39 Spirit who enables the believer to understand and apply Scripture. Therefore, any study of the
40 Word should commence with a request for the Spirit's guidance and illumination.

41 **c.** Those who come to the study of the Word must do so with faith, in the humble spirit of
42 a learner who seeks to hear what the Bible is saying. They must be willing to submit all
43 presuppositions, opinions and the conclusions of reason to the judgment and correction of the
44 Word itself. With this attitude the Bible student may come directly to the Word, and with careful
45 study may come to an understanding of the essentials of salvation apart from any human
46 explanations, however helpful. The biblical message becomes meaningful to such a person.

1 *d.* The investigation of Scripture must be characterized by a sincere desire to discover and
2 obey God's will and word rather than to seek support or evidence for preconceived ideas.

3 4. *Methods of Bible Study*

4 *a.* Select a Bible version for study that is faithful to the meaning contained in languages
5 in which the Bible originally was written, giving preference to translations done by a broad
6 group of scholars and published by a general publisher above translations sponsored by a
7 particular denomination or narrowly focused group.

8 Exercise care not to build major doctrinal points on one Bible translation or version.
9 Trained biblical scholars will use the Greek and Hebrew texts, enabling them to examine variant
10 readings of ancient Bible manuscripts, as well.

11 *b.* Choose a definite plan of study, avoiding haphazard and aimless approaches. Study
12 plans such as the following are suggested.

13 1) Book-by-book analysis of the message.

14 2) Verse-by-verse method.

15 3) Study that seeks a biblical solution to a specific life problem, biblical satisfaction for a
16 specific need, or a biblical answer to a specific question.

17 4) Topical study (faith, love, Second Coming, and others.)

18 5) Word study.

19 6) Biographical study.

20 *c.* Seek to grasp the simple, most obvious meaning of the biblical passage being studied.

21 *d.* Seek to discover the underlying major themes of Scripture as found in individual texts,
22 passages, and books. Two basic, related themes run throughout Scripture: (1) the person and
23 work of Jesus Christ; and (2) the great controversy perspective involving the authority of God's
24 Word, the Fall of man, the first and second advents of Christ; the exoneration of God and His
25 law, and the restoration of the divine plan for the universe. These themes are to be drawn from
26 the totality of Scripture and not imposed on it.

27 *e.* Recognize that the Bible is its own interpreter and that the meaning of words, texts,
28 and passages is best determined by diligently comparing scripture with scripture.

29 *f.* Study the context of the passage under consideration by relating it to the sentences and
30 paragraphs immediately preceding and following it. Try to relate the ideas of the passage to the
31 line of thought of the entire biblical book.

32 *g.* As far as possible ascertain the historical circumstances in which the passage was
33 written by the biblical writer under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

34 *h.* Determine the literary type the author is using. Some biblical material is composed of
35 parables, proverbs, allegories, psalms, and apocalyptic prophecies. Since many biblical writers
36 presented much of their material as poetry, it is helpful to use a version of the Bible that presents
37 this material in poetic style, for passages employing imagery are not to be interpreted in the same
38 manner as prose.

39 *i.* Recognize that a given biblical text may not conform in every detail to present-day
40 literary categories. Be cautious not to force these categories in interpreting the meaning of the
41 biblical text. It is a human tendency to find what one is looking for, even when the author did not
42 intend such.

43 *j.* Take note of grammar and sentence construction in order to discover the author's
44 meaning. Study the key words of the passage by comparing their use in other parts of the Bible
45 by means of a concordance and with the help of biblical lexicons and dictionaries.

1 k. In connection with the study of the biblical text, explore the historical and cultural
2 factors. Archaeology, anthropology, and history may contribute to understanding the meaning of
3 the text.

4 l. Seventh-day Adventists believe that God inspired Ellen G. White. Therefore, her
5 expositions on any given biblical passage offer an inspired guide to the meaning of texts without
6 exhausting their meaning or preempting the task of exegesis (for example, see *Evangelism*, p.
7 256; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 193, 595; *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, pp. 665, 682, 707, 708; *Counsels*
8 *to Writers and Editors*, pp. 33–35).

