

ABSTRACT OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Master of Arts in Leadership

Adventist University of Africa

School of Postgraduate Studies

Title: WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP IN THE EXECUTIVE LEVELS OF THE SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

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Date Completed: July 2013

There are too few women in the leadership or executive levels of the Seventh-day Adventist Church even though they represent more than 50% of the membership.

Women are significantly underrepresented at every strata of Adventist executive leadership. This study examines the biblical foundations for inclusive ministry and how biblical church practice either includes or excludes women. Biblical foundations are examined with a view to increase the number of women in church leadership.

The foundations begin with equality as the basis for relationships between male and female in their representation of God. This equality is never revoked. True equality is

evident in a unity of brotherhood amongst God's children, John 17. This study accepts that unity should be a distinguishing feature of the Adventist Church. Spiritual gifts are the foundation that edifies the church. These gifts are not gender specific and are awarded solely on the discretion of the Holy Spirit. The priesthood of all believers is an underlying principle flowing from the Old Testament right into eternity and Jesus Christ is the High Priest of all believers.

Paul compares with Jesus and Luke in His inclusion and acknowledgement of women in his ministry; Roman 16 demonstrates this. Jesus came at a time when the world needed change but it is Jesus' empowerment of women that arrests ones attention. The historical position of Adventists to women in leadership differs substantially from the current position. That vibrancy is lacking in the policy driven approach to women in leadership today. For mission success women must have their voice back.

Adventist University of Africa

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP IN THE EXECUTIVE LEVELS OF THE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

A project
presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Leadership

by
Beverley Ramages

July 2013


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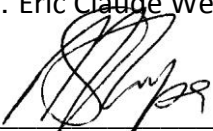
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CHAPTER 1

ADVENTIST WOMEN CAN BE SPIRITUAL LEADERS

If one looks at every strata of Adventist executive leadership it appears that women are significantly underrepresented. The historical position of Adventists to women in leadership differs substantially from the current position. In the 1890's women filled 15% of the administrative positions in the North American Conferences, a movement that was a mere 27 years in existence. More than 20 SDA women served as licensed ministers at the time. The church almost ordained women as full-fledged ministers as early as 1881, in fact the General Conference Resolution was to do just that: "RESOLVED, That females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry."¹

Ellen White penned this statement on ordination in 1895, "Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands....Let every individual labor,

¹Bert Haloviak, "Route to the Ordination of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Two Paths," March 1985, (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, 1985), 6.

privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work."¹ Ellen White and the 19th century SDA church were clearly not concerned about a lack of scriptural authority for church policy.² By the 1930's however, the historical understanding and practice of inclusiveness in the operations of the church had been lost. The first church manual compiled in the 1930's included this statement on page 64: "Deaconesses were included in the official staff of the early Christian churches (Rom 16:1, 2). . . . There is no record, however, that these women were ordained; hence the practice of ordaining deaconesses is not followed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church." This position was changed during the 2010 General Conference Business Session; deaconesses can now be ordained. Adventists pride themselves on a truth that is biblically based. This study will examine just how biblical the practice is as opposed to the message with a view to increase the number of women in church leadership. If one were to divide the General Conference and its sub-organizations into clusters in terms of lines of communication, the Cape Conference, Southern Africa Union Conference, Southern Indian Ocean Division would form a cluster. Using this cluster as a sample, not a single female pastor, an official Seventh-day Adventist minister of the gospel, is currently employed as a director of any of the church's departments. The percentage of women who are employed as pastors make up less than 5% of the total number of pastoral staff. The women who are employed as directors of departments are either pastor's wives or other professionals. The employment picture at the General

¹Ellen G. White, "The Duty of the Minister and the People, 1895." *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 9, 1895, 434.

² Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), 471-472.

Conference of Seventh-day Adventists headquarters is even bleaker. Not one department is headed by a licensed female minister.

“Women can be the instruments of righteousness, rendering holy service. It was Mary that first preached a risen Jesus. . . . If there were twenty women where now there is one, who would make this holy mission their cherished work, we would see many more converted to the truth. The refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth.”¹ These are the words of Ellen G. White, written in the 1800’s where she appears to be encouraging women to become active leaders and pastors. That same sentiment could be expressed today and the question asked: but where are the women? A cursory glance through the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists directories will confirm that women fill too few leadership positions, especially women who are qualified to do so. This is troubling because of the emphasis Seventh-day Adventists have always put on education for both genders,² and yet we see very limited evidence of women in leadership compared to how women are represented in the current social and business environment. The Southern Indian Ocean Division cluster, as one of the largest clusters of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, has a particularly poor representation of women in leadership.

This study will examine the biblical foundations for leadership in the Adventist Church. The foundations of equality, unity, the allocation of spiritual gifts, the relevance of the priesthood in Adventist reasoning today, what Paul says, the example of Jesus and

¹Ibid., 471-472.

² White, *Education*, 225.

Ellen White and the early Adventists' approach to women in leadership will come under review and more critically, whether these foundations are subordinate to Adventist traditions today. The use and sometimes the abuse of policy will also be examined as a contributory factor to how women have lost their voice in the Adventist Church. The study will illuminate the causal principle where necessary and zero in to the subsidiary principles where simplicity is needed.

The biblical foundation for equality that will be used is Genesis 1:26, as the basis for relationships of equality between male and female in their representation of God. On the issue of equality within marriage Ellen White wrote; "Woman should fill the position which God originally designed for her, as her husband's equal."¹ On the issue of equality in the church Ellen White wrote; "As the children of God are one in Christ, how does Jesus look upon caste, upon society distinctions, upon the division of man from his fellowman, because of colour, race, position, wealth, birth, or attainments? The secret of unity is found in the equality of believers in Christ."²

When the church recognises the equality of all believers, in policy and practice, it will achieve unity amongst believers. Paul draws an analogy between the church and a human body. He uses the metaphor of the body to describe what the oneness of the church ought to be. His primary emphasis is on the unity of believers with Christ and with one another. Unity should be a distinguishing feature of the Adventist Church. Is unity visible in the church? What will be or has been the effect of the absence of unity? A key

¹ White, *The Adventist Home*, 231.

² White, *Counsels for the Church*, 289.

thought in the central message of the Adventist church is a call for the return to worship of the Creator God. This must include a call to recognize humankind in the likeness of God – a return to acknowledgement of the status of full equality, joint dominion and unity of male and female.¹ The human likeness to God includes various spiritual gifts used to strengthen and unify the church.

It is a function of the Holy Spirit to bestow spiritual gifts upon the believer. This allocation is based solely on His discretion and is given for the growth of the church. These gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11, 12; Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12 are not gender specific. Women in both the Old and the New Testaments give evidence of the presence of these gifts in their ministries. Deborah was the ruler of Israel and commanded the judiciary, the army, the administration of Israel; all of this as the wife of Lappidoth. Paul acknowledges Phoebe as an outstanding spiritual leader in the new Christian Church without raising issues of headship. However, the priesthood was not considered as a spiritual gift. The Levitical system of priesthood prescribed that only male who were born into the tribe of Levi could serve as priests. Although women were also involved in temple service their roles seem less defined than that of the priest.

Priesthood, however, was not a primary qualification for the leadership of God's people. Miriam was not a priest but God mentions her as one of the three leaders whom He had appointed to lead Israel out of Egypt. Ellen White was not a priest but she was one of the three leaders or founder members of the Adventist Church appointed by God himself. If man had been tasked to appoint leaders they would never have chosen either

¹ Donna J. Haerich, "It Shall Not Be So Among You" *Spectrum*, 38, 2 (Spring, 2010): 35.

of these women. A priesthood of all believers is clearly the underlying principle that follows from the Old Testament, Exodus 19:4-6, into eternity, Revelation 1:6. This underlying principle of the priesthood is emphasised by Peter in the New Testament, 1 Peter 2:9. "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, To show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into this marvellous light."

Jesus came at a time when His people needed remoulding. The nation of Israel was a miserable failure as the representative of God on earth. Jesus was not born to maintain the status quo. The male dominated Jewish leadership bore little resemblance to the image of God. Jesus had and accepted women as disciples. Not only did they travel with Him but they used their own means to provide for Him. Some of the women were married. This would be considered radical even by today's standards but Jesus did nothing to exclude them. But it is Jesus' empowerment of women after His resurrection that really arrests the attention and makes one question the current issues in the church surrounding women in leadership today.

Paul models what he has observed in Jesus' example. He confirms by his own example and through his writing that both men and women can serve God equally in the same capacities. Paul has long been used to whip up the emotions of both men and women against women in leadership, for emasculating women and leaving them without a voice. Generally the objectors would draw attention to Paul's exceptions such as 1 Corinthians 11, 1 Cor 14 and 1 Timothy 2. But Paul can be compared to Jesus and Luke in His inclusion and acknowledgement of women in his ministry. The first church leaders

which Paul mentions in Romans 16 are women. Amongst the first apostles mentioned are Andronicus and Junia, whom ancient commentators believed were a husband and wife team of apostles.¹ It is Paul who levels the playing field between men and women, if you like. There is not much mention made of women leaders in the church after the 2nd century up until the religious revivals of the 19th century. Suddenly women are preaching, evangelizing, teaching and prophesying. The Methodist church was a strong encourager to women.

Ellen White, a former Methodist member, was one of the founder members of the Adventist Church. Without her prophetic leadership there would probably be no SDA church as we know it today. She advised that women have a special ability to reach the heart and inner life of humanity. They can apparently reach those whom men cannot reach. It is amazing then that there are so few women in strategic church leadership positions today.

The historical position of Adventists to women in leadership differs substantially from the current position. "As new converts were attracted into the Advent Movement, many were startled to discover that Adventist women evangelized, spoke in churches and religious gatherings, exhorted the believers, and exercised spiritual leadership."² It was also surprising that this was seen as a fulfilment of God's promise. There was a vibrancy

¹ Robert M. Johnston, "Shapes of Ministry in the New Testament and Early Church," 45-58, chap. in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, Andrews University Press, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 47.

² Beverly G. Beem and Ginger Hanks Harwood, "'What about Paul?' Early Adventists and the Preaching of 'the Mary's,'" 2010, *Spectrum*, 38, no 2, Spring 2010, 26.

there that is lacking in the policy driven approach to women in leadership today. This was not so in the times of Christ. “The life of Christ established a religion in which there is no caste, a religion by which Jew and Gentile, free and bond, are linked in a common brotherhood, equal before God. No question of policy influenced His movements.”¹

In the Adventist Church we have significantly attacked class, race and nationality, but we have not adequately addressed or broken down gender prejudice. Neal Wilson arguing policy in favour of not ordaining women said: “It would not be right to ordain a woman pastor in America if she could not serve in Africa. Her ordination should be valid everywhere.” To which Charles Bradford, an African-American President of the NAD responded: “When I was ordained, I could not preach or pastor the White church across the street. If the principle you have stated had been in place at that time, I would never have been ordained.”²

The church needs to become a place where the religion of Christ is both preached and practised. There should be an intentional effort to break down gender prejudice and to significantly increase the number of women in executive leadership. The policies of the church should not undermine the example of Christ in His ministry and leadership and thereby endanger the success of its mission.

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¹ White, *Counsels for the Church*, 289.

² J. David Newman, “Wanted: A Theology of Ordination,” *Adventists Today*, 18 no. 3 (2010): 6.

church should not undermine the example of Christ in His ministry and leadership and thereby endanger the success of its mission.

This study will examine the biblical foundations for leadership in the SDA church, analyse current SDA practices towards women in church leadership and make recommendations towards crafting a framework for greater future inclusion of women in executive church leadership structures. The methodology relies on primary and secondary sources to arrive at a framework that will be more inclusive of women in church leadership.

CHAPTER 2

A VIEW ON FEMININE SIRTUAL LEADERSHIP

It is my contention that there are too few women in the leadership or executive levels of the Seventh-day Adventist Church even though they represent more than 50% of the membership. This study examines the biblical foundations for inclusive ministry and how the Seventh-day Adventist church practice either includes or excludes women from its executive leadership structures. Biblical foundations are examined with a view to increase the number of women in church leadership. The study attempts a biblical approach to equality, unity, the allocation of spiritual gifts, the understanding of priesthood, and Paul's approach to women leaders and the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy on the issue of women in leadership. The study uses the teachings and example of Jesus as a benchmark for women to lead. The foundations begin with equality as the basis for relationships between male and female in their representation of God.

Equality

A biblical view of women in leadership cannot be developed without establishing God's intentions for man at creation and establishing whether He changed His mind at any stage. In Genesis 1:26, 27 God says, "Let us make man (*'ādām*) in our image, after our likeness", so He created them male and female." An image or likeness of something is not that thing itself. The image is a mere representation of that thing. Man is not God, they

are an image or likeness of God. Therefore men can never be God, they can only be a representation of the image or likeness of God. No other creature on earth was created in the image of God. 'Man' can also never completely represent God as only male or only female. Man therefore fully represents God only when both male and female are present. The cohesiveness of this unit probably only constitutes a human representation of God on earth. This does not mean that there are no other representations of God in the universe. God's creation of man may only apply to His creation on planet earth. There may be other creations that He has imbued with His likeness too.

Not only is man created as equal in representing God but every other blessing and authority is given to both equally. Both are given dominion over all creatures on the earth. God blesses both the man and the woman equally. He instructs both to "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it" equally. Nowhere is there a whisper of inferiority, of one being less than the other or one being less competent to represent God than the other. There is no hint of ontological or functional superiority/inferiority or headship/submission between male and female. Both are "equally immediate to the Creator and His act."¹ Genesis 1 and 2 lays the basis for relationships of equality between male and female in their representation of God.

