

Roles Within Marriage

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

Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

This newsletter resumes the study of biblical principles for building a happy and lasting marital relationships. For this issue I decided to focus on the biblical teachings regarding roles within marriage, for two reasons. First, because “role conflicts” are a major cause for the breaking up of marriages today. Some men interpret the principle of “husband headship” as a biblical mandate to boss their wives and children. Some women accept for a time their submissive role until they revolt against a tyrant husband by leaving, divorcing, or looking for another man.

The second reason, I choose to address the topic of roles within marriage is because some colleagues here at Andrews urged me to respond to the recommendation proposed by the 1999 Annual Council to the forthcoming General Conference Session regarding the “Biblical Teachings on Marriage.” There are several recommendations that deserve a close analysis, but for this time I decided to focus on the one regarding marriage.

The recommendation proposes to the General Conference Session the acceptance of the “partnership view” of marriage—a view which is presented more fully in the recent symposium *Women in Ministry*, prepared by a special committee of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan. According to the “partnership view” of marriage, the husband-headship and wife-submission are *not* part of the creational functional distinction in marriage, but came about as the result of sin and are to be eliminated by the gospel. Thus, it is alleged that the Bible teaches that husbands and wives are to be mutually submissive to one another and share responsibility in the home on a 50-50 arrangement.

This recommendation is apparently inspired by the desire to find a biblical justification for women ordination. By arguing that the role distinctions of husband-headship and wife-submission originated as a result of the Fall, and are to be eliminated by the gospel, ordinationists wish to prove that women can be ordained to serve in the church to the headship position without violating a biblical principle.

In the light of its far-reaching implications, I felt that the egalitarian or “partnership view” of marriage deserves careful scrutiny. This we shall endeavor to do in two installments. The present newsletter focuses on the biblical teaching regarding husband-headship and wife-submission. In the next newsletter we shall reflect on the implications and applications of the headship/submission principle. The material presented in these newsletters is largely excerpted from my book *The Marriage Covenant*, which has been favorably reviewed by scholars of different persuasions. If you wish to receive a copy, just contact us by email or by phone at (616) 471-2915. We will gladly mail you a copy immediately.

UPDATE ON NEW BOOK *THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC*

The printing of the book *The Christian and Rock Music: A Study of the Biblical Principles of Music*, is on schedule. The attractive cover is already printed and the printing of the signatures will be completed by Friday, April 21. On Monday April 24, the book will be bound and on the following day, April 25, it will be delivered to us.

Our plan is to process your orders as fast as we can possibly do it. You need to know, however, that during this past week we have received orders for over 4000 copies, and it will take us several days to process all your orders. Please be patient with us. On our part we will do our utmost best to process your orders as soon as possible.

Truly your response has surpassed my fondest expectations. The telephone has been ringing constantly. Many of you have shared with me your concerns over the adoption of pop music at your church. It is my fervent hope and prayer that this book will help especially those involved in the music ministry of the church, to understand more fully

the biblical distinction between the sacred music for worship and the secular music for entertainment.

If you have not ordered your copy yet, feel free to call us at (616) 471-2915 or to email us your request. You can also order the book at my website: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com> There you can see the attractive cover of the book and access several chapters of the book free of charge. We will do our best to process your order as soon as possible.

NEWLY RELEASED TIMELY BOOK BY **ADVENTISTS AFFIRM**

This past week came off the press a most timely book sponsored by **ADVENTISTAFFIRM**. The book is entitled ***Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry***. Fifteen Adventist scholars, church leaders, and lay people have contributed chapters to this book, which responds to the symposium ***Women in Ministry***, written by twenty pro-ordination authors, mostly teachers at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. These authors seek to prove that the Bible supports the ordination of women to serve in the headship roles of elder and pastor, and consequently the SDA Church should approve this practice in the church today.

