

## ***Background***

September 2012 I was asked to serve on the General Conference of SDA "Theology of Ordination Study Committee." This group met four times, during 2013 and 2014, and considered voluminous amounts of material on the subject of ordination in general, and the role of gender in ordination. I found it of great significance that we were lead back to consider the lessons of Genesis 1, 2, and 3, and the relationships of the Godhead. There was an attempt as well to draw lessons from SDA history, mostly related to the early years and to the Minneapolis era, in regards to processing disputed views and arriving at new understandings. As documented, there was no consensus. Rather three views developed to address the issues. I am convinced we should identify with principles rather than groups, so my desire has been to consider the principles behind each group's positions, and to encourage each to see their strengths and weaknesses. The following is my attempt to summarize the issues involved.

*[References for the points made are available upon request. Notes for portions of the section "Female Ordination" are provided at the end of the paper with reference.]*

## ***Affirmations of Principles***

### ***1. Agape***

Unselfish love is the core character quality of God, and of Their image in which we were created. Greatness is thus measured by giving and by going down, both for service of love. All of the following should be read only in the context of what *agape* love really looks like in both genders--

its unselfishness: the spirit of giving instead of taking;

its humility: the willingness to go down to meet the needs of others (manifested especially by the Son, the "Word of God" to the creatures, even before sin), especially ones lesser in age, in abilities, in privileges, etc.,

its meekness: the total absence of self-justification, of lifting self up, rather devotion to lifting others up.

### ***2. Salvation***

Sin has well nigh obliterated this image of God in humans, leading to myriad forms of self-exaltation, ranging from an individual superiority, to a misuse of academics. While these have the core of selfishness, they are often expressed in gender-specific fashion, just as Eve's and Adam's sins were specific and thus gender different. God in the plan of salvation works to restore the original, which believers cooperate with.

### ***3. Authority***

Authority is the vertical structure of *agape* that preserves equality, and rejects superiority and inferiority, while affirming both the responsibility and submission that such love expresses in the positions God ordains. This is how the order of heaven, its first law, operates. Those placed in authority reveal *agape* in service and ministry, instilling God's principles in those under their

care. This functional leadership is much more than a position. The Scriptural nouns and verbs describing this responsibility are numerous and varied.

#### **4. Mission**

The greatest mission of the church is to nurture the next generation of believers, our children and other new believers, in evangelism (sharing the gospel, birthing) and discipleship (mentoring, growing).

#### **5. Gender Roles**

Males and females have complimentary, overlapping, and yet distinct roles in this mission. Equality but not neutrality is the Bible norm. (Neutrality is one factor leading to gender confusion.) The roles are best carried out in an unselfish, cooperative partnership.

### ***Considerations, Confessions, and Commitments***

With *agape* clearly in view, consider further the following areas related to our theme:

#### **1. Authority and Equality**

All godly counsel affirms both the dimension of authority and of equality. Authority according to *agape* leads both to responsibility and to submission.

Those in authority are led to fulfill their responsibilities by the sacrifice of self in submission to God (to discern His will, mirror His character, abide by His principles), and by mutual submission to their peers. They are thus empowered to lead as God leads, by the non-coercive power of unselfish love, serving as Christ served, leading the spirits of those under their responsibility in loving submission to God and His principles. The authority of *agape* rejects the abuse seen in the historical authority pattern of Romanism while also repudiating the neglect of leading while maintaining godly headship. This authority knows how draw those under its care back from the extreme of loss of individuality and from the ditch of rebellion, particularly one that insists on "equality, justice, and rights." An elder/bishop is an overseer with responsibilities under God to over see things and be a leader as Christ was. One is qualified to be an elder/bishop by being successful in previous responsibilities of maintaining order through the influence of *agape*, especially in his own family. He must give an account to God for fulfilling those responsibilities of *agape*.  
*With godly service both abuse and neglect are avoided.*

