

THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION

NAD Study Committee Report Summary

November 2013

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THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION

Who comprised this Theology of Ordination Study Committee?

This Ordination Study Committee was made up of North American Division Leadership, Presidents of our Universities, University Professors of Old Testament and New Testament Studies, and Pastors from around the NAD. This Committee was formed to study the practice of Ordination.

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- “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and 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.” Joel 2:28,29.

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- ◉ **We understand all believers to be called and equipped—anoointed—by God for service. Individuals are imbued by the Holy Spirit with spiritual gifts in order to edify the body of Christ and fulfill the gospel commission, and in this general sense all believers are “ordained.”**
Pg.5.

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- ◉ *“Ordination is a formal acknowledgment and authentication of one’s call to service ministry by God. Authentication should be understood as ratifying what only God can dispense. Ordination neither supersedes God’s call nor enhances it.” Pg.5.*

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- *“...Ordination affirms the genuineness of the call as having borne the proper fruit of the Holy Spirit’s work. God initiates the call and equips the recipient for enacting it. God’s person accepts the call. God’s people affirm the call.” Pg. 5*

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- *“We believe that an individual, as a Seventh-day Adventist in thorough commitment to the full authority of Scripture, may build a defensible case in favor of or in opposition to the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, although each of us views one position or the other as stronger and more compelling.”*

Pg.6

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◉ RECOMMENDATION 1

- ◉ In harmony with our biblical study, we recommend that ordination to gospel ministry, as an affirmation of the call of God, be conferred by the church on men and women.

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- ◉ **RECOMMENDATION 2**
- ◉ The committee humbly recommends that the North American Division support the authorization of each division to consider, through prayer and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, its most appropriate approach to the ordination of women to gospel ministry. Pg.6.

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- Biblical Hermeneutics -
- “The “no inspiration” side of the continuum represents the idea that the Bible is not divinely inspired and should be regarded as any other literary work. The “biblical inerrancy side represents the idea that God dictated the precise words of Scripture. The traditional Adventist approach to interpreting Scripture reveals a centrist path of “thought inspiration”.” Pg.8.

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- Headship -
- “...Biblical headship does not apply to church leadership roles but is limited in application to the husband’s role as servant-leader in the home. Still others contend that headship is not even a biblical concept, but rather a relatively modern term, and that the original Greek word for head (kephale), denotes source not leader. These argue that hierarchical position is not the point, and that correct interpretation of these challenging passages is dependent on understanding the context in which they were written.”
- The majority of the committee does not view the issue of headship as a barrier to ordaining women to pastoral ministry.

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- ◉ Unity -
- ◉ In recent years the General Conference has established policies recognizing women in leadership roles: the ordination of deaconesses and elders and the commissioning of pastors. Although these policies are not practiced in all regions of the world, the Church has remained a single, worldwide organization. It is the conclusion of the study committee that differences in opinion and practice on this issue do not constitute disunity in Christ nor in the Church. Pg.9.

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- ◉ DOESN'T THE BIBLE OPPOSE THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN?
- ◉ Although the word *ordination* doesn't appear in the Bible, the concept is referenced using other terms, such as *laying on of hands* and *anointing*. The Bible doesn't mention gender in reference to the topic.

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- ◉ IF GOD MEANT FOR WOMEN TO BE CHURCH LEADERS, WOULDN'T JESUS HAVE INCLUDED WOMEN AS DISCIPLES?
- ◉ Jesus' inner circle of disciples was not only exclusively male, it also included no slave, no freed slave, no Gentile, and no person of color. Women were mentioned as following Jesus, but to travel full-time with Him would have been viewed with suspicion and disapproval. It would have raised questions of propriety about Jesus as well as the other disciples. Including female disciples would have undermined the ministry of Jesus. It appears that His choice was in deference to the culture of the day.

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- ◉ DID THE FOUNDERS OF THE ADVENTIST CHURCH SUPPORT FEMALE PASTORS?
- ◉ In *Review and Herald* (Jan. 15, 1901), Ellen White states, “It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, **both men and women**, to become **pastors** to the flock of God.”

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- ◉ DOESN'T THE FACT THAT ALL OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PRIESTS WERE MALE DEMONSTRATE THAT WOMEN WERE NOT INTENDED FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP?
- ◉ It's true that the Old Testament priests were exclusively male; they were also chosen from only one tribe, the Levites. The Levitical system included dozens of ordinances that are not to be practiced today, such as sacrificing lambs. The Old Testament priesthood is not the model for New Testament Christian ministry.

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- ◉ WAS ELLEN WHITE IN FAVOR OF ORDAINING WOMEN?
- ◉ The White Estate has concluded that Ellen White did not take a formal stand concerning the ordination of women.
- ◉ However, in *Review and Herald* (July 9, 1895), Mrs. White said, “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.**”

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- In *Review and Herald* (Jan. 2, 1879), she said, “The refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of **preaching the truth.**”

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- “Uniform consensus on the subject of ordination is not intrinsic to and essential to participate in receiving the Good News, nor is it part and parcel of being identified as a Seventh-day Adventist.” Pg.35.
- “Unity means that our hearts are bonded together even when our function, our gifts, or our thoughts and perspectives are different.”Pg. 35
- Acts 15 Principle of Unity

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- ◉ **Man and Woman as Priests in the pre-Fall Eden Sanctuary**
- ◉ Genesis 2 not only portrays Adam and Eve as equal partners in mutual submission in their marriage relationship; the narrative also indicates that both of them served as priests officiating in the pre-Fall sanctuary worship services in the presence of Yahweh. According to Genesis 2:15, the first couple were to “tend” (*abad*) and “keep” (*shamar*) the garden. These terms literally mean to “serve” and “guard” respectively, and imply more than that Adam and Eve were entrusted with a responsible stewardship of serving and protecting their environment...