Prove All Things provides a much needed response to ***Women in Ministry***. The contributors not only to point out the shortcomings of ***Women in Ministry***, but also explain why Scripture excludes the appointment of women to the headship role of priests, elders, or pastors, while including them in the supportive ministry of the church. This is an extremely valuable book for anyone interested in the current debate over women's role in the church. It clears up much of the confusion that exists in many people's mind. It will help you to appreciate more fully the unique ministry that God has called women to fulfill not only in the home, but also in the church.

Two important chapters of ***Prove All Things*** can accessed free of charge at my website: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com> If you wish to receive a copy of this timely book, you can contact me by email or by phone at (616) 471-2915. I have purchased several hundred copies especially for the subscribers to our newsletter. The book can also be ordered directly at the **ADVENTISTS AFFIRM** website: <http://www.adventistsaffirm.com> There you can access several chapters of the book free of charge.

ROLES WITHIN MARRIAGE

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

The stability of marriage depends largely upon the way the husband and the wife fulfill their respective roles. Marriage counselors often point to “role conflicts” as a major cause for the breaking up of marriages. “Those of us who do marriage counseling,” writes Paul Stevens, “realize that many marriages are struggling desperately at just this point. Some men insist that the Bible makes them responsible to God for the family. They are boss. Some women believe this is true and try for years to submit to a weak man or a tyrant. But there comes a day, almost inevitably, when the woman revolts. She may revolt by having a nervous breakdown, by getting a plane ticket and flying away, or by leaving him for another man.”¹

Role conflicts within marital relationships largely stem the different interpretations and applications of the Biblical teaching on husband-headship and wife-submission. The very mention of the terms “headship/submission” is anathema for many who in recent years have made the quantum leap from “Adam’s rib to women’s lib.”

Any one who dares to drop the phrase “submission of the wife” into a conversation with a “woman’s libber” risks the danger of being “categorized as some ignorant weirdo who believes in slave chambers of torture and one who promotes chaining women in a washroom. The very idea! I mean, what thinking person today can possibly imagine squashing a woman under the heels of a man . . . or shoving her in a corner, reducing her activities to changing diapers, doing dishes, checking off a grocery list, and mopping floors?”²

The widely publicized misrepresentation and rejection of the Biblical roles within marriage has been largely influenced by the Women’s Liberation Movement which received renewed impetus in 1966 with the founding of the National Organization of Women (NOW). The radical groups in the movement go as far as promoting the abolition of marriage to liberate women from their submissive role. Shelia Cronan, a leader in the Women’s Liberation Movement, unequivocally states: “Since marriage constitutes slavery for women, it is clear that the Women’s Movement must concentrate on attacking this institution. Freedom for women cannot be won without the abolition of marriage.”³

The more moderate groups take issue with the radicals who reject marriage altogether, promoting instead the “partnership paradigm” within marriage, according to which husband and wife function as 50-50 partners. For the most part, Evangelical Feminists espouse the egalitarian view of marriage, by interpreting the male-headship and women-submission texts in accordance with the partnership position. They believe that the Bible teaches that husbands and wives are to be mutually submissive to one another and share responsibility in the home on a 50-50 arrangement.

Adventist Adoption of Partnership Paradigm. In recent years an increasing number of Adventist scholars have adopted the egalitarian or partnership view of marriage. This view is reflected in the symposium *Women in Ministry*, prepared by a special committee from the SDA Theological Seminary,⁴ and also in the recommendations proposed by the 1999 Annual Council to the General Conference Session regarding changes to be made in the *Church Manual*. Chapter 15 of the proposed recommendations deals with “Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage.”