Those under authority are led to godly submission, primarily to God, and secondarily to those under whom God has placed them. This is possible only by the sacrifice of sinful self (not of individuality), perceiving God's leading even when earthly authority is imperfect, desiring to make the earthly leader's godly duties as easy and as successful as possible. This is manifest especially when a specific skill of those under authority is greater than the skill of those in authority. Those in submission willingly employ their skills unselfishly, desiring no higher position before God's timing. The rebellions in Scripture are very instructive, especially Korah's and Absalom's. For example, Korah's rebellion, based on a futile appeal to "equality," was not directly against the headship of Christ but the headship of Moses--an authority / headship / leadership delegated by God.

*With godly submission both passive acquiescence and rebellion are avoided.*

*Agape* also sees all and each of equal value before God--worthy of the death of the Son of God for the sins of each individual. Thus in the midst of the order of authority, *agape* maintains equality with no superiority or inferiority. A godly leader affirms equality--we are all brothers and sisters--while still acknowledging and appealing to his responsibility to be leader.

We should confess that flowing from our sinful, rebellious nature, we have valued neither authority nor equality as we ought. We have manifested attitudes of superiority and inferiority between many classes of people. This has fostered even more rebellion, and the resultant bitterness and confusion.

We should commit to teaching and modeling the Biblical principles of authority and equality, as core to our final witness to the world to the truth of God and His kingdom. We should commit to studying and copying the order of heaven as essential to the organization God has ordained on earth. We should commit to equality in value, based on the universal witness of the cross of Jesus.

## **2. Male Leadership**

The male role is to be protector and spiritual leader, especially as a mentor to younger males. God designs for men to be leaders, for at least the following reasons:

a. Men will too easily abdicate their responsibilities. This was Adam's original sin in Genesis 3; it was *not* that of abuse. Observe his legacy--many males in families in societies today neglecting their duties, at times totally absent, with all of the fallout, especially on male children. Consider the stories of Aaron and Eli, as illustrations of the abdication of leadership responsibilities.

Without *agape*, another dimension of Adam's legacy is males' failing their duties by exercising "male power" in a selfish way, with multiple forms of abuse. (Note the two extremes away from *agape*--neglect or abuse.)

b. Males of all ages (especially the young) need male role models of how to be a godly leader in current and/or later responsibilities. This is the genius of Paul's instructions to Timothy, a young male he was mentoring, who had been raised by godly women, but needed to be trained in how to hold males responsible for their duties. Paul thus addressed to Timothy (and others) the responsibility *agape* places on men in headship. It is in this context we see the qualifications for minister/deacon and elder/bishop. (Pastor, in contrast, is a spiritual gift that enables one to nourish and tend as a leader, as Christ did, without any evidence for specific gender application.) Men must continue to be mentored in the duties most have or will have to be heads of their families, with the godly responsibility that entails.

We should confess that as males we have both abdicated our responsibilities and abused them. We have not held men accountable, nor mentored males as we should have, for their responsibilities in family and society.

We should commit to support males in their godly leadership in the home, and to recognize that only those who have proven themselves in that setting are fully qualified in combination with all the other Bible qualifications to lead the larger church family.

### **3. Female Leadership**

Women have leadership duties. Two areas are very clearly at the top:

- a. The female role biologically is, following the pattern of the Son of God from the beginning of creation, to go down to meet the needs of the lesser ones, in ways the male does not. Most females thus have the greatest responsibility of any gender or position--to lead their own children in godly growth and development more intimately than the children's father. This female subordination was implicit for Eve in Genesis 1 & 2. It is no more inferiority than the Son's going down was inferiority. As with the Son, out of the equality of the primary relationship, she has duties that are actually unequal--they are more sacred and holy. In these duties, the female is to manage the house, to make it a place for hospitality, a place of unselfish joy. One of the greatest duties of male leaders is to support and encourage these female duties. This was also implicit for Adam in Genesis 1 & 2. Often women have responsibility to assist other mothers in their duties, or to minister to children whose own mothers are absent. Often women are called to minister and pastor with a focus on these family and home needs.
- b. A woman often has greater sanctified skills than any available man to carry other church responsibilities. These skills should be recognized and utilized in the immediate context in a way that the Spirit makes clear.