The fall of man seems to have resulted in a restructuring of the marriage relationship. Some would argue that male and female no longer represent God as they are no longer equal. In Genesis 3:16 "and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee," God resets the operational structure of the marriage relationship. Although it

¹ Helmut Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 7.

is not quite clear what 'desire' refers to, it is clear that woman's desire will only be for her own husband and not for all men. The word *māšal* in v16 means 'to rule'. But it is not the same meaning as *rādāh*, used to describe mankind's dominion over the animal kingdom i.e. 'to tread down, have dominion over.' The verb *māšal* consistently means 'submission, subjection or dominion, but the idea of forceful authority is absent'.¹

R. M. Davidson writes "The relationship of subjection/submission does not apply to man-woman relationships in general. The equality that existed in creation has not been affected. The servant headship of the husband prescribed in this passage (v. 16d) can no more be broadened to refer to male-female relationships in general than can the sexual desire of the wife (v. 16c) be broadened to mean sexual desire of all women for all men."²

The equality of the spousal couple within the unity of the relationship is clearly seen through the many independent actions of the women within the few marriage relationships that are recorded in the Bible. Married women like Sarah, Hannah, Rebekah, and Deborah, to mention a few, were clearly not unequal partners to their husbands. This is obvious by the independent actions that the women engage in. For instance, Rebecca prays directly to God about the babies in her womb and He answers her directly, Gen 25:22, 23. She is not dependent upon Isaac to represent her concerns to God. God does not communicate the future of the boys to Isaac, but to Rebecca. Surely such important information regarding the future of the covenant people should have been communicated

¹ Richard M. Davidson, "Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture," 259-295, chap. in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, Andrews University Press, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister, (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 269.

² *Ibid.*, 269.

to the 'head' of man, if the male represents God more completely than the female. In 1 Samuel 1:11 we find the example of Hannah promising Samuel to God without consulting Elkanah, her husband. God accepts her vow. Elkanah consents to what Hannah has pledged without any apparent loss to his dignity. This is interesting because it is inconceivable that a man, particularly in the patriarchal system, would give up his firstborn son from the woman that he loves.

The book of Genesis discusses the relationship within marriage of Abraham and Sarah. Sarah's beauty and personality seems to command the respect and admiration of great men. When they go into Egypt, Abraham has to ask her to lie about their relationship. Although Abraham is the 'first of equals', he does not command his wife but requests her compliance and often obeys her too. In the book of Judges, Deborah prophesies, hands down judgements, goes to war, acts as chief of staff, holds the highest position of political authority, all the while also being a wife to Lappidoth. She herself announces her successes to the nation. Lappidoth seems to just be a name, a consort. In the New Testament we find similar examples of equality within relationships. Dominance in decision making within marriage clearly moves from one spouse to another.

It is insightful to note that while Israel operated under an ostensibly patriarchal social structure, that that structure did not exclude women from positions of influence, leadership, or, in fact, headship over the men in Israel. Deborah, Miriam, Huldah are a few prominent examples of such leadership. Neither is there any indication that this was looked upon as unusual or that it was opposed to the divine will for women. That women will be included in the final activities on earth is expressed clearly in Joel 2:28, 29, "and it

shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh, your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days". On the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:17, 18, when the crowds voiced their surprise at the men and women who were preaching about Christ, Peter reminded them of the prophecy in Joel. This prophecy clearly includes both men and women equally in the outpouring of God's Spirit. In Galatians 3:28, Paul writes "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. This is different to the Jewish model of church. Paul introduces an equality, inclusiveness and participation for all in Jesus. There are so few recorded stories of women in leadership positions that it is almost a surprise to have to even consider women as being leaders too. Although there are many recorded incidents of complaints against the leadership of men, there are no recorded complaints against the leadership of a woman, except God's punishment of leprosy on Miriam. The leadership record of women in the Old Testament may merit more serious study.

Unity

The Bible uses various images to portray and describe the church. One of Paul's analogies for the church is 'the body of Christ.' He uses this metaphor of the body to describe the oneness of the church. His primary emphasis is on the unity of believers with Christ and with one another. The concept of a body includes the mutual dependence yet the independence of its members. However, the body is completely dependent upon the

head who is Christ.¹ All the parts are equally united through Him and nourished by Him, as the head of the body (Col. 2:10). It seems clear that the head, Christ, directs all of the body, the church, and that the body individually and in unison works under the direction of the head.

Another biblical image of the church is the Church as the People of God. In the Old Testament God chose the Israelites as His people. They were to be His earthly representatives to the world, but they failed. This time He chooses not a nation but a group of people, who also individually and corporately choose Him. The Christian Church is God's chosen instrument of action. It is entrusted with the task of sharing the good news worldwide. But "oneness and wholeness are of the essence of its life, a oneness enriched by the gathering of men and women from all nations, tribes, tongues, and peoples."² The individual is baptised into what Paul calls the "unity of the Spirit" (Eph 4:3) which is "one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all who is above all and through all, and in all" (Eph 4:4-6).

Unity should be a distinguishing feature of the Adventist Church. In John 17:21 Jesus prays "that they all (His followers) may be *one*, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they, also may be *one* in Us *that the world may believe* that You sent Me."³ "The

¹ "Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology," *Commentary Reference Series*, Edited by Raoul Dederen (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 2000), 547.

² *Ibid.*, 549.

Holy Spirit breaks down barriers between high and low, rich and poor, male and female. Realizing that in God's sight they are all equal, they hold one another in esteem."¹

"In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us."² "Such unity is the church's most powerful witnessing tool, for it gives evidence of Christ's unselfish love for humanity."³ The absence of visible unity in the professed church of God can only be a serious detractor from its mission. Strong prejudices often lie at the heart of the exclusion of women from leadership and ministry in the church. These prejudices are as varied as: an interpretation of scripture that excludes women; a loss of procedural memory of church practice; cultural biases; gender biases; male protectionism, territorial self-interest; sociological factors. In the past forty years, the role of women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been the subject of official study on four occasions: by study committees in 1973 (10 men, 15 women) and 1985 (51 men, 15 women), and commissions in 1988 (62 men, 17 women), and 1989 (50 men, 17 women); and another committee, in 1975, considered the worldwide responses to the report of the 1973 committee.⁴ It is difficult to believe that there has been no clear

² Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association. 1988), 203.

³ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁴ "Office of Archives, Statistics and Research Homepage," General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2013, <http://www.adventistarchives.org> (28 February 2013).

direction yet. I believe that this issue would have been resolved much sooner if the marginalised group were men. It is very clear that women are outnumbered in every committee except the first one and the question then arises, who is speaking for the women. This question should be asked because it is policy not principle that is used to exclude women from leadership and ordination. None of these bodies addressed the theology of ordination *per se*. Currently another committee, the General Conference Theology of Ordination Study Committee is attempting to arrive at a theology of ordination. However a theology of ordination will not will not necessarily address prejudicial practices. I could compare the forty years of indecision in this matter over whether women can or cannot lead to the forty years that the Israelites spent in the wilderness.

Policy has long been used to undermine the Biblical principles of equality and unity in the current operations of the Adventist Church. It has been used effectively to exclude very many Adventists from very many things ranging from employment to salary to medical and pension benefits to ordination. How policy has been used to specifically marginalise and prejudice women will be discussed in more detail under the heading “The Effect of Policy on the Exclusion of Women”

The absence of visible unity in the professed church of God has and will raise questions of credibility amongst the unbelievers that we wish to win. World emphasis on rights brings an expectation of an inclusive church. Inside and outside of the church, people want to see a church that practises what it preaches. An apparent dissonance in the practice of mission, message and ministry can only call our claims, as His end time

church, into question. This unity should distinguish Christians and even more so Seventh-day Adventist Christians. The message is as important as the method. Individual cultures should be subordinate to the culture of Christ. It is interesting that Adventists require every baptised member to make drastic changes in their lives when they become Adventists. They often change their day of worship, their belief systems, but we currently regard the recapturing of equality and unity in service before God as too drastic.

Donna Haerich suggests “three actions that need to be taken within the teaching and praxis of the Adventist church that directly bear on the welfare and status of women and girls. Firstly, the church should acknowledge that the laws and religious practices of the Israelites in Old Testament did not portray a perfect society.”¹ It was the norm for women, within the patriarchal society in the Old Testament, to be sold as slaves, passed on as property, taken as war spoils, and offered as sacrifices to Molech. Yet this society also accepted women who were called by God into positions of leadership, be it political, judicial, social or spiritual. The issue of headship was clearly not seen to limit this calling. The limitations of patriarchy can only be addressed once you acknowledge them and the ensuing damage that has been caused to the image of God in man.

Secondly, we should fully accept the inclusiveness of Jesus’ teaching and practices. Our strong prejudices often lead us to have attitudes against unity. Ephesians 4:3-4 identifies attitudes that promote unity, humility and gentleness; patience with love; the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. These are the powerful underlying attitudes

¹ Ibid., 32-35.

that bind the body of Christ in unity. They ought to be present and practised in the leadership structures of the church.

Adventists believe that they are living in the last days of this earth's history and that they are God's remnant people for this time. According to Rev 12:14-17, the remnant appears on the world's stage after a time of great persecution. The mission of the remnant is outlined in the prophecies of Revelation. The Adventist Church refers to these prophecies of Rev 14:6-12 as the three angel's messages. They believe that the three angel's messages contain the proclamation of the remnant that will bring full and final restoration of the gospel truth.¹ Revelation 14:7 reads, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgement is come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." Amongst other things, this verse points to the Creator God of Genesis 1 and that He should be worshipped because He has created the earth. Included in the creation of the earth was the creation of man. It was man that God created in His image, male and female and gave dominion over all the earth.

"Finally, if the prime thrust of the Adventist message is still the Three Angels Message of Revelation 14, then this must include a call to recognize humankind in the likeness of God – a return to acknowledgement of the status of full equality and joint dominion."² A full

¹ The Remnant and Its Mission, chap 12, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of the 27 Fundamental Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1988), 163-165.

² *Ibid.*, 163-165.

acceptance of the meaning of Revelation 14:7 would probably lead to a more inclusive and gender representative leadership practice in the Adventist Church.

The Allocation of Spiritual Gifts

Paul in Eph 4:11, 12 lists some of the gifts which the Holy Spirit gives for the building up of the church as being, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Paul confirms in Romans 12:6-8 that we all have different gifts. These gifts do not appear to be gender specific but are assigned and allocated to whom the Holy Spirit chooses or identifies as a worthy recipient. 1 Cor 12, also lists various gifts - wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues. These gifts also appear to be generic to humans. It is interesting that Paul mentions the Spirit each time he identifies a gift. He emphasises the fact that it is the same Spirit of the Lord giving all of these gifts. The Spirit also gives them to each one, just as he determines. This continuous emphasis might be to prevent man from usurping either the right of others to use their gifts freely or the right to decide differently to what the Spirit has decided and thereby discriminate against the voiceless. In 1 Peter 4:10-11, Peter instructs that “each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”(NIV)

The early church practised an inclusive ministry. “Those who receive spiritual gifts are especially to serve believers, training them for the types of ministry according to their

gifts.”¹ We find confirmation of this practice in the acknowledgements in Scripture. Paul in Roman 16 begins the chapter by commending Phoebe. She is a deacon, on the same level as the deacons in I Timothy 3. There were no deaconesses in the early church. Paul requests that the church, men and women give her the assistance that she requires. He mentions Priscilla and Aquilla as fellow workers and joint elders of their house church. The first church leaders mentioned in Romans 16 are women. The first apostles mentioned are Andronicus and Junia, whom ancient commentators believed were a husband and wife team of apostles.² Paul calls them outstanding apostles.

The concept of a husband and wife ministerial team was also successfully used by the early Adventist church. The very nature of the gifts of the Spirit and how they were allocated would mean submission and headship of men to women, where women held leadership positions. Deborah emerges as perhaps the most triumphant of women leaders in the Old Testament, Judges 4. She holds almost every position of authority in Israel yet it seems that she is still fairly young because she continues as a judge for forty years after the battle with Sisera. She identifies herself as a Mother in Israel. Her victories are definitely won as a woman. Deborah exercises authority over men in every one of the

¹ Ministerial Association. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1988), 237-244.

² Robert M. Johnston. “Shapes of Ministry in the New Testament and Early Church,” 45-58, chap. in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, Andrews University Press, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister, (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998), 47. “The male name Junias does not occur until some dubious references in the Middle Ages, but the female name Junia was well known in New Testament times. It is most reasonable to conclude, therefore, that we are dealing here with a female apostle named Junia.”

mentioned leadership positions that she holds. Her victory song confirms her influence in the nation. She is one of the longest serving rulers of Israel. She is also the only judge during whose time Israel does not go into a decline.¹

The Priesthood

After the fall, God instituted a system of sacrifices through the shedding of blood. The shedding of blood pointed forward to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ's dying on the cross to save man. It appears that God killed the first animal in the Garden of Eden and sacrificed it so that man could be dressed. He then dressed both Adam and Eve in the skin of the animal that was killed. This is significant because biblically the skin of the atonement sacrifice was specifically set aside for the officiating priest (Lev 7:8).² So although God could have produced a linen or cotton robe similar to what the 'lesser' priests would wear, He provided Adam and Eve with skins.