The brief section on “Biblical Teachings on Marriage” proposes the partnership view of marriage—a view which is presented more fully in *Women in Ministry*. It is alleged that husband-headship and wife-submission are *not* part of the original functional distinction in marriage, but came about as the result of sin. “The entrance of sin adversely affected marriage. When Adam and Eve sinned they lost the oneness which they had known with God and with one another (Gen 3:6-24). . . . As part of the curse of sin, rulership was given to the husband (Gen 3:16; see also *Patriarchs and Prophets* pp. 58-59).”⁵

The implication is that prior to the Fall, Adam did not exercise a headship role. Husband-headship and wife-submission are the result of sin and redemption is designed to eliminate these functional distinctions by restoring “marriage to its original ideal . . . of oneness and equality” in Christ.⁶ “The gospel emphasizes the love and submission of husband and wife to one another (1 Cor 7:3, 4; Eph 5:21).”⁷

Simply stated, the 1999 Annual Council recommends that the SDA Church adopts at the forthcoming General Conference Session “the partnership view” of marriage. This recommendation is apparently inspired by the desire to find a biblical justification for women ordination. By arguing that the role distinctions of husband-headship and wife-submission originated as a result of the Fall, and are to be eliminated by the gospel, ordinationists wish to prove that women can be ordained to serve in the church in headship position over men without violating a biblical principle.

In view of the fact that *only* the delegates to the General Conference Session will be given the opportunity to discuss and vote upon this proposed egalitarian view of marriage, it is imperative for those of us who find this view unbiblical to express our concerns at this time. The intent of this study is to invite, not only the GC delegates, but our Adventist membership at large to reexamine the biblical teachings on roles within marriage. If, the egalitarian view of marriage is proven to be unbiblical, then the proposed recommendation needs to be modified in accordance to biblical teachings.

Objectives of this Study. This essay is divided into two parts. The first part considers the Biblical meaning of “headship” and “submission,” especially in the light of Ephesians 5:18-33, since the latter is regarded as the most important NT “household code,” which allegedly teaches mutual submission between husband and wife. The second part examines the practical implications and applications of the Biblical principle of headship/submission. Specifically, we shall consider what it means from a practical standpoint for the husband to practice headship and for the wife to practice submission.

PART I: THE MEANING OF HEADSHIP/SUBMISSION

In a previous study on “Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture,” which appears as chapter 4 of the symposium *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry* (2000),⁸ I have examined the principle of male headship and female submission in the light of the first three chapters of Genesis. Briefly stated, the study shows that the principle of husband-headship and wife-submission was established by God at creation, and not after the Fall, as suggested by the authors of *Women in Ministry* and by the 1999 Annual Council’s recommendations to the General Conference Session.

1. Headship-Submission in Genesis 1-3

To avoid repeating my lengthy analysis of the first three chapters of Genesis, published in *Prove All Things*, I will simply summarize in this study its conclusions. Genesis 1 simply affirms that man and woman are equally created in the image of God, but they are sexually different. By twice calling the human race “man” (Gen 1:26-27), God whispers male headship already in Genesis 1, though it is explained in chapter two.

Genesis 2 clarifies the equality and gender distinctions of Genesis 1. Man and woman are equal in nature because they share the same human flesh and bone and have the same spiritual value before God. Yet they are different in function because woman is to be submissive to man. The latter is indicated by the followings four elements of the narrative: (1) the priority of man’s creation (Gen 2:7, 22), (2) the manner of the woman’s creation out of man (Gen 2:21-22), (3) the woman’s creation to be man’s helpmate (Gen 2:18-20), and (4) man’s naming of the woman both before and after the Fall (Gen 2:23; 3:20).

The headship of man is implied also in chapter 3 where God calls upon the man to answer for the pair’s transgression and indites man (not the woman) for failing to fulfill his headship role by listening to the voice of his wife rather than to His command.

Genesis 3 describes the distortion of creation’s order brought about by the Fall. This distortion affected not only the serpent, the land, work and childbearing, but also the headship of man and the submission of woman. Contrary to the claims of the symposium *Women in Ministry* and the 1999 Annual Council’s recommendations, the curse marks not the origin of man’s headship, but rather its distortion into oppressive domination. Sinful man would now take advantage of his headship to dominate and oppress his wife.

