

# **The Doctrine Of Creation**

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Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.  
Professor of Theology, Andrews University

### **Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Forum:**

The last newsletter on "The Crisis of Faith in Western Europe" generated an unusual number of responses. Overall the comments were very positive. Few of you expressed your disagreement on the very last section of the newsletter dealing with Francis Schaeffer's comments on "Feminist Subversion." I quoted Schaeffer's comments on the attempt of the feminist movement to promote "equality without distinction," because this pervasive ideology is the driving force behind the women's ordination movement outside and inside the SDA church. I will come back to this issue at the end of this newsletter.

Let me assure you that I welcome your comments, whether they are complimentary or critical. The fact that some of you commented on the very last section of the lengthy newsletter, tells me that you read it all. For me it is encouraging to know that many of you take time to read the whole newsletter.

This newsletter is devoted to the very theme of our current Sabbath School Lesson, namely, the Doctrine of Creation. In many ways this is one of the most important endtime issue that deserves our attention. The challenge of evolutionism to the Biblical view of a divine creation of all the human and subhuman forms of life, is undoubtedly one of the major causes of the crisis of faith that we discussed in the previous newsletter.

In this newsletter our focus will be on the importance and implications of the doctrine of creation for our present life and future destiny. For Adventist the doctrine of creation has enormous importance because it is clearly linked to the doctrine of the Sabbath. If one falls the other falls as well. This helps us to understand why the Evil One has made a determined effort to attack the doctrine of creation, because ultimately such effort can undermine the doctrine of the Sabbath.

I trust that this Bible study will prove helpful especially to the many subscribers who teach the SS lesson. I will not be able to post regular comments on the theme of the Sabbath School during the next few months, because of my extensive traveling in North America and overseas. Thus, I hope that this newsletter may provide some helpful comments on the doctrine of creation.

Last Sabbath, July 17, we had an excellent SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR at the Frederick SDA Church-one of the most magnificent churches in which I have ever preached. The 7.5 million dollars church complex was built only a couple of years ago and it provides ample facilities for the various ministries and activities. The church was packed with visitors from the various area churches. A reason for the intense interest was undoubtedly the recent attacks against the Sabbath by people like Dr. Richard Frederick, former pastor of the Damascus SDA Church.

A good number people attended because they had learned about the seminar from the announcement I posted in the last newsletter. This made me aware of the importance to continue to post regularly a brief announcement of the forthcoming seminars.

### **AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE**

In previous newsletters I have shared some encouraging experiences of the rediscovery of the Sabbath by pastors of different denominations. Many of you have

expressed your appreciation for these update reports. This time I would like to relate an experience that sounds almost too nice to be true.

A Belgian Benedictine monk, Ferdinand Poswick, Director of the Center for Biblical Information at the Abbey of Maredsous in Belgium, ordered a copy of my dissertation FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY, when it first came out from the Pontifical Gregorian University Press in 1977. Being impressed by documents and arguments which indicate the continuity, validity, and value of the Sabbath for the Christian life today, Poswick decided to contact me during his trip to America in 1982. He never anticipated meeting me in Dallas at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature.

At the Dallas meeting, Poswick shared with me his great desire to translate and publish FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY into French if I would give him permission. He felt that the book could contribute to the recovery of the biblical values of the Sabbath for today. I was delighted to grant him permission, forfeiting royalties in view of the cost of translation.

Poswick supervised the translation done by another Benedictine monk, Dominique Sebire, who worked for almost two years on this project, producing a superb French translation. The French title of the book is DU SABBAT AU DIMANCHE. Poswick and Sebire did all of this as a labor of love, without receiving a cent of compensation from anyone. They were inspired by the desire to help Christians rediscover the blessings of the biblical Sabbath for today. They verbalize this desire in the Foreword which I do my best here to translate from French into English.