According to Jacques B. Doukhan in his article "Women Priests in Israel: A Case For Their Absence," there are three functions of priesthood - administrative, prophetic and cultic functions. Cultic functions revolved mostly around the offering of sacrifices. The only priestly function that women seem to have been barred from is the performance of

¹ Charme R. Robarts, "Deborah-Judge, Prophetess, Military Leader, and Mother in Israel," *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Carroll D. Osburn (Joplin: College Press, 1995), 76.

² Jacques B. Doukhan, "Women Priests in Israel: A Case for Their Absence," 29-43, chap. in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, Andrews University Press, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998), 36-37. By bestowing on Adam and Eve the skin of the sin offering, a gift strictly reserved to priests, the Genesis story implicitly recognizes Eve as priest alongside Adam.

the sacrificial rites, the sacrifices.¹ There is no biblical record of a woman actually slaughtering a sacrifice. However, there are ample records of women performing all the other priestly functions. Doukhan infers from this that the Hebrew attitude toward women that associated them with the giving of life could be why women are exempted from the taking of life during sacrificial rites.² This same approach towards a life-giver is found in Exodus 23:19 “You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.” A variation is found in Genesis 9:4 “But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.” Life came through women and should therefore not be taken by them. Whether this is actually so cannot be confirmed. One other reason might also be the example and activities of the priestesses’ active in the surrounding nations.

Priesthood is not a primary qualification for leadership of God’s people. Women are often excluded from executive church leadership simply because they are not licensed pastors. One of the reasons for this is that the role of the pastor is often equated with that of the Levite priest and the priests were all men descending from the tribe of Levi. Biblical spiritual leadership is often presented as residing solely in the Levite priest to the exclusion of prophets and judges. This priestly leadership has seemingly been transferred onto the pastor, even though being a pastor is a gift of the Spirit. Moses was not a priest, neither were Miriam, or Deborah or Joseph; they all ranked above the office of priest. Looking at the Old Testament, the examples of women in leadership positions are few in

¹ Jacques B. Doukhan, “Women Priests in Israel: A Case for Their Absence,” 29-43, chap. in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, Andrews University Press, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 33.

² Ibid., 34.

comparison to men in leadership. However, those whose story is told demonstrate a presence of female leadership that is clearly accepted as normal amongst God's people. Although little is known of her particular role in the leadership of Israel out of Egypt, except that she was a prophet, musician and dancer, Miriam is clearly a God-appointed leader for the Hebrews. God himself tells the prophet Micah to remind His people that when he brought them out of Egypt he provided leadership through Moses, Aaron and Miriam, Micah 6:4. Miriam appears to have been a single woman. God places her in a position of authority over all of Israel, including all of the men and married women. She must have been equipped with the necessary leadership skills required for a forty year trip through the desert with a million people in tow. The fact that there are no arguments, no resistance, no questions raised about Miriam seem to suggest that women in leadership positions were an acceptable practice in Israel, even though they are rarely mentioned.

God had initially called the entire nation of Israel as a kingdom of priests to the nations of the world, Exodus 19:4-6. Throughout their history Israel was to have brought the message of salvation to the nations. Although there were priests of God who served outside of the nation of Israel, for example Jethro and Melchizedek, this appears to be the first time that God calls and sets aside an entire nation as a 'kingdom of priests'. The immediate function of the priest is an intermediary between man and God. Israel was to be God's intermediaries on earth, a shining light to the surrounding nations.

Jesus confirmed the mission of the Jewish nation to the woman at the well in John 4:22, saying "you worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation

is of the Jews.” It seems that God’s people are always called priests. In the New Testament Peter writes to the newly formed Christian Church in 1 Peter 2:9, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people.” John in Revelation 1:6 confirms, “to Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father,” that the saved will be priests in heaven.

Raoul Dederen in his article ‘The Priesthood of All Believers’, calls Christians a kingdom of priests because they have replaced ancient Israel as God’s chosen people.¹ This seems to be a generic priesthood as opposed to the Levitical priesthood, of the Old Testament, which required a service with the blood of animal sacrifices. The underlying purpose of this priesthood is set out in 1 Peter 2:9 “To show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into this marvellous light.” As ancient Israel was to represent God to the nations of their time, the Christian community must represent God to the nations of their time and the saved will be a symbol of His salvific grace to the unfallen worlds throughout eternity.

The priesthood could therefore not be the exclusive preserve of men. The Israelites were chosen into the priesthood as a nation by God. Christians and those who will be saved choose to be priests by their actions and profession of faith. There were no priests in the early Christian church because the early Christians believed that they were all priests. The Levitical priesthood symbolised a system of sacrifices that pointed forward

¹ Raoul Dederen, “The Priesthood of All Believers,” 9-27, chap. in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, Andrews University Press, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 19.

to the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. It is the blood of Christ that cleanses the sinner. The Levitical priesthood therefore seems secondary to the primary or generic priesthood which included the whole nation of Israel, men and women. It cannot then be used as a reason for excluding women from church leadership, whether pastoral or otherwise.

What Jesus Did

The difficulty expressed around the inclusion and the ordination of women in the leadership of the Adventist Church currently bears no relation to how the Godhead relates to women, how the early Christian church related to women or how the pioneers of the Adventist Church related to women. Jesus was not born to maintain the status quo. The male dominated Jewish leadership bore little resemblance to the image of God. It was time for change and Jesus followed a course of action radically different to the Rabbis of the day.

Jesus had and accepted women as disciples. He was accompanied by His disciples and a group of women, Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna are some of the names mentioned in Luke 8:1-3. Not only did they travel with Him but they used their own means to provide some of the needs of the group and also to minister to their needs. By accepting support from women Jesus departed from rabbinical teaching. It was an accepted rule that a rabbi not be waited on by a woman.¹ Some of the women were married. This would be considered radical even by today's standards but Jesus did nothing

¹ Claude G. Montefiore, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings*, Hartford, CT: Hartford Seminary 2003.

to exclude them. In His interaction with women there is no record of brutality, derogatory or demeaning behaviour. Christ seemed to comfortably move among all types of women and be accepted and loved by them. Similarly there is no record of any type of aggressive or violent behaviour from women towards Jesus.

Walter Specht in his article "Jesus and Women", elaborates on the many ways in which Jesus' treatment of women was unconventional and unprecedented in His day. Jesus championed women's rights in various ways.¹ Many of the illustrations he used were familiar to women e.g. Mat 13:33 The kingdom of heaven is like leaven; many of His teachings related to women e.g. John 4:4 The woman at the well; His willingness to reveal the prejudices of men to protect a woman, e.g. John 8 The woman caught in adultery; His sympathy and help for women when disciples try to bar them from coming to Jesus. Matt 15 The Syro-Phoenician woman; Jesus allows women to learn from Him as a student would learn from a Rabbi as with Mary and Martha.

It is at His mother's request for help at the wedding in Cana, that Jesus performs His first miracle. The provision Jesus makes for His widowed mother is an example and a reproof to many sons today. But it is Jesus' empowerment of women after His resurrection that really arrests the attention and makes one question the current issues in the church surrounding women in leadership. It is the group of Galilean women who had travelled with Him, who followed Him to the cross. They remained to observe where His body would be laid and returned to embalm Him on the Sunday morning (Luke 23:49-56). Thus they were eyewitnesses to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:1-

¹ Walter F. Specht, *Jesus and Women*, (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1975), 63-77.

4). They were the first to receive the message of the resurrection. They were chosen over the 12 apostles to be among the first witnesses. The angels reminded the women of what Jesus had predicted in Galilee regarding His betrayal, death by crucifixion, and resurrection. In the light of these words they were able to interpret the empty tomb “to the eleven and to all the rest” (Luke 24:8-9, RSV). Thus they became the first heralds of the resurrection. If Jesus selected women to be the bearers of the news of His resurrection to His disciples, male and female, who are we to prevent women from continuing to do so?

The New Testament Approach to Women

Paul is the apostle that is mostly used to make Christians feel that women do not matter sufficiently to God to be needed in ministry. But Paul’s actions really spoke louder than his words. If Paul had an issue with women in church leadership we would not have his acknowledgements of their participation and contributions in Rom 16. The book of Romans is a letter written by Paul to the church in Rome. Chapter 16 seems to be Paul’s acknowledgements and greetings to various people in the Roman church community. The bearer of the letter to the Romans appears to be a woman called Phoebe. Paul describes her as a leader of the church at Cenchrea and instructs the believers in Rome to assist her in whatever she requires. He then sends greetings to a husband and wife team whom he describes as his helpers in Jesus. Furthermore he places the wife’s name before the name of her husband which is unusual but probably indicates that they were equally important in the work. Paul also mentions that they had both risked their lives in order to save him. He includes a number of women in his greeting and they hold various positions of

importance in the church community from Junia, the apostle to his mother. Paul takes the time to greet both the women and the men and begins the chapter by greeting the women who held leadership roles within the church community.

Pauline disciples would have Bible readers believe that a few select Pauline verses, here and there, cancel a uniformly biblical approach to women in leadership. It appears to be a tricky thing to read Paul's comments outside of a context. Any right-thinking person would stop and query such an interpretation because there is so much contradiction there.

The main verses used to set Paul up as the authority on excluding women are 1 Cor 11, 1 Cor 14:34, 35 and 1Tim 2:12. These verses should also correspond with what is demonstrated in the rest of the Bible by comparing Scripture with Scripture, gathering all the scriptural information on the topic. A comparative assessment must be done based on what the individual writer has said on the topic and what the rest of scripture says on the topic. If we use these verses in isolation, not comparing it to what Paul's other writings say about women's gifts, their participation, their leadership and their inclusion then we could be accused of being intellectually dishonest. This was the method used by the early Advent pioneers as they tried to "replace tradition, creed and convention with a biblically based practice and understanding."¹ It seems strange that Paul would tell women in 1 Cor 11 how to dress when they prayed and prophesied in church but in 1 Cor 14 he appears to tell women to keep silent. A closer examination reveals a general situation pertaining to women in 1 Cor 11 and a specific situation pertaining to wives in 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2. In

¹ Beverly G. Beem and Ginger Hanks Harwood, "What about Paul?" Early Adventists and the Preaching of "the Marys," *Spectrum*, 38 no. 2, (Spring 2010): 27.

Rom 16, we find the general acknowledgement which Paul himself gives to the women he shared his ministry with. It is quite clear that these women could pray, preach, teach and prophesy, even to men. A closer look at 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2 however, indicates a problem with married women, their unruly behaviour in those churches and instructions on how, to deal with this kind of behaviour, in the church.

We are challenged with the general principle in 1 Pet 2:9, “called to show forth the praises of Him who has called you from darkness into His marvellous light,” being overshadowed by what appears to be a few exclusionary texts introduced by Paul. There has been much studying but we are still no nearer to a conclusion on Paul. Six Commissions meeting 1973-1989, 74 papers and many sets of minutes later we are no nearer a conclusion about Paul’s statements. Instead another Commission is to study the question of the Ordination of women particularly and report its findings to the next General Conference Business Session, 2015. Interestingly most of the papers deal with the exceptions in the writings of Paul instead of the underlying principles which consistently apply throughout Scripture.

Ellen White has this to say about the need for continuous study and searching for new light, “When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves, to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what.”¹ It is time to put aside old prejudices. It seems that just like the Jews of old towards the Gentiles, Adventist men

¹ White, *Gospel Workers*, 298.

cannot endure that Adventist women should enjoy the same religious privileges on equality with themselves as if God's blessings are reserved exclusively for themselves. "But now, as in the days of Christ, when the Jewish priests and rulers saw the multitudes that had assembled to hear the new doctrine, they were moved by envy and jealousy, and contradicted the words of the apostles with blasphemy. Their old bigotry and prejudice were also aroused, when they perceived great numbers of Gentiles mingling with the Jews in the congregation. They could not endure that the Gentiles should enjoy religious privileges on equality with themselves, but clung tenaciously to the idea that the blessing of God was reserved exclusively for them. This had ever been the great sin of the Jews, which Christ, on several occasions, had rebuked."¹ It is a further indictment that when the waters of dispute are stirred, too few voices are raised in support of women and the contribution they can and do make to the leadership in the church.

Women, the Thorn in the Flesh for Adventist Leadership

The three pioneers of the Adventist Church include one woman, Ellen G. White. She is the only acknowledged prophet of this church. She received her first vision at the age of 17 years and was God-ordained to serve as His messenger to this church. At her death in 1915, she had served as a prophet for about 61 years. At the age of 78, travelling home from the 1909 General Conference Session, a trip that took five months, she spoke 72 times at 27 locations, a remarkable feat even for someone today.

¹ White, *Life Sketches from the Life of Paul* , 48.

She was a woman and in the thick of the growth and development of this church in its infancy. Quite apart from being a prophet, Ellen White was central to the establishment, growth and development of Adventism. Although she was never formally ordained, she has been listed as an ordained minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church since 1872 and has clearly been the most influential minister this Church has ever had. She is also distinguished as being the most published female author on spiritual and religious matters.

Women in leadership roles in Ellen White times were not easily acceptable by society. In the nineteenth century women only had a slim place in society outside of home. They were voiceless not only in society, but also in the Church.¹ Societal and cultural conditioning had not really improved all that much. 1800 Years after Christ, very little had changed for women. The 1830's -1850's saw a growing trend in the United States towards the reformation of society. One of the philosophical ideals was the abolition of slavery. It was the abolitionist movement that really thrust the "woman question" to the forefront eventually causing a split in its movement in 1840. The question of women's rights as an equally pressing issue had eventually come into the public domain.