We should confess that we have not valued as we should the role of women in nurturing children, or their skills in the wider church ministry. We should confess that frequently their calling by God has been questioned and doubted based simply on their gender.

We should commit to express the value of women in the ways God leads us to, through support, freedom, mentoring, etc. We should commit to recognize their role as essential leadership in families and in the church, based on Bible qualifications.

### **4. Ordination**

Ordination is not necessary for one to minister for God, nor is it necessarily placing someone in a leadership position. It is the church's acknowledging, usually manifested by the laying on of hands, that someone has been called by God to a special responsibility. This laying on of hands is one of the fundamental principles of the order and system of the new covenant church. The specific cases when this is done are not all specified in Scripture. The Spirit guides the body to recognize the spiritual gift thus given. Ordination is usually to be a minister to others' spiritual needs (minister/deacon or pastor/shepherd), or a leader or overseer (bishop or elder), but can also be a dedication to other specific ministries in the church (such as physician). Ordination accomplishes several important goals. It publicly devotes one to be responsible for the duties of that task, acknowledging their qualifications. This act both creates in the corporate consciousness a recognition of the position and character of responsibility thus acknowledged, and holds the individual thus dedicated to his/her calling in the face of future temptations to neglect the calling. Ordination thus protects the order of the church, and the calling of the individual.

We should confess that we have not valued the role of ordination across church ministries, as the counsels point to, and have often improperly reserved it for a restricted hierarchy focused on male pastors.

We should commit to ordain following the Bible pattern for ministries that need that public dedication.

*As the last two areas of concern intersect in a special way, it is necessary to consider them together.*

## 5. Female Ordination

There are three possible categories in which women would be ordained, two of which we should embrace:

- a. When women are called and qualified to minister (the Bible word is "deacon" or "servant") or pastor (the Bible word is "shepherd") as the counsel calls for, they should be ordained in a similar fashion as men. As noted, not all positions of ministry require ordination. The ordination of both genders does not mean their ministry is identical in all respects (compare the counsels about ordination to and practice of medicine). The ordination of females should not lessen or destroy the male leadership responsibility addressed by Paul.
- b. Women can also be ordained (or made the head spiritual leader of a church, more the elder/bishop function) when men are absent or unqualified, such as in the case in China, or in other local situations, such as historically in Healdsburg with Alma McKibbin.
- c. The ordination of women is carried out at times in a fashion not ordained by God (such as a rebellious demanding of equal rights, gender neutrality). If a local ordaining body proceeds to do so in disregard (rebellion) of the larger body's policy, then the protest comes from the larger body. There is no evidence that I have found that there should be any working policy to allow for this type of ordaining.

Many of the cautions in ordaining women are the same as ordaining men. Here are some:

- a. *Agape* must be the guiding principle.
- b. The ordination must be based on a recognition of the woman's skill and success in performing the duties and responsibilities of life up to that point, as a preparation for the greater responsibilities ordination specifically acknowledges.
- c. The ordination must not be cause for her to neglect more important duties in a mistaken push to "rise higher" (Eve in Genesis 3), nor cause for other women or men to neglect their duties. In contrast, often her ordained duties will include particularly calling and training other women (as well as men when appropriate) to take up their responsibilities.
- d. The ordination should not be based on a gender-neutral position.

We should confess that we have neglected the part of God's plan reflected in the first two categories of female ordination. We should also confess that we have become confused by a culture in rebellion that promotes a version of equality that has actually devalued authority and gender distinctions, with the extremes of individualism.