"Did Jesus of Nazareth abolish the Sabbath? Paul, who was often accused by his own Jewish brethren of many transgressions-was he ever accused of Sabbathbreaking? Why then did Christians stop observing the Sabbath beginning from the fourth century? Was it perhaps to distinguish themselves from the Jews and to facilitate their integration in the rhythms and customs of the Constantinian empire?

"Doesn't Sabbathkeeping remain a very visible sign of the break that occurred between carnal Israel and those who claim to be spiritual Israel? At any rate, should we not prefer the sincere and truthful celebration of the Sabbath unto God to the pharisaism of a paganized Sunday? [Isn't this a daring statement to make by Benedictine monks?]

"Some Christians, the Seventh-day Adventists, often considered as marginal among the mainline denominations, do observe the Sabbath. One of their theologians wished to verify the historical sources dealing with the change from the observance of the Sabbath to the observance of Sunday. . .[biographical information about me follows]. For the reflection of Christians we present this research that the author has adapted for the American edition of his dissertation.

"May this thorough study stimulate biblical, patristic, and liturgical research, challenging everyone to return to the sources, improve the methodology of research, and reexamine afresh a truth [that is, the Sabbath truth] which the author presents with the conviction of someone who has found in the celebration of the Sabbath a spiritual enrichment which gives a special quality to his faith in the Resurrection and Return of Christ."

Words fail to express my heartfelt appreciation to these dedicated Benedictine monks, not only for giving unstintingly their time and skills to this project, but also for daring to challenge Christians to "reexamine afresh" the values of the Sabbath which can bring spiritual enrichment to our Christian life today. It is hard for me to believe that they succeeded in having the French edition of my dissertation DU SABBAT AU DIMANCHE published and distributed through Catholic bookstores. I can only thank God for making this happen.

DU SABBAT AU DIMANCHE has been reprinted in America but is currently sold out. I have only ONE personal copy left, so please do not ask me to part with it. In view

of the constant demand for this book from French speaking churches and countries, we are planning to reprint it in the near future.

## **THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION: General Comments On Sabbath School Quarterly**

The topic of the Sabbath School Quarterly, "God's Creation," is timely and relevant to our Christian life. Perhaps no other Biblical doctrine has come under such fierce attack during this past century as the doctrine of creation. For many creation is a myth and evolution is a scientific fact. A medical doctor called me this afternoon to inform me that he left the Adventist church largely because his "scientific" studies on the origin of the universe have led him to reject his belief in a literal six days creation and the Sabbath. A brother whom I had known in Rome, Italy, many years ago while studying at the Pontifical Gregorian University, told me few days ago during my visit to Rome, that he no longer an Adventist because his son, who is currently studying geology at Tübingen, Germany, has persuaded him that the creation story is a myth which is irreconcilable with the "scientific" findings of evolution. Incidentally, this brother attended all my presentations in Rome and has given me the email address of his son, whom he wants me to contact.

### **Conflict with Modern Science**

The two examples cited represent the countless number of Christians who reject the Biblical teaching of divine creation because they are unable to reconcile it with modern scientific theories of origin. Current prevailing theories assume that it took millions of years for the surface layers of the earth to be formed and for life to originate "spontaneously," evolving from simple, one-celled "ancestors."

To reconcile the various evolutionary theories with the creation account, some well-meaning theologians interpret the creation week as meaning not six literal days, but rather six ages of geologic time. Others prefer to view the creation week primarily as a time during which God's creative activities and goodness were revealed to man. Obviously these interpretations do away with the creation-Sabbath, simply because they imply that God did not actually rest and sanctify a literal seventh-day.

The problem with scientific logic is that it refuses to be informed by divine revelation. When a person insists on believing only what can be demonstrated in a laboratory, he chooses to trace his roots DOWNWARD from biological specimens rather than UPWARD from the image of God. Ultimately, this leads a person to believe in nothing else but himself. The tragic consequence of such a philosophy is that it empties life and human history of ultimate meaning, leaving both life and history with no divine beginning or destiny. Life is reduced to a biological cycle which by chance alone determines its own beginning and end. Thus the ultimate reality is not God but matter, which historically has been viewed as eternal and evil.