This was Ellen White's world. She came from a Methodist background. Methodists did not have a problem with women speaking to mixed audiences. Maybe they had just

¹ George R. Knight, *Ellen White's World* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1998), 48 "For example, they had no right to vote, college education was unavailable to them, and married women didn't have the right to hold any property, even property they brought into the marriage."

never read Paul's exceptions from a 20th century viewpoint. The Methodists ordained their first woman to the gospel ministry in 1853.¹ At the same time, in different areas of the USA, the Restoration Movement with its radical view of *sola scriptura* was spreading.² The aim of the restoration movement was the complete restoration of the church to that established by the apostles after the resurrection of Christ Jesus in Jerusalem (Acts 2). The movement was composed of members from various denominational backgrounds. The early restoration movement pioneers were very concerned about the many traditions, doctrines, creeds and cultural values which had become part of the worship for members of the various denominations. James White and Joseph Bates were both members of the Christian Connexion, a branch of the restoration movement.

Ellen White, on the other hand, was socialized in a social climate where women were slowly reclaiming their right in society to be treated as equal human beings. It should therefore come as no surprise that the inclusion of women in ministry was not really an issue to early Adventists. On the issue of equality within marriage she wrote "Woman should fill the position which God originally designed for her, as her husband's equal."³ On the issue of equality in the church Ellen White wrote "As the children of God are one in Christ, how does Jesus look upon caste, upon society distinctions, upon the division of man from his fellow-man, because of colour, race, position, wealth, birth or

¹. Ibid., 49.

²Ibid.,

³ White, *The Adventist Home*, 231.

attainments? The secret of unity is found in the equality of believers in Christ.”¹ After her death this was an increasingly difficult bit of advice for church leaders to follow. She believed that we lived at the end of time and that this was a crisis that required the involvement of every hand. “In this time of crisis, the Lord has a work for women as well as for men....The Saviour will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of His countenance, and will give them a power that exceeds that of men.”² According to Ellen White, women have a special ability to reach the heart and inner life of humanity. They can apparently reach those whom men cannot reach. It’s is amazing then that there are so few women in strategic church leadership positions. She takes us back to Genesis 1 and the concept of *’ādām* male and female working in unity and as equals.

“When a great and decisive work is to be done, God chooses men and women to do this work. It will feel the loss if the talents of both are not combined.”³ In this statement Ellen White again points out that a successful approach to evangelism should be a combined approach including both women and men, not only as foot soldiers but also as generals. Her approach to evangelism and the spreading of the gospel was simple: “Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labour, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work.”⁴ The

¹ Ibid., 289.

² Ibid., 464.

³ Ibid., 469.

⁴ White, “The Duty of the Minister and the People,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (9 July 1895): 2.

evangelism success rate lessens considerably where only one half of the unit is used. The male/female unit becomes inefficient and less effective.

Ellen White identifies several elements to consider about women in ministry: (1) “There are women who should labour in the gospel ministry;” (2) women’s work is “essential,” and without it the cause will “suffer great loss;” (3) women in-ministry should receive just wages; (4) these wages may appropriately come from the tithe; (5) the call to ministry can in some cases take priority over housework and childcare; (6) some women should make ministry a lifelong vocation in which they earn their livelihood; and (7) conferences should not “discourage” women from “qualifying themselves” for ministerial work.¹ She clearly supports and encourages women to prepare for and participate in church leadership. She actually goes further than that saying: “this question is not for man to settle. The Lord has settled it. You are to do your duty to the women who labour in the gospel.”²

The Seventh-day Adventist Approach to Women in Leadership

The historical position of the early Adventist church has always been for women to serve as licensed ministers, evangelists and other official positions. Of course what they were paid is another matter altogether. One of the first women to be licensed was Sarah Lindsay in 1872. The denominational yearbooks list more than 20 women being licensed between 1874 and 1904, the first three decades of the yearbook. Some women were

¹ Ibid., 193.

² Ibid., 493.

outstanding evangelists and ministers. An amusing response to one such woman comes from a letter written by Pastor S. M. Cobb to his Conference President about Sr. Lulu Wightman, “She has accomplished more in the last two years than any minister in this state....I am...in favour of giving a license to Sr Lulu Wightman to preach, and if Bro. W. is a man of ability and works with his wife and promises to make a successful labourer, I am in favour of giving him a license also.”¹ She was an imminently successful minister even by today’s standard being credited with starting at least 17 churches, some which are still operational today.

The ministry of these women was not without questions, given the times, but for the early Adventists, the key to understanding women’s role in public ministry was provided in Joel 2:28 and in their understanding of spiritual gifts. Their approach was grounded in their understanding and the unqualified acceptance that in Acts 2 the Holy Spirit was poured out on all who were gathered in the upper room, including the women. They worked from the premise that the Pentecostal experience of Acts 2 included the women who had been in the upper room. This would then mean that women were included in the work of the early church and that this was evidenced by their inclusion in the preaching, prophesying, teaching, exhorting, edifying of the early Christian church.

These same gifts were present amongst the women in the early Adventist church. “As new converts were attracted into the Advent Movement, many were startled to discover that Adventist women evangelized, spoke in churches and religious gatherings, exhorted the believers, and exercised spiritual leadership and that this was seen as a

¹ Ibid., 332.

fulfilment of God's promise."¹ The vibrancy of the early Christian church with its inclusion of Philip's prophesying daughters, Priscilla and Aquilla's teaching function, Andronicus and Junia's apostolic leadership, and the many house churches led by women was modelled by the infant church with much success. Maybe it was the biblical model of the early Christian church together with the Restoration Movement and the Methodist background of the founders of the Adventist church that made the robust participation of women acceptable.

"The early Adventist encouragement of women in public speaking ran against the customs of most of the mainline churches and counter to traditional assumptions concerning the proper place of women in society."² This did not stop the women from preaching and teaching and the men from encouraging them to do so. Under the leadership of James White, Adventist authors and the Review continued to publish articles and reports about women's spiritual leadership in the church, women's evangelistic efforts and refuting the misuse of specific Pauline statements to exclude women from preaching or teaching ministries.

An 1895 article of Ellen White clearly states that women engaged in God's work should be set apart by prayer and the laying on of hands. Is that not ordination? She adds

¹ Ibid., 26.

² Ibid., 27.

“Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labour, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work.”¹

The Effect of Policy on the Exclusion of Women

“The life of Christ established a religion in which there is no caste, a religion by which Jew and Gentile, free and bond, are linked in a common brotherhood, equal before God. No question of policy influenced His movements.”² Policy has long been used to undermine the Biblical principles of equality and unity in the current operations of the Adventist Church. It has been used effectively to exclude very many Adventists from very many things ranging from employment to salary to medical and pension benefits to ordination. There is nothing new about using policy to justify holding on to the traditions of men. The Pharisee tradition of ‘Corban’ described in Mark 7:8, is an example of the Pharisees law that enabled Jews to abandon supporting needy parents. E. E. Cleveland, submitting an article for the 1989 Cohutta Springs Commission on The Role of Women in the Church describes the state of mind of women through the eyes of a Black man who has passed through all the mental stages that women are now passing through. This article describes how colour, race, position, wealth, birth, gender or attainments are used, using policy, to exclude people from participating in church work. “This article will reflect primarily the frustration of women being thus discussed, as if they are a breed apart. (1) There is a sense of exploitation; To be used but not accepted, (2) A sense of not really belonging; race, gender, education, wealth, or lack of it is not sufficient reason for denying

¹ Ibid., 2.

² Ibid., 287-289.

one a sense of belonging (3) A sense of underutilization; To be under-used is to be misused...To us 'shut-out ones', skin pigmentation was the sole criteria. (4) A sense of expendability; this is confusing. You see, the excluded know themselves to be necessary to the movement for reasons ranging from budget and presence to the very existence and functioning ...but to be treated as if your membership is of little consequence. The ladies understand this. (5) A sense of circumscription; The excluded naturally ask the question, Why not? ...Colour, gender, and national origin are insufficient answers. If the church belongs to all of its members, who among us can say to others, 'Hitherto shalt thou come and no further'? The ladies understand this. (6) A sense of futility. Everyone matters: Organizational function must achieve this level of inclusiveness. Ask any woman. And finally; (7) A sense of low self-esteem. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' is the divine summary of man's basic need.

Women are giving up on the soul winning partnership on the grounds that they are not partners. The ordination of women to the Gospel Ministry is not the subject of this article. Including them more fully as partners in soul-winning ministry is. During the Reformation, the Holy Spirit used men, women and children to herald the full revelation of grace. So shall it be in the end of the age. While history says little about the ordination of women and children, it certainly places no limits on their ministry. The Church that recognizes this will unleash upon the world it's (the church's) majority population for soul-winning service."¹

¹ E. E. Cleveland, "Free at Last!" 1988," Commission on the Role of Women II: Cohutta Springs Documents, 1989, 3-4.

Ellen White addressing delegates from various parts of the world where missionaries to Europe pleaded for a different approach to Europeans, had this to say about the power of the Holy Spirit. The current plea for church unity, that is being used to stave off a return to the biblical practise of setting aside everybody whom the Spirit has anointed for leadership, is set in the same mould.

“Since these meetings began, I have felt urged to dwell much upon love and faith. This is because you need this testimony. Some who have entered these missionary fields have said: ‘You do not understand the French people; you do not understand the Germans. They have to be met in just such a way.’ But I inquire: Does not God understand them? Is it not He who gives His servants a message for the people? He knows just what they need; and if the message comes directly from Him through His servants to the people, it will accomplish the work whereunto it is sent; it will make all one in Christ. Though some are decidedly French, others decidedly German, and others decidedly American, they will be just as decidedly Christlike.”¹ In today’s church climate one might add some are decidedly women or some are decidedly too youthful. In the Adventist Church we have significantly attacked class, race and nationality, but we have not adequately addressed or broken down gender prejudice.

How is policy used to inhibit or effect change? Since the 1890’s women has served as pastors in the Adventist church. All of this was to change in 1975 due to American Internal Revenue Service’s policy changes and a compromising administration. In 1975 the world church voted that women could serve as local church elders. At that time there

¹ Ibid., 287.

were several women serving as licensed ministers in the NAD, who were of course also on the ordination track. It is doubtful whether there was ever an intention to bring any of them to ordination. But during the mid-1960 and mid-1970 the American IRS rules for licensed ministers meant that they were not entitled to certain significant tax benefits. The result of this would place a tremendous financial burden on both the organisation and the individual unless the church could show that a licensed and an ordained minister were not substantially different. Unwilling to challenge the restrictiveness of the IRS rule in court, Wilson preferred to find a way around it. One of the ways to get around this rule would be for a licensed minister to be ordained as a church elder too. This would entitle her to perform functions, with permission, that only an ordained pastor could perform. During the 1975 Spring Meeting in April implications for SDA women in ministry were becoming evident. At this meeting women became eligible for ordination as church deaconesses and elders in North America. But what if they held the ministerial license, as in the past? Unfortunately, this meant that the licensed women would then be on ordained pastoral level too. To prevent this from happening, they sacrificed the licensed women pastors. The Spring Meeting in 1975 thus passed this resolution:

"[We] recommend that where Bible Instructors or other women with suitable qualifications and experience are able to fill ministerial roles, they be assigned as assistant pastors, their credentials being missionary license or missionary credential." Women were no longer eligible for the ministerial license since the license had been redefined to allow

prerogatives that were seen as off-limits for women.¹ Another track of ministry, that did not include ordination, was being paved for women. President Wilson considered the issue not one of a moral or theological issue in the difference between the functions of the licensed and ordained ministry, but a matter of church policy. Less than a year later, in August of 1978 the IRS modified its working policy. But the church did not reverse its policy on women. In this case 'women were indeed discussed and decided upon, as if they are a breed apart.'

In 1975 each division voted whether to allow women to serve as elders in their areas or not. Some divisions declined to implement the policy in their divisions. It is interesting to note that men and women are ordained in the same way. It took many years but today all divisions allow women elders in their territory. But for former General Conference President Neal C. Wilson, who insisted that pastoral ordination could no longer be a Union function but had to be a world decision, women's pastoral ordination may have followed the same quiet route that women elders ordination did. Again the question of women's ordination was argued as a matter of policy. Policy and not theology was the issue. President Wilson said "It would not be right to ordain a woman pastor in America if she could not serve in Africa. Her ordination should be valid everywhere." To which Charles Bradford, an African-American President of the NAD responded: "When I was ordained, I could not preach or pastor the White church across the street. If the

¹ Bert Haloviak, "Money and Theology: IRS and the Redefining of SDA Ministry," General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist' Archives, 1996, 5.

principle you have stated had been in place at that time, I would never have been ordained.”¹ It is enough to make women wonder where God fits in.

Ellen White as usual gives clear direction on the way forward; “We have not six patterns to follow, nor five; we have only one, and that is Christ Jesus. If the Italian brethren, the French brethren, and the German brethren try to be like Him, they will plant their feet upon the same foundation of truth; the same spirit that dwells in one will dwell in the other—Christ in them, the hope of glory...We should endeavour to bring all into the harmony that there is in Jesus, labouring for the one object, the salvation of our fellow men.”²

If women are a thorn in the flesh of the established Adventist Church it is possibly because the church is no longer viewed through quite the same lens as the early Christian church fathers did or the early Adventist pioneers did. “As the children of God are one in Christ, how does Jesus look upon caste, upon society distinctions, upon the division of man from his fellow-man, because of colour, race, position, wealth, birth, or attainments? The secret of unity is found in the equality of believers in Christ.” The Review and Herald, December 22, 1891. The simple question really is what Jesus would do about the ‘woman question’ today.