9 m. After studying as outlined above, turn to various commentaries and secondary helps
10 such as scholarly works to see how others have dealt with the passage. Then carefully evaluate
11 the different viewpoints expressed from the standpoint of Scripture as a whole.

12 n. In interpreting prophecy, keep in mind that:

13 1) The Bible claims God's power to predict the future (Isa. 46:10).

14 2) Prophecy has a moral purpose. It was not written merely to satisfy curiosity about the
15 future. Some of the purposes of prophecy are to strengthen faith (John 14:29) and to promote
16 holy living and readiness for the Advent (Matt. 24:44; Rev. 22:7, 10, 11).

17 3) The focus of much prophecy is on Christ (both His first and second advents), the
18 church, and the end-time.

19 4) The norms for interpreting prophecy are found within the Bible itself: The Bible notes
20 time prophecies and their historical fulfillments, the New testament cites specific fulfillments of
21 Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, and the Old Testament itself presents individuals
22 and events as types of the Messiah.

23 5) In the New Testament application of Old Testament prophecies, some literal names
24 become spiritual: e.g., Israel represents the church; Babylon, apostate religion; etc.

25 6) There are two general types of prophetic writings: nonapocalyptic prophecy, as found
26 in Isaiah and Jeremiah, and apocalyptic prophecy, as found in Daniel and the Revelation. These
27 differing types have different characteristics:

28 a) Nonapocalyptic prophecy addresses God's people; apocalyptic is more universal in
29 scope.

30 b) Nonapocalyptic prophecy often is conditional in nature, setting forth to God's people
31 the alternatives of blessing for obedience and curses for disobedience; apocalyptic emphasizes
32 the sovereignty of God and His control over history.

33 c) Nonapocalyptic prophecy often leaps from the local crisis to the end-time day of the
34 Lord; apocalyptic prophecy presents the course of history from the time of the prophet to the end
35 of the world.

36 d) Time prophecies in nonapocalyptic prophecy generally are long, e.g., 400 years of
37 Israel's servitude (Gen. 15:13) and 70 years of Babylonian captivity (Jer. 25:12). Time
38 prophecies in apocalyptic prophecy generally are phrased in short terms, e.g., 10 days (Rev.
39 2:10) or 42 months (Rev. 13:5). Apocalyptic time periods stand symbolically for longer periods
40 of actual time.

41 7) Apocalyptic prophecy is highly symbolic and should be interpreted accordingly. In
42 interpreting symbols, the following methods may be used:

43 a) Look for interpretations (explicit or implicit) within the passage itself (e.g., Dan. 8:20,
44 21; Rev. 1:20).

45 b) Look for interpretations elsewhere in the book or in other writings by the same author.

46 c) Using a concordance, study the use of symbols in other parts of Scripture.

1 d) A study of ancient Near Eastern documents may throw light on the meaning of
2 symbols, although scriptural use may alter those meanings.

3 8) The literary structure of a book often is an aid to interpreting it. The parallel nature of
4 Daniel's prophecies in an example.

5 o. Parallel accounts in Scripture sometimes present differences in detail and emphasis
6 (for example, compare Matt. 21:33–44; Mark 12:1–11; and Luke 20:9–18, or 2 Kings 18–20
7 with 2 Chron. 32). When studying such passages, first examine them carefully to be sure that the
8 parallels actually are referring to the same historical event. For example, many of Jesus' parables
9 may have been given on different occasions to different audiences and with different wording.

10 In cases where there appear to be differences in parallel accounts, one should recognize
11 that the total message of the Bible is the synthesis of all its parts. Each book or writer
12 communicates that which the Spirit has led him to write. Each makes his own special
13 contribution to the richness, diversity, and variety of Scripture (*The Great Controversy*, pp. v,
14 vi). The reader must allow each Bible writer to emerge and be heard, while at the same time
15 recognizing the basic unity of the divine self-disclosure.