The creation story with its Sabbath-memorial challenges this nihilism, urging each generation, whether burdened with scientific facts or with mythological fantasies, to acknowledge that this world is a creation and a gift of God entrusted to man, whose life is meaningful because it is rooted in God.

Is it really necessary to be able to explain the creation week in the light of modern scientific theories in order to accept the Sabbath as a creation ordinance? Has modern science the know-how and the instruments to test and explain how long it takes to "create" a solar system such as ours with its multiforms of life? We seem to forget that science can observe and measure only the ongoing processes of CONSERVATION and DISINTEGRATION.

In fact, modern science by assuming that these ongoing processes have always functioned in the past essentially as in the present (uniformitarianism) excludes the possibility of a divine fiat (spoken-into-existence) process. Thus, ultimately the problem is not how to reconcile the creation-week with modern theories of origin, but how to

conciliate the Biblical teaching of a divine creation with the prevailing "scientific" theory of spontaneous generation. Is it possible to harmonize the two? Obviously not, since the two views rest on entirely different premises. The latter accepts only natural causes while the former acknowledges God as the Supernatural Cause: "By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear" (Heb. 11:3).

If we accept by faith that God created this world, then why should we disbelieve what He has revealed to us about the time He took to accomplish it? Someone could object that the notion of God creating and resting according to the limitations of a seven-day human week militates against His very eternal and omnipotent nature. It is evident that Almighty God did not need geological ages nor literal days to create our world but only the will to call it into existence (Ps. 33 :6).

But does not the fact that in His revelation God tells us that He chose a human week rather than a divine time-schedule to create our world point to another equally important quality of His divine nature: love? Is not God's willingness to enter into the limitations of human time at creation a reflection of His concern to give a divine example or perspective to the work-and-rest week of His creatures? Is not this also a prefiguration of God's willingness to enter, if the need should arise, into human flesh in order to become "Emmanuel," "God with us"?

To question the divine creation of our world in order to harmonize the creation-week with modern theories of origins, means to reject not only the message of Genesis 1:1-2 :3, but also its commentary given in the Fourth Commandment, which speaks of six literal days of creation and one literal day of rest, sanctified by God when this world was created (Ex. 20:11).

## **Importance of the Doctrine of Creation**

The belief in divine creation is fundamental to the Christian faith. This is reflected in the very opening statement of the Bible says: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and in the first article of the so-called Apostles' Creed which affirms: "I believe in one God the Father, all-sovereign, creator of heaven and earth." Why is the belief in a divine creation fundamental for the Christian faith? Let us consider three major reasons which I have outlined in the syllabus of my Bible doctrine class. (Aren't you lucky that you do not need to recall them for a quiz? Please laugh!)

### **(1) Belief in Creation is the Basis of True Worship**

To worship means to acknowledge and praise the worthiness of God. Would God be worthy of praise if He had not originally created this world and all its creatures perfectly? Could a person find reasons to praise a company that produced and sold him a car full of mechanical defects? In the same way it would be hard to find reasons to praise God if His original workmanship had not been perfect or if He had not been directly responsible for our existence.

### **(2) Belief in Creation is the Basis for Belief in Redemption**

Our belief in a divine creation determines our belief in redemption and final restoration. The Biblical doctrine of redemption depends on the notion that God's perfect creation was marred by human rebellion. To restore His creation to its original perfection God implemented His eternal plan of redemption, which includes the incarnation and the atoning sacrifice of His Son.

If originally God had not created this world and all its creatures in a perfect way, why would He be concerned to redeem and restore this world to an original perfection that never existed? If God was not personally responsible for our past perfect origin, why should He take responsibility for our present salvation and ultimate restoration?