Paul’s Interpretation of Genesis 1-3. Paul attaches fundamental importance to the teachings of the first three chapters of Genesis. He appeals to the pre-Fall order and manner of creation to defend the submission of women to the leadership of man both in marriage and in the church. His appeal to the order of creation is in line with Christ’s teaching that calls for a restoration of the creational relationship (Matt 19:8) by the members of His kingdom. The function of redemption is not to redefine creation, but to restore it, so that wives learn godly submission and husbands learn godly headship.

Paul bases his teaching concerning the role of women in the church, not on the consequences of Fall described in Genesis 3, but on the pre-Fall order of creation presented in Genesis 1 and 2. The foundation of his teaching is not the divine judgments pronounced at the Fall, but God’s original purpose manifested in the order (1 Tim 2:13) and manner of human creation (1 Cor 11:8). It is unfortunate that in their interpretation of Genesis 1, 2, and 3, the egalitarians consistently ignore Paul’s appeals to these chapters to support his teachings on male/female role distinctions in the home and church. To ignore the self-authenticating internal witness of the Bible, can give rise to gratuitous private interpretations.

Summing up, the first three chapters of Genesis and their Pauline interpretation indicate that both husband-wife equality *and* role distinctions, properly defined, are part of God’s creational design for the harmonious functioning of the family. 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” (Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 4:17; Gal 6:10).

2. Mutual Submission?

A strenuous effort has been made in recent times to reinterpret Ephesians 5:18-33, Colossians 3:18, and 1 Peter 3:1-7 in accordance to the partnership paradigm. Before examining the nature of the husband’s headship role and of the wife’s submissive role, we need to consider the meaning of the opening statement of the “household code” found in Ephesians 5:21-33, which reads: “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21).

This statement is seen by many as the key that interprets the whole passage in terms of mutual submission in a marriage relationship. In other words, Paul is supposedly calling upon husbands and wives to be mutually submissive by serving one another in love. This interpretation obviously excludes the notion of the husband’s headship over the wife. Though the idea of mutual submission is not foreign to the intent of the passage, in my view it does not represent the main teaching of the passage. Verse 21 can best be understood as a general heading for the whole section which deals with the role relations of wives/husbands, children/parents, slaves/masters (Eph 5:21—6:9). I have four basic objections to the mutual submission interpretation of the passage:

First, the whole passage (Eph 5:21-6:9) consists of a series of three exhortations in which wives, children and slaves are urged to submit to or obey respectively husbands, parents and masters. These exhortations negate the notion of mutual submission, especially in the case of children/parents and slaves/masters. They can best be understood as explanations of what is meant by being subject to one another.

Second, the exhortation to be submissive or to obey is given to the subordinate partner, not to both. The corresponding exhortations to husbands/parents/masters are not for them to be submissive but to respect and love their subordinates. Thus both the structure and context of the passage recognize a distinction of roles. This view is also strengthened by the absence of the corresponding exhortation for masters and husbands in the parallel passage of 1 Peter 2:18-3:2.

Meaning of Verb. Third, the New Testament use of the verb *hypotasso*, translated “to make subject” in the active and “to be subject” in the passive, consistently expresses the idea of exercising or yielding to authority.⁹ “Each of the more than forty New Testament uses of the verb carries an overtone of authority and subjection or submission to it.”¹⁰ The meaning of the verb “to be subject” then, contains the idea of an order where one person submitting himself or herself to the leadership of another.

Fourth, the phrase “to one another,” which is the basis for the idea of mutual submission in marriage, does not always require identical reciprocity. An example of this is found in James 5:16 where the same phrase occurs: “confess your sins to *one another*.” This instruction is given in the context of a sick person confessing his or her sins to an elder as part of the healing process. There is no indication in the context of a reciprocal confession of sin, that is, of the elder also confessing his sins to the sick person. In the same way the exhortation “Be subject to one another” does not necessarily require the idea of identical reciprocity. In the light of the above structural, contextual, and verbal considerations, the phrase “Be subject to one another” simply refers to the general principle of mutual respect for and submission to one another’s authority.