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- The suffusion of sanctuary language in Genesis 1-2 leads inescapably to the conclusion that the Garden of Eden is to be regarded as the original sanctuary on this earth.
- “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”
- To whom was dominion of the earth given?

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- ◉ Ellen White -
- ◉ “White also gave numerous examples of women who ministered for God in the Old and New Testaments to show that there is no such prohibition for women to labor for the gospel or to speak in church assemblies.” Pg.101

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- ◉ **1 Timothy 2:11-12**
- ◉ “The articles published in Adventist papers in this period took the position that what Paul referred to in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 had to do with particular situations in the local churches of his time. Paul’s counsel regarding these situations was not applicable to all church congregations...”

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- “...Adventist pioneers did not understand Paul to be enouncing a general and universal ban on women speaking in religious meetings. Many of these articles also referred to many of Paul’s female co-workers to state the obvious conclusion that Paul was therefore not speaking against women in ministry...”

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- ◉ ...Furthermore, none of these articles used the argument that a woman prophet (i.e. Ellen White) has a special dispensation from God to speak in church—an argument that is repeatedly used today to circumvent the misunderstood prohibition and to argue that women without a prophetic call from God should not be engaged in public speaking in religious meetings.” Pg.101

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- “...Paul extols the teaching ministry that Timothy’s grandmother Lois and mother Eunice had in his young life (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-16). As noted earlier, Paul’s listing of seven women who served with him in ministry and leadership in the churches (Romans 16) belies the suggestion that in 1 Timothy 2:12 Paul is universally prohibiting such authoritative ministry and leadership.” Pg.183.

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- One more statement from 1903.
- *The Lord calls upon those connected with our sanitariums, publishing houses, and schools to teach the youth to do evangelistic work.... Young men and young women who should be engaged in the ministry, in Bible work, and in the canvassing work should not be bound down to mechanical employment.... Some will be trained to enter the field as missionary nurses, some as canvassers, and some as **gospel ministers**.²⁰*

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- ◉ Dr. Jiri Moskala -
- ◉ The inclusio in Genesis 2 makes clear that the man and the woman are presented as equals in this chapter.
- ◉ We need to go back to the ideal of God's Creation when nothing was spoiled but pure.
- ◉ Why do we not drink alcohol? Why do we promote vegetarianism? Why do we discourage divorce? Why do we not practice polygamy? Why are we Sabbath-keepers?

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- ◉ **Both Equally, Man and Woman, Created in God's Image** "So God created mankind [*ha'adam*] in his own image, in the image of God he created them [object marker with suffix 3rd person sg.]; male and female he created them [suf. 3rd pl]" (Gen 1:27 NIV). Note carefully that both, male and female, are created in the **image of God!** They are **equal** and what is one is also the other—the image of God; and they together form it too...

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- ...What is different is only their sexuality and with it their particular role in it (like parenting and motherhood). To be a woman is not to be subordinate to men or imperfect or wrong (or even evil)! Pg.171.

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- Pastor Dwight Nelson - It is of interest that the spiritual gift Joel and Peter identify in that end-time outpouring is the gift of prophecy, a gift that is ranked second in Paul's hierarchy of spiritual-leadership gifts: "And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues" (1 Corinthians 12:28, NKJV). This is the same gift that the Apocalypse predicts will be operative within the remnant community in the same "last days" (Revelation 12:17; 19:10)... Pg. 186

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- “If both genders are chosen by the Holy Spirit to receive the second-highest gift of spiritual authority in the church, the same would surely be true for the lesser gifts, including third-highest gift of spiritual authority, the gift of teaching. Thus the Bible predicts God’s apocalyptic calling and gifting of *both* genders, all ages, and all classes for the sake of His strategic endgame.” Pg. 186

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- “Having examined the salient passages of the New Testament concerning women in ministry, it is the conclusion of this paper that there is no credible, exegetical, biblical ground for a male-only gospel ministry. God’s Edenic ideal of mutual interdependence, the example of the incarnated Creator Himself elevating both men and women to His cause, the clear Pauline embrace of both men and women in New Testament gospel ministry, the everlasting gospel’s “priesthood of all believers,”...

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- ...the very character and love of God that has from time immemorial sought to draw His intelligent creation into His Kingdom rule, the apocalyptic prediction that both our sons and our daughters would be gifted similarly by God's Spirit for His final work, and the fact that the founder of this movement was a woman who manifested the very gift predicted for this end-time community—all combine to support a decision of this community of faith to ordain both men and women for its apocalyptic, global mission and ministry for Christ.” Pg.186-187.

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- “But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.’” Acts 2:16-18.

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○ Questions & Answers.

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- Since the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy fully support both men and women being used by the Holy Spirit in the proclamation of the everlasting gospel, and since there is no Biblical prohibition of ordination to the gospel ministry based on gender, should the Central States Conference be able to recommend to the Mid-America Union for ordination, men and women to the full-time gospel ministry?
Click to add text
- “Yes” or “No”.

THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION

- ◉ **Should the Central States Conference be able to recommend to the Mid-America Union for ordination, men and women to the full-time gospel ministry?**
- ◉ **“Yes” or “No”**