The point I am trying to make is that Christians can hardly accept God's plan of redemption for their lives and this world without first accepting the divine perfect creation of this world. The reason is simple. Redemption presupposes a restoration to God's original perfect creation. A person who believes that life began, not by divine CHOICE, but by CHANCE in an imperfect way, can hardly believe that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to restore the human and sub-human creation to an original perfection that never existed. What all of this means is that to accept the theory of evolution, ultimately means to reject not only creation but also redemption. It means to be left without hope for our present life and future destiny.

### **(3) Belief in Creation Determines the Vision of Ultimate Restoration**

The doctrine of the First Things, known in theology as etiology, determines the doctrine of the Last Things, known as eschatology. This means that if God's original creation was "very good," we have reason to believe that our life in the New Earth will not differ substantially from God's original creation. If God created humans as physical, heterosexual beings and declared it "very good" (Gen 1:31), we have reasons to believe that what was good at the beginning will also be good at the End.

The failure to recognize this simple truth has fostered a misconception of the world to come as a spiritual retreat center somewhere up in space, where glorified souls will spend eternity in everlasting adoration and contemplation. If the new world Christ will establish at His Coming is a place beautiful but unreal, a place where the solid joys of this present life must be exchanged for a vague and ethereal existence of adoration and contemplation, then it is not surprising that some dread the thought of Christ's Return. To them the Second Advent means the end of their hopes for the thrills and excitements they feel this present life has to offer.

The vision of a vague, ethereal paradise has been inspired more by Greek philosophy than by Biblical teaching of an original perfect, physical creation. For the Greeks the material components of this world were evil and consequently not worthy of survival. The aim was to reach the spiritual realm where souls liberated from the prison-house of a material body enjoy eternal bliss.

Both the Old and New Testaments reject this dualism between the material and the spiritual. In the Old Testament the final salvation inaugurated by the Coming of the Lord is not an ESCAPE from but a TRANSFORMATION and RESTORATION of this world to its original perfect creation. The "new heavens and a new earth" (Is 65:17) are not a remote and inconsequential world somewhere off in space; rather they are the present heaven and earth renewed to their original perfection. "The wilderness becomes a fruitful field" (Is 32:15) and "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb" (Is 11:6).

The Old Testament opens with the sevenfold proclamation that God's original creation was "very good." The seventh day was divinely established as a memorial to the perfection and goodness of God's creation. This vision of the peace, harmony, material prosperity, and delight of the primordial Sabbath-Adam's First Day after his creation-functions in Old Testament times as the paradigm of the Last Days, a common designation for the world to come.

The New Testament vision of God's new world is basically the same as that of the Old Testament. The New Testament authors do not speak of an ethereal heaven where glorified souls will spend eternity wearing white robes, singing, plucking harps, praying, chasing clouds, and drinking milk of ambrosia, but rather they speak of this planet being purified, transformed, and perfected at and through the Coming of the Lord (2 Pet 3:11-13; Rom 8:19-25; Rev 21:1).

Paul speaks in Romans 8 about this present human and subhuman creation which eagerly longs to be liberated "from its bondage to decay" (Rom 8:19-23). As in the Old Testament, this new world into which we enter at the Coming of the Lord is not another

world, but it is this earth and this heaven, restored to their original perfect creation (Rev 21:1-4).

It is regrettable that this fundamentally earthly view of God's new world portrayed in the Scripture has largely been lost and replaced in popular piety with an ethereal, spiritualized concept of heaven. The latter has made well-meaning persons indifferent if not resentful toward the Second Advent, since they mistakenly view such an event as the end of their real life on this earth. An understanding of the Biblical doctrine of creation provides a much needed corrective to the prevailing misconceptions of the world to come.

### **The Literal Days of Creation**

Historically the days of creation have been understood as literal days. With the coming of the new sciences of geology and paleontology which speak of the enormous age of the earth, theologians have attempted to interpret the days of creation as geological ages. Such an attempt ignores six major Biblical indications of the literal days of creation.