We should commit to developing a working policy to allow for the ordination of women according to God's plan. We should commit to protest (like Samuel protesting Israel's choosing a

king) whenever a body of our organization attempts to ordain in disregard of these principles of authority and equality, in our protest giving the consequences to be expected from such an act--the exacerbation, not the remedying, of societal ills. We should also commit to good plans to nurture male leaders.

## **6. Gender Partnership**

The Genesis 1 and 2 pattern, as well as many cases in both the Old Testament and the New Testament church, along with our own church history, point to the essential nature of both male and female *together* as an expression of the image of God. While this is most intimately seen in marriage, yet the pattern also calls for a team ministry, even in leadership, whenever possible. Only thus can the specific needs of both genders be adequately cared for.

We should confess that we have not seen the importance of combined male and female leadership in families, church, and society.

We should commit to developing team leadership whenever possible, starting with married couples bringing to the church family the skills proven in their own families.

### ***Adaptability and Ideal***

In light of the above principles and areas of application, there is need to see how they will be applied in a sinful, broken world, while training people for heaven, and the restoration of Eden.

1. We must recognize that the condition of sin has caused many situations that are less than ideal. We must commit that, while adapting to meet needs in those situations in ways in harmony with Scripture and the leading of the Spirit, we will not allow these to remove our adherence to and movement toward the ideal, noted in the principles above.
2. When team leadership is not possible due to lack of qualified individuals (as noted above), men will be sought who can be helped by women advisors, and women will be sought who can be helped by men advisors. Any preference given to males should come only from a commitment to mentor them for their duties and to ensure that the females be left free as needed for their higher duties which often require them to focus on the nurturing of children.
3. If a local body of believers lacks any qualified leaders, they will remain under the leadership of adjacent bodies or of the larger body until local individuals mature to meet the qualifications.

### ***Our Plea***

"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity [*agape*] edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." (1 Cor. 8:1, 2)

Our plea should be, "God show us what *agape* looks like conceptually and experientially! Help us to admit preconceived ideas that are wrong."

Notes inserted for Female Ordination, Categories a & b:

- a. When women are called and qualified to minister (the Bible word is "deacon" or "servant") [Note 1] or pastor (the Bible word is "shepherd") [Note 2] as the counsel calls for, they should be ordained [Note 3] in a similar fashion as men. As noted, not all positions of ministry require ordination [Note 4]. The ordination of both genders does not mean their ministry is identical in all respects (compare the counsels about ordination to and practice of medicine) [Note 5]. The ordination of females should not lessen or destroy the male leadership responsibility addressed by Paul. [Note 6]
- b. Women can also be ordained (or made the head spiritual leader of a church, more the elder/bishop function), when men are absent or unqualified [Note 7], such as in the case in China [Note 8], or in other local situations, such as historically in Healdsburg with Alma McKibbin [Note 9].

Notes

1. The word "deacon" in the gospels does not have any gender distinction. (Matt. 20:26; 22:13; 23:11; Mark 9:35; 10:43; John 2:5,9; 12:26). Paul uses the term for Phebe (Rom. 16:1,27 KJV). Paul used the term frequently for himself and others (1Cor. 3:5; 2Cor. 3:6; 6:4; 11:23; Eph. 3:7; 6:21; Col. 1:7,23,25; 4:7; 1Th. 3:2; 4:6). He used it once of "false apostles, deceitful workers" (1Cor. 11:15). He used it once denying that Jesus is "the minister of sin." (Gal. 2:17). Only in Timothy does he address the need to hold males responsible for this duty (1Tim. 3:8, 12). He lists this once with "bishops" implying these are the two positions of responsibility in Philippi (Phil. 1:1). Thus while this term that means "minister" is used most frequently for males, there are settings where women are included in it.