16 When parallel passages seem to indicate discrepancy or contradiction, look for the
17 underlying harmony. Keep in mind that dissimilarities may be due to minor errors of copyists
18 (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 16), or may be the result of differing emphases and choice of
19 materials of various authors who wrote under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit for
20 different audiences under different circumstances (ibid, pp. 21, 22; *The Great Controversy*, p.
21 vi).

22 It may prove impossible to reconcile minor dissimilarities in detail which may be
23 irrelevant to the main and clear message of the passage. In some cases judgment may have to be
24 suspended until more information and better evidence are available to resolve a seeming
25 discrepancy.

26 p. The Scriptures were written for the practical purpose of revealing the will of God to
27 the human family. However, in order for one not to misconstrue certain kinds of statements, it is
28 important to recognize that they were addressed to peoples of Eastern cultures and expressed in
29 their thought patterns.

30 Expressions such as "The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh" (Ex. 9:12) or "an evil
31 spirit from God" (1 Sam. 16:15), the imprecatory psalms, and the "three days and three nights" of
32 Jonah as compared with Christ's death (Matt. 12:40) commonly are misunderstood because they
33 are interpreted today from a different viewpoint.

34 A background knowledge of Near Eastern culture is indispensable for understanding such
35 expressions. For example, Hebrew culture attributed responsibility to an individual for acts he
36 did not commit but that he allowed to happen. Therefore the inspired writers of the Scriptures
37 commonly credit God with doing actively that which in Western thought we would say He
38 permits or does not prevent from happening, e.g., the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

39 Another aspect of Scripture that troubles the modern mind is the divine command to
40 Israel to engage in war and execute entire nations. Israel originally was organized as a theocracy,
41 a civil government through which God ruled directly. Such a theocratic state was unique. It no
42 longer exists and cannot be regarded as a direct model for Christian practice.

43 The Scriptures record experiences and statements of persons whom God accepted but
44 were not in harmony with the spiritual principles of the Bible as a whole--for example, incidents
45 relating to the use of alcohol, to polygamy, divorce, and slavery. Although condemnation of such

1 deeply ingrained social customs is not explicit, God did not necessarily endorse or approve all
2 that He permitted and bore with in the lives of the patriarchs and in Israel.

3 Jesus made this clear in His statement with regard to divorce (Matt. 19:4–6, 8).

4 The spirit of the Scriptures is one of restoration. God works patiently to elevate fallen
5 humanity from the depths of sin to the divine ideal. Consequently, we must not accept as models
6 the actions of sinful men as recorded in the Bible.

7 The Scriptures represent the unfolding of God's revelation to man. Jesus' sermon on the
8 mount, for example, enlarges and expands on certain Old Testament concepts. Christ Himself is
9 the ultimate revelation of God's character to humanity (Heb. 1:1–3).

10 While there is an overarching unity in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and while all
11 Scripture is equally inspired, God chose to reveal Himself to and through human individuals and
12 to meet them where they were in terms of spiritual and intellectual endowments. God Himself
13 does not change, but He progressively unfolded His revelation to men as they were able to grasp
14 it (John 16:12, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 945; *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 21).
15 Every experience or statement of Scripture is a divinely inspired record, but not every statement
16 or experience is necessarily normative for Christian behavior today. Both the spirit and the letter
17 of Scripture must be understood (1 Cor. 10:6–13, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 150; *Testimonies*, vol. 4,
18 pp. 10–12.)

19 *q.* As the final goal, make application of the text. Ask such questions as "What is the
20 message and purpose God intends to convey through Scripture? What meaning does this text
21 have for me? How does it apply to my situation and circumstances today?" In doing so,
22 recognize that although many biblical passage had local significance, nonetheless they contain
23 timeless principles applicable to every age and culture.