1. In the Old Testament "Day-YOM (Hebrew)" when accompanied by a numeral number always means a 24 hours day.
2. The last three days which were controlled by the sun as described by the SAME TERMS as the first three days.
3. The very wording indicates shortness of time. The tense use in Hebrews is a vigorous imperative: "Become light and light became."
4. Each day has an evening and morning.
5. The green plants could hardly have survived the dark part of the third day, if that consisted of long ages.
6. The commandment to keep the Sabbath as a memorial day of the creation-Sabbath (Ex 20:11), presupposes a literal original Sabbath of 24 hours.

### **The Work of the Creation Week**

**A Definite Design.** The work of the creation week reveals a definite design, with each day preparing the work for the next. The whole culmination with the creation of man and the celebration of the Sabbath as the completion and celebration of God's creation.

**A Remarkable Symmetry.** The work of the creation week reveals also a remarkable symmetry between the accomplishments of days 1, 2, 3, and those of days 4, 5, 6. During the first three days God created spaces and during the next three days He created inhabitants for those spaces. This can be illustrated with the following diagram:

Day 1: Separation of light from darkness = Day 4: Creation of lightbearers

Day 2: Separation of waters & creation of expanse = Day 5: creation of fowls & fishes

Day 3: Separation of water from dry land = Day 6: Creation of animals & man

DAY 7: CELEBRATION OF COMPLETION OF CREATION

**The Seventh Day.** The creation was "finished" on the seventh day with the rest of God and the blessing and sanctification of the day. It is important to note that in the creation story the function of the rest of God is cosmological and not anthropological, that is to say, it is designed to express God's satisfaction over His complete and perfect creation, and not to give a chance to Adam and Eve to relax.

This point is indicated by the verb "SHABAT-rested" used in Genesis 2:2-3, which means cessation and NOT relaxation. Literally translated Genesis 2:2 reads "On the seventh day God STOPPED." The anthropological function of God's rest is present in Exodus 20:11 where the verb used is "NUAH-relaxed." The difference between the rest of God in Genesis 2:2-3 and that in Exodus 20:11, is not evident in English Bibles, because the two Hebrew verbs SHABAT and NUAH are translated in the same term "rested." But in Hebrews the rest of God in Genesis 2:2-3 is a rest of cessation, to testify in a dramatic way that creation was complete and perfect, while in Exodus 20:11, is a rest of relaxation to serve as a model for mankind to rest on the seventh day.

## **Evolution Cannot Replace Creation**

**Spontaneous generation is impossible.** The claim of evolution that life originated spontaneously from inorganic matter runs contrary to reason. Even allowing for billion of years, it is impossible to perceive how spontaneous generation could occur. Matter and energy cannot have evolved out of nothing. Personal, rational beings cannot have evolved from impersonal forces or objects, especially when one considers the complex design of the human body. The doctrine of creation remains an imperative to understand the beginning of this world with its multiforms of life.

**Evolution contradicts Biblical teachings.** The evolutionary theory clearly contradicts the biblical teachings of a personal God who created both human and subhuman species after their own kind. The Bible pictures humans as beginning perfect and then deteriorating as a result of the influence of sin. By contrast, evolution depicts humans as evolving from a brute, primitive condition to the present condition of civilized, rational existence. If it were true humans beings are evolving biologically and rationally, how can we explain the senseless wars of the twentieth century that have destroyed more human lives and property than all the wars of human history combined?

**Traditional evolution is being discredited today.** The foundational pillars of evolution such as natural selection, survival of the fittest, transmission of acquired characteristics, have been largely discredited by new theories such as the "big bang" theory. The latter maintains that the conditions conducive to the origin of life came together suddenly as a result of a cosmic explosion. This theory may be closer to the Biblical account of creation, but remains inadequate, because it fails to explain how our complex cosmos could derive from chaos, personal-rational beings from impersonal-irrational matter.