EGW statements speak to males most often as ministers, but also women at times, and especially certain areas of ministry, as the following will show (all emphasis supplied, ordered by date):

—Equal but more sacred and holy (1875)

We have an earnest desire that woman shall fill the position which God originally designed, as her **husband's equal**. We so much need mothers who are mothers not merely in name, but in every sense that the word implies. We may safely say that **the dignity and importance of woman's mission and distinctive duties are of a more sacred and holy character than the duties of man**. (3T 565.2)

There are **speculations** as to woman's **rights and duties** in regard to voting. Many are in no way **disciplined** to understand the bearing of important questions. They have lived lives of present gratification because it was the fashion. Women who might develop **good intellects** and have **true moral worth** are now mere slaves to fashion. They have not **breadth of thought** nor **cultivated intellect**. They can talk understandingly of the latest fashion, the styles of dress, this or that party or delightful ball. Such women are not prepared to intelligently take a **prominent position in political matters**. They are mere creatures of fashion and circumstance. Let this order of things be changed. Let woman realize the **sacredness of her work** and, in the strength and fear of God, take up **her life mission**. Let her **educate her children** for usefulness in this world and for a fitness for the better world. (3T 565.3) [1/3/1875]

—Various branches (1882)

The primary object of our college was to afford **young men** an opportunity to study for the **ministry** and to prepare **young persons of both sexes** to become **workers** in the **various branches** of the cause. (5T 60.1) [3/28/1882]

—Any position of trust (1887)

Many have felt, 'Well, it don't matter if we are not so particular to become thoroughly educated,' and a

lower standard of knowledge has been accepted. And now when **suitable men are wanted to fill various positions of trust**, they are rare; when **women are wanted** with well-balanced minds, with not a cheap style of education, but with an education **fitting them for any position of trust**, they are not easily found." (RH, June 21, 1887 par. 10)

—Husband and wife unite (1898)

There are **women** who should labor in the **gospel ministry**. In many respects they would do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God. **Husband and wife** may **unite** in this work, and **when it is possible**, they should. The way is open for consecrated women. But the enemy would be pleased to have the women whom God could use to help hundreds, binding up their time and strength on one helpless little mortal, that requires constant care and attention. (5MR 325.4) [3/22/1898; context is adopting child versus partnering in ministry; see also 5 MR 29.2, 30.1]

—Man's equal (1898)

The Lord God has **work for women as well as men** to do. They can do a **work in families that men cannot do**, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of **those whom men cannot reach**. Therefore their labor is needed. We must have it. We who love God in truth are **all working** for a heavenly kingdom. There is no time to waste upon a class of work that has no Christ in it, or upon that **work that woman, who is man's equal, can do** if her heart is imbued with the love of Christ our Saviour. (21MR 30.4) [4/9/1898]

—Power exceeding men (1902)

The Lord has a work for women, as well as for men. They may take their places in his work at this crisis, and he will work through them. If they are imbued with a sense of their duty, and labor under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they will have just the self-possession required for this time. The Saviour will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of his countenance, and will give them **a power that exceeds that of men**. They can do in families **a work that men cannot do**, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come **close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach**. Their labor is needed. (RH, August 26, 1902 par. 5)

—Ministry/ministers (1903)

The Lord calls upon those connected with our sanitariums, publishing houses, and schools to teach the youth to do **evangelistic** work. Our time and energy must not be so largely employed in establishing sanitariums, food stores, and restaurants that other lines of work will be neglected. **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. (8T 229.3)

The youth should be encouraged to attend our training schools for Christian workers, which should become more and more like the schools of the prophets. These institutions have been established by the Lord, and if they are conducted in harmony with His purpose, the **youth** sent to them will quickly be prepared to engage in **various lines** of missionary work. Some will be trained to enter the field as missionary **nurses**, some as **canvassers**, and some as **gospel ministers**. (8T 230.1) [9/1903]

2. The word "pastor" occurs in the KJV NT only in Eph. 4:11 (list of gifts of the Spirit), taken from the word for "shepherd." There is no evidence that the gifts of the Spirit are gender specific, with the historical exception of "apostle." It appears from this verse that "pastoring" is a certain type of ministry, along with "prophesying", "evangelizing", and "teaching."