24 5. Conclusion

25 In the Introduction to *The Great Controversy*, Ellen G. White wrote:

26 "The Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union
27 of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of
28 God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that 'the Word was made
29 flesh, and dwelt among us.' John 1:14" (p. vi).

30 As it is impossible for those who do not accept Christ's divinity to understand the purpose
31 of His incarnation, it is also impossible for those who see the Bible merely as a human book to
32 understand its message, however careful and rigorous their methods.

33 Even Christian scholars who accept the divine-human nature of Scripture but whose
34 methodological approaches cause them to dwell largely on its human aspects risk emptying the
35 biblical message of its power by relegating it to the background while concentrating on the
36 medium. They forget that medium and message are inseparable and that the medium without the
37 message is an empty shell that cannot address the vital spiritual needs of humankind.

38 A committed Christian will use only those methods that are able to do full justice to the
39 dual, inseparable nature of Scripture, enhance his ability to understand and apply its message,
40 and strengthen faith.

41 **Adventist Review* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 22 January,
42 1987)

43

Appendix II: Key Quotations from the Spirit of Prophecy (Ellen G. White Writings)

“Sharp, clear perceptions of truth will never be the reward of indolence. Investigation of every point that has been received as truth will richly repay the searcher; he will find precious gems. And in closely investigating every jot and tittle which we think is established truth, in comparing scripture with scripture, we may discover errors in our interpretation of Scripture. Christ would have the searcher of his word sink the shaft deeper into the mines of truth. If the search is properly conducted, jewels of inestimable value will be found. The word of God is the mine of the unsearchable riches of Christ” (The Review and Herald, July 12, 1898, par. 15).

“God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority--not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support” (Great Controversy 595).

“In His word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience. . . . Yet the fact that God has revealed His will to men through His word, has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Saviour, to open the word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings. And since it was the Spirit of God that inspired the Bible, it is impossible that the teaching of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the word. The Spirit was not given--nor can it ever be bestowed--to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested” (Great Controversy vii).

“There is everything plainly revealed in God's Word which concerns the salvation of men, and if we will take that Word and comprehend it to the very best of our ability, God will help us in its comprehension. Human minds without the special assistance of the Spirit of God will see many things in the Bible very difficult to be understood, because they lack a divine enlightenment. . . . Never attempt to search the Scriptures unless you are ready to listen, unless you are ready to be a learner, unless you are ready to listen to the Word of God as though His voice were speaking directly to you from the living oracles. Never let mortal man sit in judgment upon the Word of God or pass sentence as to how much of this is inspired and how much is not inspired, and that this is more inspired than some other portions. God warns him off that ground. God has not given him any such work to do. . . . Do not let any living man come to you and begin to dissect God's Word, telling what is revelation, what is inspiration and what is not, without a rebuke. Tell all such they simply do not know. They simply are not able to comprehend the things of the mystery of God. What we want is to inspire faith. We want no one to say, "This I will reject, and this will I receive," but we want to have implicit faith in the Bible as a whole and as it is” (7 BC 919).

“Make the Bible its own expositor, bringing together all that is said concerning a given subject at different times and under varied circumstances. Do not break up your home class for callers or visitors. If they come in during the exercise, invite them to take part in it. Let it be seen that you consider it more important to obtain a knowledge of God's Word than to secure the

1 gains or pleasures of the world. If we would study the Bible diligently and prayerfully every
2 day, we should every day see some beautiful truth in a new, clear, and forcible light” (CG 511).

3 “But the Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a
4 union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son
5 of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that ‘the Word was
6 made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ John 1:14. Written in different ages, by men who differed
7 widely in rank and occupation, and in mental and spiritual endowments, the books of the Bible
8 present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded.
9 Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more
10 strikingly presented by one than by another. And as several writers present a subject under varied
11 aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be
12 discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight,
13 discerns the underlying harmony. As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought
14 out in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he
15 grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and
16 appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, under the guidance of the Holy
17 Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind--a different aspect of the
18 truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a
19 perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life”
20 (GC vi).