## **Implications of the Doctrine of Creation**

**This world is good.** Creation teaches us that this world is good, because God created it good: "God saw . . . it was very good" (Gen 1:31). The presence of evil does not negate the essential goodness of this world and our right to enjoy it. The Christian faith is not a world-denying faith, but a world-affirming faith, because it believes that God created this world perfectly, has redeemed it completely, and will restore it ultimately.

**Physical life is good.** The reason is that God made it good. Gender distinctions are good because God made them "very good" (Gen 1:31). Delighting in the goodness of God's creation is appropriate, because it is designed to satisfy not only our basic needs but also to provide pleasure. God has filled this world with things that are not only useful but also beautiful. The hues of the flowers, the plumage of the birds, the fur of the animals, the beauty of the human body with its lovely cheeks, dainty lips, and sparkling eyes-these things are of the nature of ornaments, because they are superadded to what would be merely useful. God could have designed all the fruits and vegetables to be green, but He chose for them to exist in a variety of colors so that they would give us not only food but also beauty. I am surely glad that tomatoes are red so that I can enjoy a nice red tomato sauce on the pasta or pizza. I doubt that most people would find a green tomato sauce equally appetizing.

**Intellectual life is good.** Modern science originated in the Western world when people began to believe that the present world is worth investigating, because it is the good and orderly creation of God. The ancient Greeks and Eastern Religion saw little value in exploring the visible world, because they believed that the real world was to be found above and beyond the empirical world. Unfortunately this mentality infiltrated Christian thought to the point that during the first fifteen centuries Christian thinkers were more interested to debate on how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, rather than exploring the mysteries of the cosmos around them and within them.

**Technological progress is legitimate,** because it fulfills the will of the creator who said: "Fill the earth and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen 1:28-29). Discovering the secrets of the world above, around, and within us, means to be doing the will of God. For a Christian who believes is a Creator-God, originator and giver of every good thing (Jam 1:17), the benefits of science and technology are an indication of the work of God through the work of man.

**The history of this world has meaning,** because God is working out in history His creative purpose for the beginning and end of this world. The Sabbath as the memorial of God's perfect creation, offers to the believers the constant assurance that this life has meaning and hope, because it is rooted in God from creation to eternity.

**Social concern is legitimate.** The Christian concern over poverty, ignorance, disease, inequality, war is legitimate, because the Christian is working with God to restore this world to its original perfection.

**Idolatry is wrong.** Creation teaches that nothing is to be worshipped in this world as God, because everything was created by God. Idolatry is the commitment of oneself to something other than God. Faith in a Creator condemns idolatry and liberates us from the danger of worshipping creatures or human creations, rather than the Creator.

**Conclusion.** The doctrine of creation is foundational to the Christian faith in general and to the Seventh-day Adventist faith in particular. To belief that this earth with its multiforms of life originated not by CHANCE, but by the CHOICE of a living, loving Creator, means to recognize His power to redeem us, to judges us, and ultimately to restore us to the creational perfection memorialized by the Sabbath. The Sabbath is closely linked to creation because through this day the Lord invites us to renew our faith in Him as our perfect Creator and complete Redeemer, and ultimate Restorer.

## **A CLARIFICATION ABOUT WOMEN'S MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH**

Several members of our newsletters, have contacted me to express their disagreement over my position on the role of women in the church to which I alluded in the final paragraphs of the last newsletter. I welcome your constructive criticism, but I do not appreciate the warnings I received to stay out of the women's ordination issues, because this may destroy any positive contribution my ministry is making to the Adventist church.

Frankly I feel that such a warning is uncalled for, because as Bible believing Christians we have a right and a responsibility to examine the issues we face today in the light of Biblical teachings. It is a known fact that the push for women's ordination is one of the critical issues facing the Christian world today. It affects not only the Christian churches in general, but also the Adventist church in particular.