EGW appears to capture that "pastor" can apply to men or women, as a ministry term, in these statements:

—Both men and women pastors (1900)

All who desire an opportunity for true **ministry**, and who will give themselves unreservedly to God, will



find in the canvassing work opportunities to speak upon many things pertaining to the future, immortal life. The experience thus gained will be of the greatest value to those who are fitting themselves for the **ministry**. 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.... (6T322.1) [1900]

—Women working with the other gifts like "evangelizing" (1903)

Let every soul, **men as well as women, sound the message**. Then the truth for this time will be carried to the waste places of the earth. (RH, June 2, 1903 par. 11)

3. "Laying on of hands" is given as a fundamental principle in Heb. 6:1, 2. It is one way people were healed (Matt. 9:18; Mark 5:23; 6:5; 7:32; 8:23, 25; 16:18; Luke 4:40; 13:13; Acts 9:12, 17; 28:8), and were blessed (Matt. 19:13, 15). In connection to ministry, it refers to the how people were set aside or ordained (Acts 6:6; 13:3), how the Spirit was given (Acts 8:17-19; 19:6), and how Timothy's gift was imparted (1Tim. 4:14; 2Tim. 1:6). Of interest and significance, in a passage dealing at length with both men and women's roles in the church (1Tim. 5), and right after instructing Timothy to "observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality", Paul says "Lay hands suddenly on no man" (1Tim. 5:22). The "no man" is not the noun for male, but the adjective (in Greek) "none." The adjective can be in male, female, or neuter gender, and here it is male, according to my Bible software program. I think if Paul had wanted unambiguously to address laying hands on males he would have used the noun for a male (as in 5:9, "wife of one man").

EGW addressed the laying on of hands for women explicitly, and implicitly:

—On "laying on of hands" on lay women working part time (1895)

If ministers and men in positions of authority will get out of the way, and let the Holy Spirit move upon the minds of the **lay brethren**, God will direct them what to do for the honor of his name. Let men have freedom to carry out that which the Holy Spirit indicates. Do not put the shackles upon humble men whom God would use. If those who now occupy positions of responsibility had been kept at one class of work year after year, their talents would not have developed, and they would not have been qualified for the positions they hold; and yet they make no special effort to test and develop the talents of those newly come into the faith. (RH, July 9, 1895 par. 7)

**Women** who are willing to consecrate **some of their time** to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be **set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands**. In some cases they will need to **counsel with the church officers or the minister**; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to **branch out more in our methods of labor**. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let **every individual** labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work. Place the **burdens upon men and women of the church**, that they may grow by reason of the exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness. (RH, July 9, 1895 par. 8) [Note: if "laying on of hands" should be done for these women, what of women who do a full-time work of ministry?]

—Physicians (1906)

The work of the **true medical missionary** is largely a spiritual work. It includes **prayer and the laying on of hands**; he therefore should be **as sacredly set apart for his work as is the minister of the gospel**. Those who are selected to act the part of **missionary physicians** are to be **set apart as such**. This will strengthen them against the temptations to withdraw from the sanitarium work to engage in private practice. No selfish motives should be allowed to draw the worker from his post of duty. The medical work done in connection with the giving of the third angel's message, is to accomplish

wonderful results. It is to be a sanctifying, unifying work, corresponding to the work which the great Head of the church sent forth the first disciples to do. (CH 540.4) [Note: see DG 94 ff, regarding need for women physicians; so women physicians would be included.] [1906]

4. Ordination is not required for ministry. Note EGW statements:

The ministers are paid for their work, and this is well. And if the Lord gives the wife, as well as the husband, the burden of labor, and if she devotes her time and her strength to visiting from family to family, opening the Scriptures to them, **although the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her**, she is accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry. Should her labors be counted as naught, and her husband's salary be no more than that of the servant of God whose wife does not give herself to the work, but remains at home to care for her family? (5MR 29.2) [3/22/1898]