In a letter by J. A. Mowatt , the author, asks a simple question: “Who would object to a woman rescuing his friend from temporal death? No man. Then why object to a

¹ J. David Newman, “Wanted: A Theology of Ordination”, *Adventists Today*, 18, no. 3 (2010): 6.

² *Ibid.*, 287-289.

woman rescuing a man from eternal death? Who would dare say that Grace Darling did wrong to go out in the lifeboat and rescue the crew of a sinking vessel? No man. Why then object to a woman pushing out the gospel lifeboat to rescue men sinking into perdition...”¹ Uriah Smith in the editor’s introduction to Mowatt’s article commented “We consider the following a triumphant vindication of the right of the sisters to take part in the public worship of God...they have a right to do this, or any amount besides in the same direction.”

Ellen White was firmly restorationist. This was a common theme that threads through her writing. “To restore in man the image of his Maker...this is the object of education, the great object of life.”² If restoring the image of God in man is the great object of Adventist education, that restoration must include the equality of man (*’ādām*) that has been lost through the effects of sin. Furthermore, this equality would be clearly demonstrated in the practice of the church. Its practices would be based primarily on biblical principles and secondarily on policy. She believed that leaders should work to restore God’s plans for an inclusive church. “Is it not He who gives His servants a message for the people? He knows just what they need; and if the message comes directly from Him through His servants to the people, it will accomplish the work whereunto it is sent; it will make all one in Christ. Though some are decidedly French, others decidedly German, and others decidedly American, they will be just as decidedly Christlike.”³ The same Holy

¹ J. A. Mowatt, editorial, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 30 July 1861, 1, 66.

² *Ibid.*, 15.

³ *Ibid.*, 287-289.

Spirit that convicts the soul on the issue of the Sabbath will convict the soul on the presence of women in leadership. When looking at women in leadership, especially in our present multi-cultural and diverse church, “Ellen White herself lived an essential leadership concept –that cultural position, wealth, power, education, gender and physical appeal are no predictors or limitations to God’s leadership calling.”¹ She was the weakest of the weak, no social connections, poor, uneducated, a woman and not much physical beauty, but God chose her, as He did Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Priscilla, Mary and countless others, to be His messenger. Ellen White believed and taught that equality within marriage came out of Eden. “Woman should fill the position which God originally designed for her, as her husband’s equal.”²

When one considers the considerable confusion evidenced in the number of Commissions set up by the General Conference ostensibly to understand the role of women in the Church, it makes one want to cry. Is the very clear and obvious inclusion of women in leadership in the Old Testament, in the New Testament by Jesus, that anti-feminist Paul, the early Christian Church and the early Adventist Church not persuasive enough?

Women’s Voice in Church Leadership

The key reason, according to Bert Haloviak, why women lost their voice, involves the relationship between women, the local church, the issue of "pastoring" vs. evangelism

¹ Ibid., 127.

² Ibid., 231.

and fundraising.¹ The 19th Century Adventist church was focussed on mission. Sharing the 3 Angels Messages was an urgent priority. The pioneers saw the duty of the minister as having "to preach the word, to teach faithfully the plain declarations of the word of God" and then to move on. It soon became clear that ministering involved both evangelism and pastoral work. After much debate the pioneers moved away from the practice of the day, which was a stationary pastorate. Instead, they developed a 'departmental' concept that would see laymen and women assume local church responsibilities. The pastoral role probably because it was a more nurturing role was often occupied by women while men often were the itinerant evangelist. After a body of believers was raised up, the husband went on to new territory, while the wife remained for a while to more fully establish the new believers in the message. Evangelism became the key to 'proof' of ministry.

Women, by the 1890s, had risen to conference leadership positions in those areas that most directly related to the work of the local church. However, in the 1920's we begin to see a shift in approach. In 1890 approximately 15% of the administrative positions within the North American conferences were held by SDA women. After the 1901 reorganization the percentage was 11% (1905) and remained consistent until the mid-1920s when it dropped to 7.8% (1928). By the mid-1930s, the figure was 4.5%.

In 1923, evangelism and economy in administration became the focus of the President's Council and the Autumn Council. The key focus was to encourage Conference Presidents to hold up the evangelical work as first and foremost. It was John K Jones, New

¹ Bert Haloviak, *The Decline of Leadership Positions for SDA Women* (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives, 1990), 20 March, 1990, 1.

York Conference president, trying to discourage the many local church pastorates that were springing up, who insisted "only men who have as their objective the saving of souls" should be chosen as leaders. The Autumn Council later voted that the educational secretaries or superintendents, home missionaries and missionary volunteer secretaries appointed, should have practical experience in evangelistic work and preferably be ordained. Women were thus inadvertently recommended to be eliminated from the three departments they had been most identified with.

At the same time, a document entitled 'The Work of the Minister' was approved. One of its provisions read: "Recommended that every minister, whether a resident pastor or a departmental secretary, make it his objective to engage in aggressive effort to win new members to the faith."¹ The provision was consistent since ordination effectively became a requirement for departmental leadership. Such leaders were now explicitly defined as ministers.

Economics impacted further on the position of women at the 1932 Autumn Council: "Because of the exigencies of the present economic conditions...,We recommend, 'That our employing organizations spread their power of employment as far as possible among our members, and that the list of employees be so adjusted that both husband and wife shall not be remuneratively employed. Where, to maintain the efficiency of the work, or for special reasons, it seems necessary to vary from this rule by the employment of a man and his wife, the wife be paid on the basis of a greatly reduced

¹ Bert Haloviak, *The Decline of Leadership Positions for SDA Women* (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives, 1990), 20 March 1990, 5.

wage'."¹ How that for is misuse and it is in the minutes. It is probable, considering God's faithfulness to His people in the past, that had church leaders been faithful in patterning their policies on the biblical principles of equity and fairness to all, we would not have the credibility issues inside and outside of the church regarding our practices. It is also possible that the unfair practices which the church has engaged in over the years led to a falling away of many of the children who observed the effects of these practices in their homes and on their parents.

The Adventist approach to many issues is inadequate and needs revisiting. Ellen White's advice when an approach is so muddled with prejudice, cultural biases and personal assumptions that it becomes difficult to draw proper conclusions that can withstand a test, still holds true today: "There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation. We are living in perilous times, and it does not become us to accept everything claimed to be true without examining it thoroughly; neither can we afford to reject anything that bears the fruits of the Spirit of God; but we should be teachable, meek and lowly of heart."²

¹ Ibid., 6.

² Ellen G. White, "Christ Our Hope," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (20 December 1892): 1.

Man was created in the image of God. That image consists of male and female. Neither is less competent than the other to represent God. Understanding the necessity for a correct representation of who He is Jesus in John 17 prays that His people might be one. The unity of God's people will cause the world to believe in Him. This unity is nurtured by the gifts of the Spirit. In Romans 12:6-8 it is clear that these gifts are not gender specific but are assigned and allocated to whom the Holy Spirit chooses or identifies as a worthy recipient. Both men and women are called to be His priests into eternity as a symbol of His salvific grace to the unfallen worlds. In Matt 28:18-20 Christ instructs all His followers to go into the world and make disciples of people.

Having looked at the biblical foundations for leadership as varied as spiritual, judicial, civil or prophetic, it appears that women are not excluded or limited from leading. The absence of women leaders can be due to a number of reasons but it does not biblically justify their exclusion from leadership today.

CHAPTER 3

A THEOLOGICAL ISSUE

Women employed in leadership positions in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) usually come into its employ through a different route to most of the men who are employed. Most men are employed as Pastors before they are called to serve at an administrative level in the church. Women are appointed to leadership in the SDA Church by a Business Session or the Executive Committee of the organisation. On the other hand, a Pastor is usually called into the ministry after either serving as an intern or an elder in the local church. However, women are routinely disregarded for most leadership positions, executive or pastoral, simply because they are not pastors. I will examine the biblical issues surrounding the employment of women within the executive levels of leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I use the issues that arise to highlight some of the reasons why so few women are employed in the leadership structures of the church with a view to increase the number of women in executive leadership.

The Issue

Obey has always wanted to become a Pastor. She felt the Lord calling her into the gospel ministry since she was a little girl. Upon finishing high school she went to Maranatha College where she completed a Theology Degree. She was accepted by her classmates.

During the final year of study, the Presidents of the Conferences in her Union came to the college to interview the students and to encourage them to apply for an internship. However, when Obey was interviewed, every President, while inviting her to apply at the same time tried to persuade her not to apply. Not one of them thought that her application would be considered seriously or that it would be successful.

She remembered that when she had initially applied to study Theology, the Dean of the School of Theology had tried to dissuade her. He told her that it was unlikely that she would ever be appointed as a Pastor because the Presidents would be reluctant to support her appointment. Furthermore, if the Presidents did not support her name she would not be accepted. However, Obey felt that she was obeying the call of God by enrolling and studying to become a Pastor.

Before graduation, Obey applied to her home Conference for acceptance into the internship programme. She was the only woman in the graduating class. She was also the only graduate not to be accepted into the pastoral internship programme. It seemed to her that there was no criteria set for acceptance except being female.

The Dean of her faculty, some of her fellow students and a few church members protested against her exclusion. Obey had fulfilled all the criteria for employment as a Pastor but the President felt that the churches in the United Conference were not ready for a female Pastor and he was not ready to rock the boat by appointing one. They requested biblical reasons for it but they were not satisfied with the response of the Conference President. A few labour experts even encouraged Obey to sue the church because they said this was discriminatory according to the labour laws of South Africa.

Eventually, the President offered her employment as a Bible worker. The job requirements were the same as her male counterparts but the remuneration was slightly less. Her supervisor had graduated in the same year that she did and with the same degree.

When the first term was over, Obey approached the President and again enquired about an appointment as a Pastor. The President felt that she needed to spend another term as a Bible Worker. She completed two terms as a gospel worker and during this time, it was discovered that she had great organizational and secretarial skills.

At the next business session Obey's name was recommended for Executive Secretary of the United Conference. The Nominating Committee felt that one less pastor would be taken out of the field if Obey was willing to serve in that capacity. Furthermore, the policy did not exclude a person who was not a pastor from holding that position.

The delegates of the Business Session were shocked at the nomination of a woman for the position of Executive Secretary. The delegates kept asking that clarity be given as to who could be appointed to that position. Their understanding was that it had to be a Pastor and a man. The majority felt that women were not equipped to lead the church. They felt that this was a function of men.

Eventually an Objections Committee was appointed to hear objections against the name of Obey. When it became clear that the Executive Secretary did not have to be a pastor, the objections then came against the appointment of a woman. The main arguments against her appointment were twofold; that Paul wrote against women in leadership, particularly over men; that it went against Black traditional culture.

The pastors, who were all delegates at large, met in groups to discuss what they saw as a new development. Being called to serve the church as an Administrator or Director is generally seen by 'ambitious' district pastors as a promotion and a position to strive for. For some it would even be the pinnacle of their careers. Others aim higher. They tried to explain to Obey why she was unsuitable for the position. How this position was traditionally reserved for a seasoned Pastor, someone who was very familiar with church policies and procedures. It had to be someone who could represent the Conference at Union meetings, keep the minutes of all Conference meetings, etc., and Obey had never done any of this before. She asked whether the outgoing Executive Secretary had had any experience when he was elected. "No," they said, "but at least he was a pastor."

As she listened to their explanations, she wondered whether God had really called her into the ministry or whether God appointed men to decide whether God has really called you or not. She wondered whether women had ever had a voice with God, whether gender would ever become a non-issue in church leadership.

Interview 1

Mrs Boss: Departmental Director

I came from the private sector into the church system about ten years ago. I made the decision but it was a very big culture shock, I must admit. In the beginning it was very hard due to all the politics and other things that you find in the church.

In the church system, discrimination and the gender bias is a very big thing because people believe that a woman does not have a voice, does not have a brain,

cannot make decisions and therefore cannot render valuable input. Even if you have qualifications you are not really deemed to be fit to render certain duties.

I am a National Director, but all the Regional Directors are male. We have one woman but our organisation has a history of male domination. What impacts our employment of women is the structure and the fact that employees are away from home a lot. Even when you advertise posts, women just simply don't go for it, due to that. I also think the organisational culture definitely contributes to it.

In moving around between different Conferences, as a SAU Director, I have found the same mindset everywhere, maybe with a slightly different slant. Certain Conferences present a huge challenge because of the strong local culture. They are really challenged by women in leadership positions. Even at their Conference Session, a woman is not allowed to stand up and speak to men, you have to be submissive and you must be seated. Yet these same people daily work in a business or political environment where their cultural practices are not allowed or are discouraged.

We've struggled to get women to commit themselves to serve on our Board. Many women see this as a conflict of interest for them in terms of their culture and the church culture. In their minds, the place of a woman and where she fits in is not clear. Most ladies are satisfied with being the secretary of a meeting but not the chairperson.

There is an increase of women in executive leadership at the SAU but it is more in the peripheral areas of ministry e.g. MOWCS, Pensions, Women & Children, but not in the more traditional departments. I feel that Pastors do have a sense of entitlement, 'this is a church organization therefore we have to be appointed in these positions'. There is not an

expectation for people to be adequately equipped and capable to fulfil these duties.