In view of our Adventist commitment to the normative authority of Scripture, we have a solemn obligation to study and discuss together what the Bible teaches on the role of women in the church. It is unfortunate that an open, frank, calm, and respectful discussion of this sensitive subject has not been possible in recent years.

About 10 years ago the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference asked 20 scholars, representing equally the pro and con views of women's ordination, to

prepare papers on various aspects of this subject. I was assigned the topic of "Headship and Submission" on which I worked for three solid months producing a 40 page paper. Unfortunately none of the 20 papers were read or discussed. Instead at a special meeting held at Cahutta Springs, the General Conference President decided to push for a political solution, by allowing for the ordination of women as local elders but not as pastors. Such a compromise solution has proven to be unacceptable to all parties, engendering endless controversies.

I have no desire to open the discussion in this context. Those of you who are interested in my research are welcomed to request a copy of my book **WOMEN IN THE CHURCH: A BIBLICAL STUDY ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH**. We would be glad to mail you a copy. Incidentally numerous theological seminaries have adopted the book and the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church has translated it in Chinese for their seminary in Taiwan. You are welcome also to request my lengthy review (150K) of the pivotal chapter of **WOMEN IN MINISTRY**, a symposium produced by pro-ordinationists, mostly teachers from the SDA Theological Seminary. You will find that a thoughtful reading of this paper will help you to understand what are the real issues that we are facing today.

The only thing I would like to clarify in these final remarks is the prevailing misconception that those of us who, for Biblical reasons, cannot support the ordination of women to the male headship role of elder or pastor, are against the ministry of women in the church. A dear sister wrote to me a passionate message, urging me to understand that women can fulfill a vital ministry in our churches today in view of the many broken homes, single parents, abused children.

Such an appeal was totally unnecessary, because I fully concur that if ever there was a time when the ministry of women was needed, such time is today as we face unparalleled marital, family, and social problems. Women who have been trained theologically and in counseling skills can provide a vital healing ministries to our churches, homes, and community.

Let there be no doubt that the issues is not ministry. On this point we are all in full agreement. If you read my book **WOMEN IN THE CHURCH** you will find that I am pleading for a larger ministry of women in the church. Furthermore, women who are engaged in full-time church ministry should be paid on the same basis like men. Financial discriminations should be eliminated.

The issue is not ordination either, because for Adventists ordination is not a sacramental rite like in the Catholic church. For Catholics ordination invests a priest with almost "magic" powers to perform, among other things, the miracle of transubstantiation. For Adventist ordination is simply a commissioning to serve the church in a certain capacity. This means that women who serve the church in various ministries of counseling, visitation, Bible studies, preaching, music, education, etc, should be commissioned like men with the laying on of hand.

On this point we have a clear guidance from Ellen White who wrote: "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" (**REVIEW & HERALD**, July 9, 1895).

### **The Real Issue**

What is the real issue then? Simply stated the real issue is role distinctions. God has created men to serve as fathers and women as mothers. These distinctive and complimentary roles apply to the home and to the church because the church is an extended family, often referred to as "the household of God." It is as simple as that.

The issue then, is not, Should women minister in the church? On this point, as mentioned earlier, we are all in full agreement. Rather the issue is, Should women be ordained to serve in the headship role of elders or pastors in order to minister in the church? The answer of Scripture, according to my investigation, is abundantly clear. Both in the Old and New Testaments women were precluded to serve as priests, elders, or pastors, not because they are inferior or less capable than men, but because these offices entail the headship role of a spiritual father and not the supportive role of a spiritual mother.

This does not mean that the church does not need spiritual mothers. The contrary is true. As a home without a mother lacks that tender, loving care that only mothers can give, so a church without spiritual mothers lacks that warmth, care, and compassion that spiritual mothers can best give. Summing up, my understanding of the Biblical teaching is that men and women are equally called by God to minister in the home and in the church, but in different and yet complementary roles.