Brethren and sisters, how much work have you done for God during the past year? Do you think that it is those men only who have been ordained as gospel ministers that are to work for the uplifting of humanity?--No, no! Every one who names the name of Christ is expected by God to engage in this work. The **hands of ordination may not have been laid upon you**, but you are none the less God's messengers. If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, if you know his saving power, you can no more keep from telling this to some one else than you can keep the wind from blowing. You will have a word in season for him that is weary. You will guide the feet of the straying back to the fold. Your efforts to help others will be untiring, because God's Spirit is working in you. (RH, November 24, 1904 par. 16)

5. Physicians are to be set apart by laying on of hands (see above) with implication that both genders are included since both are to be fully trained; but the practice of medicine should have gender differences. Note EGW statements—

It is **not in harmony with the instructions given at Sinai that gentlemen physicians should do the work of midwives**. The Bible speaks of women at childbirth being attended by women, and thus it ought always to be. Women should be educated and trained to act skillfully as midwives and physicians to their sex. It is just as important that a line of study be given to educate women to deal with women's diseases, as it is that there should be gentlemen thoroughly trained to act as physicians and surgeons. And the wages of the woman should be proportionate to her services. She should be as much appreciated in her work as the gentleman physician is appreciated in his work. (CH 365.2) [6/3/1907]

The light given me of the Lord regarding this matter is that, **as far as possible, lady physicians should have the care of lady patients, and gentlemen physicians the care of gentlemen patients**. Every physician should respect the delicacy of the patients. Any unnecessary exposure of ladies before male physicians is wrong. Its influence is detrimental. (KC 23.2) [11/11/1907]

6. The failure of male leadership is addressed by Isa. 3:12 "As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths."

EGW quoted this verse twice in her published writings, with the implications that men have a spiritual responsibility that should not cave into the ungodly demands of children or women. Explicit connections are made to the story of Sodom (connected also with Lot and his failures with his family) and the story of Eli (with his failures). Note the two EGW statements—

All are in constant danger. I warn the church to beware of those who preach to others the word of life but do not themselves cherish the spirit of humility and self-denial which it inculcates. **Such men** cannot be depended on in a crisis. They **disregard the voice of God** as readily as did Saul, and like him many stand ready to justify their course. When rebuked by the Lord through His prophet, Saul stoutly asserted

that he had obeyed the voice of God; but the bleating sheep and lowing oxen testified that he had not. In the same manner do many today assert their loyalty to God, but their concerts and other pleasure gatherings, their worldly associations, their glorifying of self, and their eager desire for popularity all testify that they have not obeyed His voice. "As for My people, **children** are their **oppressors**, and **women rule over them**." (5T 88.1) [1882]

We are urged by the Spirit of the Lord to bear a pointed testimony against the **idolatry of dress** in this age. If we are right with God, we will discard everything of a deforming character, such as paniers, bustles, unnecessary plaiting, and fashionable arrangement of the dress upon the body. **Ministers and ministers' wives** should be an example in **reproving** the fashionable display in our **sisters** who claim to believe the truth. They should have their **children** dressed in a way that God would approve, presenting them to the church in simplicity, and modesty of apparel. Far greater pains should be taken to instruct them so that they shall have **beautiful characters** and keep the **way of the Lord** than to have them make a **stylish appearance, taking the way of the Sodomites**. The Scripture says, "As for my people, **children** are their **oppressors**, and **women rule over them**." Moreover the Lord saith, "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abominations before me; therefore I took them away as I saw good." I appeal to you in the name of the Lord to study your Bibles, to be doers of the word, and to educate your children that they may know the way of the Lord, so that **the curse of Eli** may not come upon you. (PH096 15.1) [4/1888]

7. Women's responsibilities when men are unqualified:

In the home: see 3MR369-372 (1868); in the church: see 19MR56 (1879)

8. Regarding China: Friends of mine (a couple who are both physicians) who worked for years in China reported the following:

You realize that while in China we seldom went to church. We had worship in our home. Since we were well marked by the police system, we would only complicate the life of any church we attended.