3. The Nature of the Wife’s Submission

The admonition to “Be subject to one another” is followed immediately by Paul’s exhortation to wives: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body and is himself its Savior” (Eph 5:22-23). In what sense are wives to be subject or submissive to their husbands? There are different kinds of submission and for different motivations. There is the calculating kind of submission designed to achieve the fulfillment of secret desires through the practice of “feminine wiles.” There is the submission of conciliation

which is accepted for the sake of peace. There is the submission of resignation to bitter necessity. There is the submission to the superior wisdom of another person.

Submission for the Sake of Christ. Paul rejects the worldly patterns of submission, substituting for them a new definition: “as to the Lord.” This does not mean that a wife’s submission to her husband must have the same unconditional ultimacy of her commitment to Christ. This would be an idolatrous form of submission. The phrase suggests two possible meanings. First, the *manner* of a wife’s submission to her husband should be similar in quality to her devotion to the Lord. This meaning is supported by the parallel text, Colossians 3:18, which states: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”

Second, the *reason* for a wife’s submission is “because the Lord wants it.” This meaning is suggested by the preceding and following verses. In the preceding verse (v. 21) the reason given for being submissive is “out of reverence for Christ.” “Reverence” is a soft translation of the Greek *phobos* which means “fear.” The KJV retains the literal meaning: “in the fear of God.”

In Scripture, the “fear of the Lord” is the response which produces obedience to His commandments. Thus, submission “in the fear of Christ” means to accept the authority of another (in this case, the husband) out of obedience to Christ who has delegated that authority. This interpretation is supported by the following verse (v. 23) which says, “For the husband is the head of the wife,” that is to say, because the Lord has appointed the husband to function as the head. The recognition of this fact leads Paul to conclude his exhortation by urging wives again to fear their husbands: “Let the wife see that she respects [literally “fears”—*phobetai*] her husband” (Eph 5:33).

Theological, not Cultural Reasons. The main conclusion relevant here is that a wife’s submission to her husband rests not on the consequences of the Fall or cultural norms, but on her commitment to the Lord. *Wives are asked to submit not because of the curse or the superior wisdom of their husbands, but for the sake of Christ.* Paul grounds his injunction not on the Fall, but on the unique relationship of loving mutuality and willing submissiveness existing between Christ and the church. The latter was not affected by the Fall.

Christ has appointed the husband to function as the “head,” so that when the wife subordinates herself to him, she is obeying Christ. This does not mean that a wife is to relate to her husband as if he were Christ. Paul’s exhortation is “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord,” and *not* “because they are the Lord.” Husbands are human beings, but are appointed by the Lord to act as “heads” in the marital relationship. Thus, Paul takes what could be a natural submission and places it within a spiritual order that transcends the Fall, an order that Christ stands behind.

The wife’s submission to her husband is not based on the husband’s superiority or the wife’s inferiority but on the husband’s headship role established by God at creation (1 Cor 11:8-9). This order has been established because it affords greater harmony and effectiveness in the marital relationship. The authority to which a wife bows is not so much that of her husband as that of the creational order to which both of them are subject.

Ellen White expresses this truth with clarity: “The husband is the head of the family, as Christ is the head of the church; any course of action which the wife may pursue to lessen his influence and to lead him to come down from that dignified, responsible position is displeasing to God. It is the duty of the wife to yield her wishes and will to her husband. Both should be yielding, but the word of God gives preference to the judgment of the husband. And it will not detract from the dignity of the wife to yield to him whom she has chosen to be her counselor, adviser, and protector.”¹¹

Voluntary Submission. A wife’s submission to her husband is not imposed, but consciously chosen. It is a free, willing and loving submission. It is not subservience, but loving assistance. The voluntary nature of her submission is indicated by two facts: first, by the command to the husband to love his wife rather than to make her obey; second, by the model of the submission of the church to Christ which Paul gives as an example for the wife’s submission to her husband. This means that as the church willingly chooses to obey Christ in response to His creative and redeeming love so the wife willingly

chooses to obey the husband as a response to his caring and self-sacrificing love. This form of active obedience is not self-demeaning, but self-fulfilling and upbuilding.