21 “Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall be continually liable to wrest the
22 Scriptures or to misinterpret them. There is much reading of the Bible that is without profit and
23 in many cases is a positive injury. When the word of God is opened without reverence and
24 without prayer; when the thoughts and affections are not fixed upon God or in harmony with His
25 will, the mind is clouded with doubt; and in the very study of the Bible, skepticism strengthens.
26 The enemy takes control of the thoughts, and he suggests interpretations that are not correct.
27 Whenever men are not seeking, in word and deed, to be in harmony with God, then, however
28 learned they may be, they are liable to err in their understanding of Scripture, and it is not safe to
29 trust to their explanations. When we are truly seeking to do God's will, the Holy Spirit takes the
30 precepts of His word and makes them the principles of the life, writing them on the tablets of the
31 soul. And it is only those who are following the light already given that can hope to receive the
32 further illumination of the Spirit” (5T 704-705).

33 “The student of the word should not make his opinions a center around which truth is to
34 revolve. He should not search for the purpose of finding texts of Scripture that he can construe to
35 prove his theories, for this is wresting the Scriptures to his own destruction. The Bible student
36 must empty himself of every prejudice, lay his own ideas at the door of investigation, and with
37 humble, subdued heart, with self hid in Christ, with earnest prayer, he should seek wisdom from
38 God” (CT 463).

39 “I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible; yet when copies of it were few, learned
40 men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain,
41 when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their
42 established views, which were governed by tradition. But I saw that the Word of God, as a
43 whole, is a perfect chain, one portion linking into and explaining another. True seekers for truth
44 need not err; for not only is the Word of God plain and simple in declaring the way of life, but
45 the Holy Spirit is given as a guide in understanding the way to life therein revealed” (EW 220-
46 221).

1 “An understanding of the customs of those who lived in Bible times, of the location and
2 time of events, is practical knowledge; for it aids in making clear the figures of the Bible and in
3 bringing out the force of Christ's lessons” (CT 518).

4 “Every principle in the word of God has its place, every fact its bearing. And the
5 complete structure, in design and execution, bears testimony to its Author. Such a structure no
6 mind but that of the Infinite could conceive or fashion. In searching out the various parts and
7 studying their relationship, the highest faculties of the human mind are called into intense
8 activity. No one can engage in such study without developing mental power. And not alone in
9 searching out truth and bringing it together does the mental value of Bible study consist. It
10 consists also in the effort required to grasp the themes presented” (Ed 124).

11 “The Lord gave His word in just the way He wanted it to come. He gave it through
12 different writers, each having his own individuality, though going over the same history. Their
13 testimonies are brought together in one Book, and are like the testimonies in a social meeting.
14 They do not represent things in just the same style. Each has an experience of his own, and this
15 diversity broadens and deepens the knowledge that is brought out to meet the necessities of
16 varied minds. The thoughts expressed have not a set uniformity, as if cast in an iron mold,
17 making the very hearing monotonous. In such uniformity there would be a loss of grace and
18 distinctive beauty. . . . The Creator of all ideas may impress different minds with the same
19 thought, but each may express it in a different way, yet without contradiction. The fact that this
20 difference exists should not perplex or confuse us” (1 SM 21-22).

21 “In order to sustain erroneous doctrines or unchristian practices, some will seize upon
22 passages of Scripture separated from the context, perhaps quoting half of a single verse as
23 proving their point, when the remaining portion would show the meaning to be quite the
24 opposite. . . . Whenever the study of the Scriptures is entered upon without a prayerful, humble,
25 teachable spirit, the plainest and simplest as well as the most difficult passages will be wrested
26 from their true meaning” (GC 521).

27 “The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student
28 should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a
29 knowledge of its grand central theme, of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the
30 great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the two
31 principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the
32 records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation” (Ed 190).