I say the above so that you know that we never really participated in the routine life of a Chinese church, especially one lead by a woman pastor or elder.

We did have women pastors/elders attend some of our medical missionary training classes which gave us some idea about church politics.

During our time in China (1990-1997, 2003-2008) it was the general practice for the man to be the main breadwinner. This often meant Sabbath work. When the man finally retired, he might join the church. In the meantime a converted wife would have had a lot of opportunity to grow in spiritual maturity and Bible knowledge. It was logical then to put women in spiritual leadership positions.

Another problem has been that the Chinese SDA brethren did not want anyone to aspire to being pastor/elder for "filthy lucre". So they were not given a wage sufficient for a man to support his family as a full time pastor/elder. But women, depending on the income of their Sabbath working husbands had no problem with the stipend, however low it was.

Then too, the SDA church in China is congregational. Each pastor/elder is king among his flock with tremendous power. This has its effect on how gender is viewed as concerns the pastor/elder position.

Finally, the government approved congregations sometimes have to yield to political pressures from above, which can determine who is ordained to the pastorship/eldership. And the Chinese

government does not go by Bible principles as to gender or anything else.

The above peculiarities of the Chinese church environment are sufficient to make it dangerous for us to look to China for reasons to be gender neutral as regards the appointing of pastors/elders in the world church.

## 9. Alma McKibbin

Mrs. McKibbin was a woman who pioneered the elementary school in SDA history. She rented Ellen White's home in Healdsburg after Sister White's return from Australia (see 5BIO 121.3). Alma's autobiographical sketch, *Step by Step*, records the following when the college moved from Healdsburg to Angwin in 1909, and though there is no mention of ordination, gives an example of a situation where a woman was called to minister as pastor with conference approval and especially with God's blessing in effective work for souls.—

The Healdsburg church had always depended upon the college teachers for leaders. Since I was the only teacher left, they expected me to help them in every way. Again I had to do many things that I had never done before. They made me superintendent of the Sabbath school and leader of the prayer meeting. For some time we had no church service, but finally they asked me to give a Bible study, which I did. The church had two platforms. The lower one was for Sabbath school officers. I gave my study standing on the lower platform.

The church was pleased with my study but insisted I go into the pulpit so it would be a real church service. The conference president had told me to do whatever they asked me to do, and had raised my salary to \$40 a month. So finally I gave my study in the pulpit, but I felt much out of place. Sister White had spoken there many times as had many other pioneer ministers, such as S. N. Haskell and J. N. Loughborough.

### **I Assume Pastoral Duties**

I visited every family in the church, and after a time some differences that had divided the church were forgiven and forgotten and some new members were added. These brought new life and more of the Holy Spirit into our assembly.

These experiences gave me some understanding and a better appreciation of the work and trials of pastors and other church leaders. It also gave me some experience in public speaking, which I would soon be called upon to do before strange audiences.

My sister was married and went to a home of her own. In 1910 my brother [Alonzo Baker] entered Pacific Union College. Then mother and I were alone, but again God provided for our need. A dear neighbor girl came to live with us. Levona was bright and cheery and loved my mother dearly. She never left the house while I was away, no matter how long I was gone.

Ben Beddoe, a young man from the East, came out to be our Missionary Volunteer leader. I was appointed his assistant and together we visited all the larger churches and held meetings for four or five days in each. Elder Beddoe led a morning meeting with the young people and their leaders, while I was given the evening meeting where parents were also present. I think I know all about stage fright. But the great test came after the meeting when eager parents invited me to spend the night with them. Then I heard parents' problems, sometimes till a very late hour, or even an early hour.

I came to appreciate Solomon's prayer: "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in .... Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart" (1 Kings 3:7, 9). I made this prayer my own for all the days of my life. Human wisdom is not sufficient for parents' problems--or for any problem.

(*Step by Step*, pp. 89, 91)