The purpose of this submission is not to suppress the individuality of the wife, but to ensure a deeper and more solid oneness between husband and wife as they function together in the household. Elisabeth Elliot perceptively points out that “To say that submission is synonymous with the stunting of growth, with dullness and colorlessness, spiritlessness, passivity, immaturity, servility, or even the ‘suicide of personality,’ as one feminist who calls herself an evangelical has suggested, is totally to misconstrue the biblical doctrine of authority.”¹²

In the Christian faith, authentic self-realization for men and women is found in the willing submission to the divinely-established roles grounded in creation and clarified by Christ’s redemption. This liberating dynamic is exemplified in the life of the Trinity and expressed in the Scriptures.

4. The Nature of the Husband’s Headship

The exhortation “Wives, be subject to your husbands” is followed by Paul’s admonition to husbands: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). It is noteworthy that Paul speaks of the headship role of the husband only when exhorting wives and not when addressing the husbands themselves. In other words, the wives are reminded that “the husband is the head of the wife” (Eph 5:23), but that husbands are *not* exhorted to exercise their headship role by keeping their wives in submission. Instead, Paul chose to confront husbands with the headship model of Christ’s sacrificial love (Eph 5:25-27).

Paul’s approach reveals his sensitivity to human abuse of power. He was aware of some men’s over-concern with asserting their authority. Consequently, he chose to emphasize not the husband’s right to be the head over the wife, but rather his obligation to exercise his headship through care for his wife. Paul acknowledges the headship role of the husband in the marital relationship as an indisputable principle: “the husband is the head of the wife” (Eph 5:23). Elsewhere the apostle appeals to the priority of Adam’s creation (1 Tim 2:13) and manner of Eve’s creation (1 Cor 11:8) as the basis of the headship principle. There was no need to restate this principle when addressing the husbands. What husbands needed to hear was what it means to be the head over their wives.

Headship Clarified. Paul clarifies the meaning of headship by calling upon husbands to imitate the sacrificial leadership of Christ Himself: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25-27).

Paul here goes into great detail to explain how Christ exercises His headship role over the church, namely, through the sacrificial giving of Himself for her redemption and restoration. In the same way, the husband’s authority is to be expressed in self-giving love for the well-being of his wife. The husband who follows Christ’s leadership will exercise his headship, not by forcing his wife into a mold that stifles her initiative, her gifts, her personhood, but rather by encouraging her to develop her mental and spiritual potential.

Paul further clarifies the meaning of headship by shifting back to the head/body analogy (vv. 28-30). The husband should care for his wife as he does for his own body. This means that a husband must be dedicated to his wife’s welfare by providing for all her needs. This kind of loving and sacrificial leadership eliminates all the evils associated with hierarchical marriage and enables the two to “become one flesh” (Eph 5:31).

Biblical headship is for the sake of building others and not for one’s own benefit. Headship means that the husband assumes a responsibility for the family in a way that is different from that of the wife’s. The husband serves as the provider and the wife as the home-builder. The two are not superior or inferior but complementary. Each supplements the special gifts and responsibilities of the other.

Headship and Submission. The model of Christ's sacrificial love for the church provides a most eloquent example of how headship and submission can be compatible in marital relationships. Christ's headship over the church is not diminished by His self-sacrificing love for her. By the same token, the church's submission to Christ does not diminish the possibilities for her fullest development, but rather enhances them.