33 “The significance of the Jewish economy is not yet fully comprehended. Truths vast and
34 profound are shadowed forth in its rites and symbols. The gospel is the key that unlocks its
35 mysteries. Through a knowledge of the plan of redemption, its truths are opened to the
36 understanding” (COL 133).

37

1 **Appendix III: Statement of Our Pioneers**

2
3 **ADVENT REVIEW AND SABBATH HERALD**

4 (Vol. 71, No. 23, Battle Creek, Michigan, June 5, 1894), page 360.

5 Uriah Smith, editor

6 Assistant editors: G. C. Tenney, and M. E. Kellogg

7 Editorial contributors: O. A. Olsen, A. T. Jones, Geo. I. Butler, S. N. Haskell, L. R. Conradi.

8
9 **WOMAN'S RELATION TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST.**

10 The queries concerning woman's position in the church come by post and by word of
11 mouth. Devout people, skeptics, believers, advocates of women's rights, advocates of men's
12 rights, church people, non-church people, husbands of meek wives, husbands of garrulous
13 women, wives of meek husbands, wives of lordly husbands, people that are neither husbands nor
14 wives,—all are interested in the solution of this question, What is woman's place in the church ?
15 and what would happen if she should get out of it into the man's place? People who slight
16 judgment, mercy, and the weightier matters of the law, halt, hesitate, ahem, shake the head, and
17 perhaps do worse, when they learn that some women do actually speak in church; because Paul
18 said : "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak;"
19 and, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."

20 The difficulty with these texts is entirely chargeable to immature conclusions reached in
21 regard to them. It is manifestly illogical and unfair to give to any passage of Scripture an
22 unqualified radical meaning that is at variance with the main tenor of the Bible, and directly in
23 conflict with its plain teachings. The Bible may be reconciled in all its parts without going
24 outside the lines of consistent interpretation. But great difficulty is likely to be experienced by
25 those who interpret isolated passages in an independent light, according to the ideas they happen
26 to entertain upon them. Those who were brought up to believe it to be a shame for women to
27 speak in meeting, look no farther than these texts, and give them a sweeping application. Critics
28 of the Bible, critics of womankind, as well as women who are looking for an excuse for idleness,
29 seize these passages in the same manner. By their misuse of these texts many conscientious
30 people are led into a misconception of what Paul meant to teach.

31 Considering the question from a broader standing, it will be seen at a glance that while it
32 has ever been the work of the powers of darkness to degrade woman, the work of the Bible has
33 been to elevate her. The Bible and its religion is the great civilizing agent in this world, where
34 the natural tendency is downward to destruction. Under Christianity, multitudes of women have
35 been raised from the degradation of slavery to their rightful place by the side of him for whom
36 she was created a help meet for him (not *help-meet*), that is, a fit companion. It was the work of
37 the gospel to remove distinctions among men in race, nationality, sex, or condition. Paul declares
38 that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor
39 female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:28. This text has a generic application ; it is of
40 universal force wherever the gospel reaches. In the light of such a statement, how can women be
41 excluded from the privileges of the gospel ?

42 But God has given to women an important part in connection with his work throughout
43 its entire history. In the patriarchal age and in the later dispensation are many bright examples of
44 piety and devotion among the wives and mothers of God's people. They wrought righteousness,

1 exercised the omnipotent power of faith, braved dangers, and witnessed for the truth as
2 effectually as those of the other sex, with evident tokens of God's approbation resting upon them.
3 Two books of the Old Testament receive their titles from young heroines of faith and piety. God
4 moved upon their hearts and upon the hearts of Sarah, Rebecca, Miriam, Rahab, Hannah, Jael,
5 and a host of faithful women, as well as upon the hearts of rulers and prophets.