Usually a person is appointed because he is likeable and not because he is necessarily competent.

I think the greatest obstacle in the church is a fear of change. People are resistant to change. My greatest joy is the developmental part of our work where you can actually see the success steps in what you're doing. The question of the representation of women is not a pressing issue at the SAU currently but I think it is better than it was in the past. Dr Letseli, specifically, is very fair in terms of representation. Certain of our committees are now structured so as to automatically consider representation. As a woman, you actually become more assertive because you have a bigger need to be heard. You feel that is your duty towards other women. From my observation other women do not necessarily feel the same way. Many just go with the flow. Women can do much more for other women in the system.

I want to leave a legacy of girls wanting church employment and not being afraid, because they are just as capable as the next person. To get the younger girls to actually say 'this is my opinion', is for me a very important step to create for them and helping them not to be afraid of this. Even if you look at Women's Ministries, looking in from the outside, it's a little domain over there. We don't see the power in the structure. And it doesn't flow into our other departments and for me that's a very big problem.

I believe the Executive committee should actually have a Charter or a governing document that includes a representation structure. This will automatically increase the representation of women in our leadership structures. I don't think our governing

structures have gone so far as to say it is our duty to break the mould. There are no mechanisms in place to do this. Men still ask “why do you need women on the Board?” Now the flip side of the coin happens when you bring strong women on the Board and men ask “are you sure we need them HERE.”

Women face a number of restraints working for the church. Firstly, the organisational culture limits women’s employment opportunities. Secondly, in some situations the men make it very difficult for women to function. Thirdly, women struggle to be assertive. We need to create a culture where we actually protect women who are just coming into the system. For example, one of the SAU Executive members is also a member of KZN Conference and at their Session she made a statement. A man in an equal position got up and she retracted her statement because of the cultural pressure. We’ve got to create an infrastructure that is welcoming to women. I believe that in general, women don’t feel welcome in leadership positions in this organisation. They are made to feel as if they are intruding in a domain where they do not actually belong.

From a social work point of view, one of the unique contributions women can make to church leadership is their use of soft skills. Men struggle with this. When working in a soft skill industry like we are in, we look at skills like being able to grasp the workload. For example a male Director will look at a kitchen and say “we can cook 500 extra meals here” because there is a stove, pots and 2 employees. But they can’t comprehend the implication of the additional number of pockets of potatoes and carrots that must be prepared in order to cook the meal. Those steps are missing. Those are big issues for us.

I worked with quite a few women who have left the church's employment. Sexual harassment in the workplace was one of the problems. The organization is unable to act for women, against men. One time an external person intervened and actually went to the Labour Court. The church blamed a certain lady because they said "how can you put the church in this position." But actually my question was, "how could the church have put the lady in this position?" The church is her employer; why is it not looking after her? We believe that we have the truth but our value system is very skewed.

I have received some very negative responses from men simply because I am a woman. For instance, I'm always aggressive, I don't know what I'm talking about, I don't belong here, this is a male domain. Actually they are just tolerating me. As a woman, how dare you.....etc. But I will do it again. These are some of the scenarios where your normal behaviour would be viewed as out of the ordinary.

There are quite a few reasons why the SDA Church is reluctant to employ women: A fear of change; Loss of control to women is a very big fear; Control, power and status. I feel it is a very psychological process. The boys club is a reality in the church, "this is our domain, women don't belong here!" This has to change and leadership must be very intentional about this.

There is a definite glass ceiling in the church for women. I cannot understand the attitude of the church towards employing women as pastors. The church's position on women's ordination is a big issue for me personally. I feel it is unfair and that women will be excellent pastors. Even looking at the positions of the President, CFO & Secretariat, its like hands off, women don't belong in this domain.

In my position I try to be a change agent for women by nurturing and empowering them through various skills workshops. We have to teach them not to have fear. They start to hate the church. I've seen that over and over again. Women often walk away from careers in the church because they say "I can't take that anymore."

Interview 2

Ps Wakaba: SAU President 1995-2005

BPR Ps Wakaba, what was the thinking of your Administration towards women in leadership in the SAU during your terms of office?

Ps W Many women were enrolled to study Theology and prepare for the ministry at HBC, Bethel and Solusi. I tried my very best to persuade the Presidents of Conferences at the time to employ women as Pastors but it was very difficult to convince them. At the SAU we decided to lead by example.

BPR Has this decision worked?

Ps W A little bit. There is still quite a bit of resistance against women in leadership especially employing women as pastoral staff.

BPR Did the Presidents give any reasons for this resistance?

Ps W The Presidents gave no reasons; they simply did not employ women. During the time of the Southern Union, this issue was taken to the Cape Field at Mdantsane to be discussed and voted on. The response was positive in 1985-1990. I used to

receive letters from some Pastors objecting to women being elected as elders. I would refer them to the relevant policies in the Church Manual.

BPR How did you get started working for the Church?

Ps W I started as an office secretary in 1962. In 1964 I started training for the ministry at Bethel College. In 1968 I became a Departmental Director for the Cape Field. In 1975 I was the Youth Director for the Southern Union. In 1990 I was the President. In 1991 the Unions merged. In 1992 I was appointed as the Education director and served as President from 1995-2005. The hot issue at the time was the 'head of household' policy, which definition excluded women. This meant that women were excluded from almost all benefits e.g. education, housing etc. We addressed this and settled this inequity but it did not equalize all the benefits.

BPR How did the Department of Women's Ministries get to be included and accepted as a department at the SAU?

Ps W In 1995 the Department of Women's Ministries was voted in as a Department of the Church at the 1995 GC Session at Utrecht. We came back and promoted it in our Union. There was some resistance in Caprivi which is near to Zambia, where rumours were circulating that the Department originated in the Roman Catholic Church and as a result met with huge resistance. Another reason was that the Dorcas Society saw the new department as a threat and so the leaders encouraged its members to reject it.

BPR Was the Dorcas Society the only place for women to lead?

Ps W There are strong women organisations outside of the church. There is always a tendency for women to organise themselves by forming groups

BPR Why is there such an uneasy relationship between Dorcas and AWM?

Ps W We as a Church are a bit responsible. We needed to define the differences clearly.

BPR What were the most important decisions regarding women that were taken during your tenure?

Ps W We tried to make sure that every committee at the Union included women. I tried my best to ensure that when appointing committee members we were gender/race sensitive.

BPR Have we increased women in leadership?

Ps W Yes, we have increased the inclusion of women in leadership, slowly but surely.

Interview 3

Mrs N B Wakaba

BPR How long and in which capacities have you served the church?

Sr W I started off teaching primary school in Pedi & New Brighton Primary School in 1963/1964 for 2 ½ years. In 1965 we married. My name is Nomava, which means 'experience.'

BPR What made you decide to qualify in accountancy?

Sr W My training in accountancy started at Solusi College where a degree in accountancy was being offered and the then Executive Secretary of the Southern Union persuaded me to enrol. I did, and this always ensured that I had a job, although this was not a consideration at the time. I knew that I would not go very far working for the church.

BPR Your decision to be a teacher?

Sr W Back then the only real options you had as a black woman was to be a nurse or a teacher. I did not grow up as an Adventist. It was my privilege to attend an SDA primary school where the teachers encouraged me to go to Bethel to further my high school education.

BPR What did you discover while working for the church in the accountancy department?

Sr W About 80% of the Church's treasurers are women. Our church's main financial support comes from the low-income earners. The majority of tithe payers come from the low-income bracket. Women are the most faithful.

BPR Where you were first employed when you returned from Solusi College?

Sr W In 1988-1992, I was called to serve as the Treasurer for the TOC. The reason was they were unable to find a man and so I was initially employed to serve for only 1

year. After my appointment, the first Executive Meeting was held with me being present. It soon became apparent that the pastors present were uncomfortable. They had various concerns amongst which were “who was going to sign the cheques” because the then President did not want to give me the cheque books but cheques were being issued. I was compelled to have to ask the President to hand over the cheque books. Eventually he did after giving all kinds of reasons why he could not but I said; “authority and responsibility go hand in hand,” this was my slogan. “I am in charge of the trust funds and I must have authority.”

Sr W Sometimes the pastors were overprotective but generally they gave me a chance. They could see the treasury being managed positively. For instance, before an Excom, I would always meet with the other officers to share and explain my financial report.

Ps Ian Hartley once commented that the perception in South Africa is that black people cannot manage funds.

BPR How did you manage that perception when you arrived at the SAU?

Sr W In 1992 I was called to serve as the Associate Treasurer at the SAU. I was shocked and surprised knowing the culture of my church. It made me overwork. I would always be trying to prove them wrong, trying to find new ways to do things not only because I was a woman but also because I was a black woman.

BPR How did you cope with the racial and gender prejudice?

Ps W It was tough for blacks who were employed as church workers back then. The administration of the Southern Union then was all white. When I returned from the USA in 1982, I was called to serve as the executive secretary. There was a guesthouse on the premises and a toilet but this could only be used by whites. A small informal settlement nearby had a little house for blacks to live in. It was Ps Masuku from Solusi College who asked me why we put up with it and challenged me to speak up and insist on change. I did.

Sr W I had a degree in business from Andrews University when we returned but I was initially only allowed to work as a secretary but not as an accountant. When I was eventually allowed to work as an accountant I discovered that the church kept 2 sets of books S1 for blacks and S2 for whites. At that time financial statements were produced manually but I was not allowed to see them. When I was eventually allowed to work with the financial statements, I discovered huge differences in salaries.

Ps W A black President earned less than a white receptionist. The reason given was that economics required whites to be paid extra allowances.

Sr W Coming into a largely male accounting environment presented me with great challenges. I felt that I was always given the most difficult tasks.

BPR What was different for you moving from the TOC to the SAU?

Sr W Before we moved to Bloemfontein, some local businessmen from the TOC called a special meeting with us. During this meeting they gave us some warning and pointers as to what we would find at the SAU and how we should respond. If it was not for that meeting, we would have received a big shock. We moved into absolutely empty offices. We had to ask for every bit of stationary and equipment that an office should ordinarily have. At the time Mr C Scout was an Associate Treasurer but neither he nor I were allowed to sign cheques. Eventually I requested that Mr Scout be allowed to sign and a bit later I again had to request that I be allowed to sign cheques.

BPR The specific challenges that you were faced with?

Sr W Many things were kept from me but I worked closely with Mr Scout and he helped me a great deal. He also made my transition smooth. Racism and gender prejudice was also a huge challenge. Sometimes the treasury team would meet without informing or inviting me. One day, for instance, I found them discussing the budget without me. An Australian GC treasurer was doing a six month stint at the SAU at the time. He raised my exclusion as an issue. This is how I started being included in the budgetary meetings.

BPR Were the salaries equal by then?

Sr W Yes, but not yet equal with men. Only men received certain allowances, e.g. head of household allowance. Only a man was deemed to be the head of a household.

BPR How did your involvement at such a leadership level impact on your children?

Sr W When we returned from the USA back in 1982, our son could only speak English but he was not accepted at Helderberg High School. Fortunately, a man from Damelin College in Bloemfontein, a white school, accepted him. Between 1986 and 1990 our second son could still not be accepted at HBHS. Our third son did his primary school at Westrand Primary where Mr Hunter was the principal. When he completed and applied to go to Sedaven, only his coloured classmates were accepted, not him.

Ps W A white pastor, David Packham, was emigrating to the States. In 1990 he called Beauty and told her that his conscience could not rest knowing that our son was refused acceptance to Sedaven. He personally called the principal at Sedaven to plead that our boy be accepted. In 1991 he became the first of 2 black boys to be accepted at Sedaven.

He limped through school. Even today he recalls how certain teachers didn't really want to teach them. When he went to University he became an A student in the Sciences and graduated with distinction. He won a Fulbright scholarship to the University of Illinois where he received a special award. Today he describes his best schooling years as those spent at Westrand Primary.

Sr W But I never discussed church matters with my children and so they did not really develop negative attitudes towards the church in our home. I retired at the end of January 2010.

BPR Did women ever discuss your position with you?

Sr W Not really, I would speak to women, particularly Pastors wives and encourage them on a one to one basis.

BPR Would you say that you have paved the way for other women to work at that leadership level.

Sr W I'm a woman and black. When I was at the TOC some laymen tried to instruct me in my job. They were unsure whether I was capable of doing my job. Being a woman and black, sometimes I felt that some black men also had problems with women in leadership, not just white men. They would try to dictate to me how I should use my budget.

Ps W The perception has always been and the impression given that blacks put down women. But when I tried to get women appointed as Pastors it was the white Presidents who opposed it more than the black Presidents.

BPR Sr Wakaba, what advice would you give to women who are currently preparing for the workplace, if you had that opportunity?

Sr W I would say to them that in whatever they do they should always be opening the doors for other women to follow. Always do a good job; it leaves a good impression of all women. I sometimes used to feel sorry for Ivy Petersen who served at the same time as I did. She would make suggestions or

recommendations and sometimes the men would just laugh because they were unable to comprehend the importance of what she was saying for women.

Ps W We don't want to copy politics, but women should have equal presence because their sensitivity is needed in church leadership. Leadership should educate the people. Copying is not always wrong. If it is the right thing to do, copy it.

BPR If you could serve your term now, what would you do differently? Do you have any regrets?

Ps W I do have a feeling of embarrassment. The political world is ahead of us. We should have been ahead in including women in leadership positions. I regret that we've been left behind.