The application of the Biblical principle of role distinction entails that women be commissioned to serve the church in different and yet complimentary roles. As we make a distinction between the office of a male deacon and that of a female deaconess, so the church should distinguish between the office of a male elder and a female "elderess" or "shepherdess." In other words, men should be ordained to serve as spiritual fathers and women as spiritual mothers.

Feminists strongly reject such a distinction, viewing it as discrimination. They clamor for the elimination of role distinctions and for the ordination of women to serve in the male-headship role. We noted in the last newsletter that Francis Schaeffer warns that "equality without distinction is destructive to both men and women because it does not take into account their true identity and their distinctives as well as the commonalties that are bound in what it means to be a man and a woman."

It is hard for me to understand why some Adventists are bent on eliminating role distinctions in the church. In some countries like Italy, they go as far as calling women by the masculine name "ANZIANO," which means, "MALE ELDER." The feminine name would be "ANZIANA." In Latin languages like Italian the ending vowel differentiate the masculine from the feminine. For example, MARIO is masculine and MARIA is feminine.

Why do they call women "MALE ELDER," though it is a grammatical absurdity? Simply because they want to make the point that the woman has been ordained to serve in the male headship role. Feminists are determined to eliminate the Biblical role distinctions in the home and in the church. In my view the dangers of the elimination of role distinctions are both theological and practical.

**Theologically**, the role interchangeability model encourages the blurring or elimination of the creational role distinctions God assigned to men and women. This trend should be of special concern to Seventh-day Adventists who are deeply committed to uphold the integrity of the doctrine and order of creation, as we have studied in this newsletter.

Contrary to some churches which interpret the creation story as a mythological or allegorical expression of an evolutionary process which extended over millions of years, the Seventy-day Adventist Church accepts as factual the account of the six days of creation. The observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is viewed as a perpetual memorial to the perfection of God's original creation.

If Seventh-day Adventists were to adopt the role interchangeability model which is contrary to the creational roles assigned to men and women, I believe this would gradually erode confidence in the validity of the doctrine of creation and of the Sabbath commandment itself.

**Practically**, the blurring or elimination of the creational role distinctions between men and women accelerates the rate of divorce, the breakdown of the family, and the acceptance of lesbianism or homosexuality as a legitimate optional life-style. It is noteworthy that some of the denominations which decided years ago to ordain women, are now ordaining homosexuals and lesbians. Ellen White warns against the danger of seeking a "sphere" different from that assigned by God at creation.

Referring to Eve Ellen White writes: "She was perfectly happy in her Eden home by her husband's side; but like restless modern Eves, she was flattered that there was a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. But in attempting to climb higher than her original position, she fell far below it. This will most assuredly be the result with the Eves of the present generation if they neglect to cheerfully take up their daily duties in accordance with God's plan. . . .

A neglect on the part of woman to follow God's plan in her creation, an effort to reach for important positions which He has not qualified her to fill, leaves vacant the position that she could fill to acceptance. In getting out of her sphere, she loses true womanly dignity and nobility" (3 Testimonies 483-484).

Summing up, my study of the relevant biblical texts shows that both male-female equality and role distinctions, properly defined, are part of God's creation design for the harmonious functioning of humanity. God created the man and the woman perfectly equal in their moral worth and spiritual status, but clearly distinct in their biological and functional roles. Simply stated, in the partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, God created man to function in the servant headship role of husband/father, and women in the submissive role of wife/mother. These distinctive roles apply equally to the home and to the church, because from a biblical perspective the church is an extended spiritual family, often referred to as "the household of God" (Ph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 4:17; Gal 6:10).

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### **Contact Information**

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.  
Professor of Theology and Church History  
Andrews University  
4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Phone (616) 471-2915 Fax (616) 471-4013  
E-mail: [sbacchiocchi@qtm.net](mailto:sbacchiocchi@qtm.net) or [sbacchiocchi@csi.com](mailto:sbacchiocchi@csi.com)  
Web site: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com>