6 While it is true that Christ did not choose women to the apostleship, still it would be a
7 difficult matter to show that he was partial in his regard toward the men who followed him.
8 Miracles, discourses, promises, exhortations, recognition everywhere, are bestowed upon
9 womankind by our Saviour. Every step in his life's history, from the annunciation to the
10 ascension, is intimately interwoven with the experience of women, and the pathway is cheered
11 and brightened by their help, faith, and sympathy. In his famous painting of Christ before Pilate,
12 Munkaczy represents the Saviour as surrounded by a hostile crowd of ruffians, priests, and
13 Pharisees. There is but one friendly, sympathetic face in the throng ; a woman looks upon her
14 Master with all the pity that faith and love can depict.

15 Reverting to the teachings of Paul, whose writings are in question, we discover very
16 clearly that he was the friend, not the adversary, of women in the work of the Christian church. It
17 is true he insists upon God's order being preserved. He objects to that anomalous condition of
18 things in which a woman rules over a household, or where obstreperous women run the church.
19 And who would not ?' Such things did exist then ; they do now, sad to say. But it is not God's
20 plan. In the church at Corinth we may understand, if we read the letters to that church with care,
21 that there were various disorders. In the context of the passage under consideration (1 Cor. 14;
22 34), we read: " When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a
23 tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation." Verse 26. And we gather that each one strove
24 to deliver his message without regard to order or peace. While some were prophesying or
25 exhorting, others were singing or praying, others were speaking in unknown tongues, others were
26 arguing, and the meetings were disgraceful. Unruly women added their clatter to the general
27 confusion ; and along with the other disorders, Paul sought to rebuke this trouble. These women
28 were out of place.

29 There are three Greek words from which "to speak" is translated, *ei-pon*, *le-go*, and *la-le-*
30 *o/* they may be used interchangeably, though to the latter is given by Donnegan the following
31 definitions : " To talk ; to speak ; to prate ; to prattle ; to babble ; to chatter ; " etc.; and this is the
32 word used in 1 Cor. 14 : 34, where it is said women are not permitted *to speak* in the churches.
33 None of the undignified terms are used in defining the other words, a fact which shows that the
34 apostle was rebuking garrulity rather than prohibiting Christians from witnessing for the cause of
35 Christ.

36 Not only do the circumstances and language lead us to conclude that these restrictions
37 were designed to apply to special cases of impropriety, but other considerations compel us thus
38 to interpret them. In 1 Corinthians 11, we read : "But every woman that *prayeth* or *prophesieth*
39 with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head." Verse 5. Why make this statement, if women
40 were not to be allowed to pray or speak in public ? It is then stated that woman was ordained to
41 be subject to man in point of authority, but " neither is the man without the woman, neither the
42 woman without the man, in the Lord." Verse 11. In various epistles Paul freely recognizes the aid
43 rendered him by the women associated with him. For instance, in Phil. 4:3: "Help those women
44 which *labored with me* in the gospel." Not simply as housekeepers, for the original language
45 indicates a close sympathy. Greenfield defines the word for " labor " in this instance, " to exert
46 one's power and energies in company with any one." According to the views of some people, he

1 should have written: "Stop those women, for I don't allow a woman to labor in the gospel,"—a
2 very different thing from that which he did write. If anybody still remains in doubt about Paul's
3 attitude, let him read Romans 16, especially noting verse 12: " Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa,
4 who labor in the Lord."

5 No doubt the wise apostle had good reason for writing as he did to the Corinth church,
6 and for instructing Timothy just as he did as he was about to visit the churches. But it would be a
7 gross libel on this valiant servant of Christ to impute to him the purpose to silence the testimony
8 of the most devoted servants of the cross. A fundamental principle of the gospel is that "God is
9 no respecter of persons," a principle which applies to men and to women. It does not comport
10 with reason that the apostle had such women as these in mind when he penned the words in 1
11 Cor. 14: 34, and in 1 Tim. 2 :11, 12. Women who labor acceptably in the gospel are included
12 among those of whom the Saviour says, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I
13 confess also before my Father which is in heaven."

14
15 G. C. Tenney

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