Sr W I don't have many regrets. My time was during the tough years of South African SDA leadership. Today I would be more open with my bosses about the way that they treated women because we are equal before God.

BPR Do you still feel strongly about the unequal treatment that you received?

Sr W I felt that the church only wanted my hands. My job was to do the work. It did not want my brain. Even though I was appointed as an associate treasurer, I was not allowed to be included in the major decision-making process.

BPR How did you balance home and career?

Sr W I only managed because my husband assisted me at home. I would not have managed without his help.

Ps W Some things were not ideal e.g. leaving the children with a maid. But economics forced us to both be working. Our home was often far away from the office.

Sr W When my husband was itinerating, I would have to use public transport, often taking more than one bus to get to work. A lot of time was spent travelling.

BPR Did you ever disagree/clash on how women were treated in church employ?

Ps & Sr Not really because we tried our best to improve the situation while we were working.

BPR Was it always because of budget constraints that women in leadership are not accepted?

Ps W No not always. Budget is rarely a reason that excludes. If the committee is serious about an issue it will find the budget to accommodate the person.

BPR Sr W, did you receive good support from women?

Sr W No! When you work for the treasury you are often treated as if you're a monster. The Shepherdess is affected by church funds and so she will complain about her husbands' salary. They see you as an enemy not as a person who ensures that his salary is paid every month. Usually the problem is a lack of knowledge and understanding of church policies.

BPR Please share 3 of the most important leadership principles that you have learnt over your many years in leadership.

- Ps W
1. You must understand the people that you are leading, their concerns.
 2. People want to know that they have a contribution to make so always give them an opportunity to have a say.
 3. We are a diverse nation, ensure that all the different groups are included in the decision-making process.

I am not suggesting a quota system but problems arise when a group is being neglected. For instance Mr Peters came into education because the Indian group felt that they were being neglected.

BPR Thank you so much for the time that you took to participate in my case study research. I really appreciate your willingness to share so much of your experience with me.

CHAPTER 4

THE NEED FOR BETTER SERVICE

Reflecting God in the 21st Century

One of the best known and most quoted bible verses that is used when referring to the mission of the Adventist Church currently, is Matt 18:18-20 “All power is given to me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” This directive is given to all the disciples, the 12 and those who were with them (Matt 18:18-20, Mark 16:7-11, Luke 23:6-11, John 20:21-23). All power is given to Jesus and it is Jesus who commands all His followers to go. He has not delegated this power to the church, even to the Roman Catholic Church.

It is insightful that Jesus not only appears to a number of women disciples before He appears to the male disciples but also that He chose women to communicate the message that He had risen. The message consisted of more than the three words “He is risen” and more than a reminder of the invitation that they should all meet up in Galilee. It included a reminder of what He had taught disciples, including the women, about His death and resurrection while He was still with them. The women explained what Jesus had taught to them in Galilee a second time. This is why Ellen White says that it was Mary

who first preached the resurrection sermon.¹ When Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit upon them He breathed it on the men and the women. The question ‘who is called and who should go’ can be answered in the affirmative: ‘everyone’. At His resurrection Jesus wiped away the last vestiges of masculine pride and privilege by placing women at the head, as it were, of the good news of His resurrection. It is as if by appearing to the women first, He was putting the post ascension group of disciples on an equal footing. As if He said there will be equality and unity amongst my followers. This is confirmed in the upper room when the Holy Spirit is poured upon all present, not only the original twelve disciples. It was manifested further with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. There is no record of women being either excluded from the upper room, the preaching on the day of Pentecost or the invitation to follow Christ and through this become ministers to others. It is Peter who reminds the hearers that the prediction of Joel is being fulfilled in their presence, and this included the participation of women. God is not fully represented unless both male and female is present. Women should be included at every level of church leadership in proportionate numbers until women in leadership ceases to be an unusual occurrence.

Why then do so few women today serve the church with their leadership and ministerial abilities? The present organisational culture of the Adventist Church needs to be changed to be more inclusive of women and to be woman friendly. In line 1 of the case study, Obey feels that God is calling her into pastoral ministry. She responds to the call by enrolling to do a Theology Degree at Maranatha College. But when it came to

¹ Ellen G. White, “Address and Appeal, Setting Forth the Importance of Mission, 1879” *Review and Herald*, Jan 2, 1879, 1.

employment she discovered that church pastoral employment is male and male pastor orientated. The process, for women who are not pastors, of being employed in the executive levels of the church is arbitrary and uncertain at best and exclusionary and discriminatory at worst. One of the problems is that the Adventist Church appears to have usurped the power to call and to send which was given to Jesus in Matt 28. Obey was not employed, not because she was not called by God, she was. She met all the criteria required of a candidate except gender. "The early Adventist encouragement of women in public speaking ran against the customs of most of the mainline churches and counter to traditional assumptions concerning the proper place of women in society."¹ This did not stop the women from preaching and teaching and the men from encouraging them to do so. Women need to be encouraged to be pastors and church leaders for they can do a work in the gospel ministry that their male counterparts cannot do. This encouragement should be done regularly and in the presence of the congregation in order to educate the church at large. This will remove the very real perception that women cannot lead in the Church of God. This perception is really based on the fact that women are generally not included in top level leadership and that very few have been given the opportunity to prove that they are able to lead. A natural consequence of an approach of equality will be that young women will feel encouraged to study to become Pastors and thereby bring completeness to the ministry that is sorely missing. "When a great and decisive work is to

¹ Beverly G. Beem and Ginger Hanks Harwood, "What about Paul?" Early Adventists and the Preaching of "the Marys," *Spectrum*, 38 no. 2, (Spring 2010): 26.

be done, God chooses men and women to do this work. It will feel the loss if the talents of both are not combined.”¹

The decision that was made at the Autumn Council, 1923, that only men who had practical experience in evangelistic work and were preferably ordained, entrenched the teaching and thinking of Adventists that only men could hold certain executive positions. The reasons for the change was lost and forgotten but the price of that poor decision remains with us to this day. It has been transported into various cultures and countries where it often met similar male-dominated cultural practices of the indigenous peoples. Instead of bringing the inclusiveness of the gospel in Jesus to the people, the Adventist missionaries carried with them the affirmation of male dominance within the Adventist Church organization. This influence is felt in the farthest reaches of Adventism. The idea of gender equality in service is foreign to many cultures, but it can be taught and modelled.

One can appreciate how crucial Ellen White’s advice to the missionaries who went to Europe was “Since these meetings began, I have felt urged to dwell much upon love and faith. This is because you need this testimony. Some who have entered these missionary fields have said: ‘You do not understand the French people; you do not understand the Germans. They have to be met in just such a way.’ But I inquire: Does not God understand them? Is it not He who gives His servants a message for the people? He knows just what they need; and if the message comes directly from Him through His servants to the people, it will accomplish the work whereunto it is sent; it will make all

¹ Ibid., 469.

one in Christ. Though some are decidedly French, others decidedly German, and others decidedly American, they will be just as decidedly Christlike.”¹

It is still God who gives the message. It is still God who calls the messenger. It is still God who prepares the heart and convicts the mind. Some of the most far-reaching negative decisions affecting women leadership in the church were taken in the 1970’s under the leadership of Elder N Wilson. It was the 1975 GC Spring Meeting that passed this resolution “[We] recommend that where Bible Instructors or other women with suitable qualifications and experience are able to fill ministerial roles, they be assigned as assistant pastors, their credentials being missionary license or missionary credential.”² Women who were licensed ministers had their credentials changed into a missionary license. Women, there were several at the time, who had previously been on the ordination track and served as pastors were suddenly disempowered to serve because of tax considerations in the United States. By 1978 Adventist women were excluded from receiving the ministerial license that they had received beginning in the 1870s. “The inconsistency reached new dimensions in 1989 when the Annual Council voted not to recommend women to be ordained to the gospel ministry, but also allowed women ministers to perform essentially the ministerial functions of an ordained minister of the gospel in the churches to which they are assigned.”³ The effect of this policy has served to

¹ Ibid.), 287.

² Bert Haloviak, “Money and Theology: IRS and the Redefining of SDA Ministry” (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives 1996), 1996, 5.

³ Ibid., 8.

further entrench the perception that women should not be ordained. What the church had an opportunity to do in times of ease it now has to do under great duress. Due to the continuous pressure in a world that has long since acknowledged the equality of genders, church leadership now find themselves scrambling for a theology of ordination. There should be consistency and fairness in the Church's approach to the ministry. For the process of the church to regain credibility, women pastors should be reinstated as licensed ministers on an ordination track until the questions are settled. This would be unity.

Currently there is no apparent strategy to increase feminine leadership at executive level. There also appears to be an absence of concern about feminine leadership in the executive levels of the church. This is evidenced by the few women in the leadership structure of the higher organisation itself. At the General Conference itself less than 10% of the departments are led by women and not one of those departments are considered to be a 'mainstream' department. As far back as 2006 when General Conference President, Jan Paulsen, hosted the "Let's Talk" show with women, one participant asked whether he had a plan to increase women in leadership in Southern Africa. He responded 'no'. He felt that that was a local issue. However the GC has clearly not been able to address that issue itself. Until they legitimately address the issue of the lack of women at the top the GC has no credible voice because people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. Policy should not be used to marginalise women; we have long passed that phase in our history. Meaningful change in this matter must start at the top and through intensive education it should filter down to the bottom.

The Adventist Church has become institutionalised. The greatest challenge to institutionalised leadership is to change the minds of its people who have been following and implementing its policies unquestioningly. The Adventist policies of preference and prejudice: to appoint only ordained ministers as departmental leaders; to take women off the ordination track has had serious implications for the appointment of women in executive leadership. The chickens have come home to roost. There is not a single woman pastor in the executive strata, i.e. as a departmental director, of the General Conference, of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, of the Southern Africa Union Conference or of the Cape Conference. The message that this communicates is clearly, not one of equality or unity. At face value, the policies make it possible to employ women in executive leadership but it is not necessarily in favour of placing women there. This is self-evident in its practice. The policies of the church reserve the position of Presidents for an ordained pastor. The thinking seems to have been 'we need more women in here' but after decades of employing and grooming only men something far-more radical is required. A start would be for women to be placed at the head of the departments that they once excelled at; educational secretary, personal ministries and missionary volunteer secretaries.¹

¹ Bert Haloviak, The Decline of Leadership Positions for SDA Women (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, DC) Archives, 1990), 20 March 1990, 5. "Presently the GC officers and union and conference presidents and later the Autumn Council approved the following: Departmental Work--Unity and Cooperation": We Recommend....3. That in the future the selection of educational secretaries or superintendents be made from those who have had practical experience in teaching and in soul-winning work, the desirability of normal training being also recognized. 4. That in the future home missionary and missionary volunteer secretaries be selected who have had successful experience in evangelistic work, preferably ordained ministers. Women

The reflection of the representation of God through the inclusion of both male and female is essential for the 21st century Adventist Church. Gender equality in the workplace is no longer an option to the 21 century person. The biblical principles of justice and fairness are implemented in the social environment where these Christian values are not even acknowledged. "Where are the women?" is a question that will be asked every time because there is a sense of unfairness, injustice and discrimination when they are absent or their input is minimized. There is a sense that sooner or later things are bound to go wrong. This sense, even though men might see themselves as the natural leaders in the church, is encapsulated in the understanding of the need for representation of God in our structures. That without the representation of both men and women, the image of God is skewed. The absence of women leaves a substantial void that cannot be filled with masculine thinking. The question 'where are the women' cannot be answered by referring to recent policy changes. It cannot be answered by promises of better working policies in the future. It could be explained by the acknowledgement of the policies that have had the effect of excluding women, however unintentional that exclusion might have been. The principles, practice and policy of the church must be so closely aligned that the church's claim to unity and fair practice will not be seriously questioned. A pastor in the NAD's Atlantic Union Conference, Dedrick Blue, responding to a majority vote against the NAD and TED request for commissioned ministers to be Conference Presidents at the 2012 Autumn Council said, "the process deals with the mechanism, but the effect is just as important as the process. What we are grappling with

were thus inadvertently "recommended" to be eliminated from the three departments they had been most identified with."

here is the effect of our decision as a world body,” adding, “Don't get involved with process to neglect justice and mercy.”¹ The effects of the leadership decisions by Neal Wilson are now being faced by his son Ted Wilson. President T Wilson addressing the Columbia Union Business Session, 2012, in an effort to persuade the delegates not to vote in favour of ordaining women into the ministry, seemed to indicate by his words that he is more concerned with policy than the effect of policy on the unity of the church.

The biblical rule of interpretation is to compare verse with verse and line with line. Through the comparison of verses, one can gain a clear conception of the meaning of the rules, principles, interpretation and thematic issues which run throughout the Bible. To gain a clear understanding of a rule requires the comparison of a number of verses which affect the interpretation of the rule. For example, a commandment might be very generally phrased ‘thou shalt not kill’ which if not compared against any other verse in the bible will mean that there is never ever a circumstance that justifies killing. However there are verses in the bible which help clarify the scope of this commandment in making it more specific and allowing someone to kill in specifically defined instances. We use the commandment as the umbrella principle.

Comparative verses are also of equal authority because they give scope and content to the umbrella principle. Through the use of those two rules of interpretation, one is able to get a clear idea of the scope and meaning of a rule. Biblically, one cannot ever use a verse in isolation to create a principle. If one does this, it will be contrary to the Bible’s own rules of interpretation. Where only the general rule is used, the outcome of

¹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington DC) Autumn Council, 16 Oct 2012.

interpretation can be so vague as to allow the interpreter to include his agenda, culture, personal bias, policy etc., and promote it as a biblical rule.

There are two opposing positions for the inclusion of women at the executive level of the church. The 1st position promotes the inclusion of women, the 2nd promotes the exclusion of women. Proponents of both positions argue that their position is illuminated by biblical truth. Both have to be tested against the aforementioned standard.

Christ's prayer for His followers in John 17:21 is "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me, And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." The world will be won over by the evidence of unity and love amongst Christ's followers. This posits a general principle of unity. Following the biblical injunction, we have to sound out this umbrella rule against other verses that deal with unity in order to determine the scope of unity. Paul, in Galatians 3:18 holds that all are equal before God, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." This narrows down the umbrella understanding of unity. The scope of unity is essentially equality of all, without exception, before God. When Ellen White penned the words "we have nothing to fear for the future except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history,"¹ she was not only looking back but she was also giving advice for the future.

¹ Ibid., 196.

When church leaders choose equality and unity, for all, above church policy the church will move forward. If they are intellectually honest in their application of the biblical principles of unity, I believe their approach to women in leadership will change. The principles of unity in John 17, are currently used to emotionally manipulate the church rather than to unite the church because it is used in isolation. The effect of this is that women are once again being considered as 'a breed apart'. It is used to control the change process without much thought to the effect that this will have on the church in the future. It should rather be used to include women as a given principle and educate members to the principles of inclusion as they were educated to accept the principle of the Sabbath. The Spirit will be present to guide every nation to be 'decidedly Christlike' in their acceptance of their mother's, sister's, daughter's, grandmother's, wives, and friends, as equal in service before God. We are required to be united in service and equal in service. No policy should be used to exclude any hand or silence any voice or to minimize the contribution of any group.

Change must be meaningful if it is to take the organisation into a new direction. This would require strong action of intent which is followed by a plan of action for change. One of the difficulties that organisations experience is that policy makers make policy but often fail to explain it or they fail to ensure that it is implemented. It is possible that they think that because they have made the policy they are exempted from ensuring that the policy is implemented. Or alternately they think that because the policy has been made it will automatically implement itself. But the Adventist system, with its downward

delegation of authority and responsibility, looks to the lower levels to implement its policies, priorities and programmes.

One of the great inhibitors of change in the Adventist church is its electoral process. The largest group of delegates at any business session will be men. This is to be expected because of the patriarchal and paternalistic thinking that is still a part of Adventist taught culture. Further, more than 90% of administrators, directors, heads of institutions and pastors are male. Male dominance is so endemic to Adventist leadership that a woman stands almost no chance to lead. There will be little chance of a significant change unless more men are vocal about the need for change in this generation. The church needs more Pauls who will give public acknowledgement to the excellent work that woman are doing and can do.

The church needs a broader understanding of ordination. There should maybe be a distinction between ordination as a symbolic setting apart for a specific work and ordination as an acknowledgement of full ecclesiastical powers. There should be an ordination for more than just the positions of pastor, elder and deacon/deaconess. As far back as 1895, Ellen White was writing that “Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord...They should be set apart to do this work by prayer and laying on of hands.”¹ Women pastors in China, many of whom are ordained, testify about the symbolic importance of ordination, both to the women and to the congregation. Ordination gives credence to the work that they do. The hard, dedicated work of these women is recognised by the church. The church even takes credit for the

¹ Ibid., 2.

membership of those that they baptise, but they are not recognised as ordained ministers of the Adventist Church. The church would benefit from a biblical approach to ordination as opposed to a Catholic approach to ordination. How blessed the church would be if the preoccupation with ordination could be minimized and the focus can shift to ministry. Ellen White was listed as and bore the credentials of an ordained minister of the Adventist Church and was arguably the most well-known minister the church has ever had. The fact of her ordination together with the recorded evidence was only admitted and made available recently. Until then the official line was that Ellen White was never ordained. The reality is that all we have are the records. If Ellen White is accepted as an ordained minister then so should any other woman who is called to serve in a pastoral capacity.

Peter in 1 Peter 4:10-11 tells us that “each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” Paul confirms in Eph 4:11-12 that the gifts included apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. This was for the edifying of the body of Christ. There are no Levites today. Contrary to Adventist thinking in certain quarters, the pastor did not replace the Levite. There are no sacrifices to be offered, no mediator is required to intervene between God and man. The job description of a pastor is work that does not require a specific gender. This was understood by the pioneers as well as the early Christian Church. It is Paul who identifies these gifts as necessary for the edifying of the saints. As both parents stand in the place of God within the family, so both genders represent God before the people. “When a great and decisive work is to be done, God chooses men and women to do this

work. It will feel the loss if the talents of both are not combined.”¹ She says further that; “Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labour, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work.”²

These gifts are given by the Spirit to whomever He chooses. The evidence of such a gift will always be plainly visible to the church. Blessings are forfeited when men replace God’s decisions with their own. Ellen White has this to say, “When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves, to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what.”³

If the church belongs to all of its members, who among us can say to others, hitherto shalt thou come and no further. “Women are giving up on the soul winning partnership on the grounds that they are not partners.”⁴ It would be interesting if current church leaders would see the value of feminine leadership through God’s eyes. There is a parallel between the founder leaders of the Exodus and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In Micah 6:4 God reminds the nation that when He led them out of Egypt, He sent Moses, Aaron and Miriam before them as leaders. Miriam was part of a formidable team who led a group of slaves under the direction and blessing of God to freedom. The

¹Ibid., 469.

²Ibid., 2.

³Ibid., 298.

⁴ Ibid., 3-4.

Adventist Church was led into establishment by James and Ellen White and Joseph Bates.
Church leaders need to teach themselves and the church that we have nothing to fear for
the future because the future of the church is in God's hand.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

God makes no distinction between the sexes in terms of superiority or subordination, in their representation of God. The full meaning of *'ādām* is realized only when there is man and woman. This is so in the home, it is so in the church and it is so in the broader community. Where this representation is skewed God is misrepresented. History is littered with examples of couples, families, communities and nations who ignored this God-given method for human life and they no longer exist. It is sometimes necessary for the leaders of God's church to remember this in order that our teaching remains true to biblical teaching. It is also necessary for the leaders of the church to be reminded of this lest through ill-considered decisions they marginalise sections of the church membership. If the Adventist Church still considers Rev 14:6-12, to be crucial to its message for the world then part of the message is calling us back to the full meaning of *'ādām* as set out in Genesis 1, an acknowledgement of the status of full equality and joint dominion.¹ This is an inescapable fact.

Unity should be a distinguishing feature of the Adventist Church. In John 17:21 Jesus prays "that they all (His followers) may be *one*, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they, also may be one in Us that the world may believe that You sent Me." The

¹ Donna J. Haerich, "It Shall Not Be So Among You," *Spectrum* 38, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 32-35.

absence of visible unity in the professed church of God has and will raise questions of credibility amongst the unbelievers whom we are sent to share the gospel with. What they cannot see we cannot explain but what they can see we do not have to explain. The present processes and policies of the church have delivered an undesirable product, an almost exclusively male pastorate and executive leadership strata. The Seventh-day Adventist election process is handicapped by it and it will be difficult to achieve the entire scope of unity with it. But "in Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. Such unity is the church's most powerful witnessing tool, for it gives evidence of Christ's unselfish love for humanity."¹ Practice should never be allowed to detract from the message of salvation. The practice is sometimes so loudly practised that the message cannot be heard.

The Adventist Church would do well to go back to the practice of an inclusive ministry as evidenced in the vibrancy of the early Christian Church and through its own early developmental history. In 1 Peter 4:10-11, Peter instructs that "each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."(NIV) Many varied gifts are mentioned in Eph 4:11,12; Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12 and they are poured out without measure upon those whom the Holy Spirit chooses. It is not limited to gender, age, culture or position. Women are included so leaders should be careful to say "so far and no farther." These gifts are to be used in service to the

¹ Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1988), 201-203.

church. To desire any of these gifts is therefore to desire to serve the church. The very nature of the gifts of the Spirit and how they are allocated would mean submission and headship of men to women, where women held leadership positions. Deborah and Phoebe emerge as perhaps the most triumphant of women leaders in the Bible.

There were no priests in the New Testament. There were no priests in the early Christian Church. There were no priests in the early Advent Movement. None of the functions of the Levites were transferred onto modern day pastors. Christ was the lamb and He is now the only mediator. God's people are always called 'a nation of priests and a holy nation'. In the New Testament to the newly formed Christian Church Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people." This calling is confirmed in the Old Testament in Ex 19:4-6 and for eternity in Rev 1:6. The priesthood can therefore not be the exclusive preserve of men. It should be remembered that the underlying principle of the priesthood is emphasised in 1 Peter 2:9 "To show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into this marvellous light." The Israelites were chosen into the priesthood as a nation by God. Christians and those who will be saved choose to be priests by their actions and profession. Here again we find a unity of calling and function.

The first church leaders whom Paul mentions in Romans 16 are women. The first apostles mentioned are Andronicus and Junia, whom ancient commentators believed were a husband and wife team of apostles.¹ It is Paul who levels the playing field between men and women, if you wish. "Paul refers to Phoebe as *diakonos*, essentially equating her

¹ Ibid., 36-37.

diakonia ((or service) with that of Christ and his own apostolic ministry.”¹ Paul’s exceptions must be correctly interpreted before he is judged as being anti-women. He is actually, after Christ, the most unbiased and progressive in his inclusiveness of age, gender, nationality and culture.

Jesus came and lived such an astonishing life, inclusive and kind towards women, that they followed Him even to His ascension. They were witnesses to every stage of His life from birth to His ascension. I believe that Jesus, by selecting women to be the first preachers of His resurrection and including them in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit set a new *modus operandi* for His followers. They were to be truly united in service for His glory. Ellen White confirms this when she says “Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labour, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work.”² Perhaps it is time that the Adventist Church catches up with its prophet.

The gifts of preaching, prophesying, teaching, exhorting and edifying in the early Christian Church were visibly present and practised by the members of the early Christian Church. These same gifts were present amongst the women in the early Adventist church. “As new converts were attracted into the Advent Movement, many were startled to discover that Adventist women evangelized, spoke in churches and religious gatherings,

¹ Darius Jankiewicz, “Phoebe: Was She an Early Church Leader?” *Ministry* (April 2013): 10.

² *Ibid.*, 2.

exhorted the believers, and exercised spiritual leadership and that this was seen as a fulfilment of God's promise.¹

It is unfortunately true that the processes of established organisations are often driven by policy and not principle. Leaders of organisations may even feel that they cannot afford to be principle driven. They may even argue that policy oils the wheels and makes the organisation function optimally. The truth is that the Nazi Regime functioned optimally, the Mafia operates effectively, and many governments operate well. How is the Adventist Church distinguished from them? "The life of Christ established a religion in which there is no caste, a religion by which Jew and Gentile, free and bond, are linked in a common brotherhood, equal before God. No question of policy influenced His movements."² The question needs to be asked 'can the world see Jesus in you'.

Elder E. E. Cleveland perhaps best describes the frustration that women feel towards the leadership of the Adventist Church:

This article will reflect primarily the frustration of women being thus discussed, as if they are a breed apart. (1) There is a sense of exploitation; To be used but not accepted, (2) A sense of not really belonging; race, gender, education, wealth, or lack of it is not sufficient reason for denying one a sense of belonging (3) A sense of underutilization; To be under-used is to be misused...To us 'shut-out ones,' skin pigmentation was the sole criteria. (4) A sense of expendability; this is confusing. You see, the excluded know themselves to be necessary to the movement for reasons ranging from budget and

¹ Ibid., 26.

² Ibid., 287-289.

presence to the very existence and functioning . . . but to be treated as if your membership is of little consequence. The ladies understand this. (5) A sense of circumscription; the excluded naturally ask the question, Why not? Colour, gender, and national origin are insufficient answers. If the church belongs to all of its members, who among us can say to others, 'Hitherto shalt thou come and no further?' The ladies understand this. (6) A sense of futility. Everyone matters: Organizational function must achieve this level of inclusiveness. Ask any woman. And finally; (7) A sense of low self-esteem. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' is the divine summary of man's basic need.

Women are giving up on the soul winning partnership on the grounds that they are not partners. The ordination of women to the Gospel Ministry is not the subject of this article. Including them more fully as partners in soul-winning ministry is. During the Reformation, the Holy Spirit used men, women and children to herald the full revelation of grace. So shall it be in the end of the age. While history says little about the ordination of women and children, it certainly places no limits on their ministry. The Church that recognizes this will unleash upon the world it's (the church's) majority population for soul-winning service." ¹

Women have always led God's people. They have led in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, after the resurrection, in the structures of the new Christian church, during the Reformation and in the early Adventist Church. This is probably because there

¹ Ibid,, 3-4.

has always been a place for women to lead. It was accepted and expected that they could and should lead. Their voice was heard and acknowledged and respected. Ellen White's words should serve as a timely reminder to the policy-makers of the Adventist Church in the 21st century "we have nothing to fear for the future except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."¹ Those who really care about the message going out to the entire world need to care about how it will go and who will tell it. The world has become a diverse reality. To craft a new approach to mission will require the meaningful input of those who do the most talking and influencing in any society, the women and the youth. Other major religions have stolen a march on the Remnant as they drag their feet.

Let the women lead too!

¹ Ibid., 196.

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