The comparison between the relationship of Christ-the-church and husband-wife points to the ultimacy of the authority structure in marriage. It provides a most compelling proof that headship/submission are part of the divine order, and not the result of the Fall. Role distinctions within marriage must always mirror the relation of Christ to the church. "It was not the design of God" writes Ellen White, "that the husband should have control, as head of the house when he himself does not submit to Christ. He must be under the rule of Christ that he may represent the relation of Christ to the church."¹³

Neither headship nor submission must crush or distort the possibilities for self-growth or personal fulfillment. Effective leadership in any organization must encourage the fullest development of the abilities of those under authority. This requires that a leader be aware of the concerns of those under him and that the subordinates respect the wishes of the leader. As Christians we need to maintain the delicate balance between the exercise of authority (headship) and the response to authority (submission).

5. Reasons for the Rejection of Husband-Headship

Why are some Christians, including some Adventists, so offended by the Biblical principle of husband-headship that they wish to reduce it to the consequences of the Fall? At the root of the rejection of husband-headship, there is a gross misunderstanding of its Biblical meaning. In the Bible, husband-headship relates to function not to value. If male headship in the home and in the church meant that man was innately more valuable than woman, then something would be terribly unjust in the Bible. But male headship in the Bible does not mean that women are inferior or of lesser value than men.

The value of a human being is not determined by office or function. The head of a department is not of greater worth than a regular teacher in the department. Human worth in the Scripture is determined not by our office or function but by our status before God by virtue of creation and redemption. By virtue of creation, both men and women are equal before God because both have been created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). Similarly, by virtue of redemption, both men and women are equal before God because, as we read in Galatians 3:28, we "are all one in Christ Jesus."

Difference Between Value and Function. The divine order of headship has nothing to do with men being of greater worth than women, for they are not. The issue is the different and yet complementary functions God has assigned to men and women. Weldon M. Hardenbrook perceptively observes that "The failure to differentiate between value and function lies behind much of the power struggle that ravages families across America. Men who actually think they are *more* valuable because God asks them to be head of the family unit are deceived. And women who feel reduced in personhood because they are not in charge are equally deceived."¹⁴

The Trinity provides a perfect model of how equality in worth can coexist with submission in functions. God the Father is the Head in the Trinity (1 Cor 11:3), but His headship does not lessen the value of the Son, because both are equally God. Some argue that the Son's functional submission to the Father was temporary, limited only to the time of His incarnation and/or of the completion of His redemptive mission. This argument is untrue, because 1 Corinthians 15:28 clearly tells us that at the consummation of His redemptive mission, Christ who has been reigning until He subjects all things under His Father's feet, will Himself be subject to God: "When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to everyone" (1 Cor 15:28).

The Son is not of less value because of His functional submission to the headship of the Father, since both fully share the divine nature. Similarly, a woman is of no less value because of her functional submission to her husband, since both men and women are "joint heirs of the grace of life" (1 Pet 3:7), having been equally created and restored in God's image (Gen 1:27).

Irresponsible Male Headship. A major reason that husband-headship is hotly contested today is that all too often men demand submission from their wives without in turn submitting themselves to the headship of Christ. With complacency, men will quote the Scripture which says “the head of the woman is man” (1 Cor 11:3, NIV) to assert their authority, forgetting the preceding statement which says: “the head of every man is Christ” (1 Cor 11:3). Before a man can serve as an effective head of his wife and children, he must himself submit to the headship of Christ. “Proper headship operates within a clearly defined chain-of-responsibility. If the chain is broken at any link, authority becomes impaired.”¹⁵

One can hardly blame wives who resent being under the irresponsible headship of husbands who are not accountable to Christ. That is not only unfair but also unchristian. Biblical husband-headship, however, is patterned after the sacrificial headship of Christ over the church, manifested in the sacrificial giving of Himself for her redemption and restoration (Eph 5:25-30).

It was through His act of love and self-sacrifice that Christ became Lord and Master of the church. Similarly a man cannot rightfully claim to be the head of a home unless he is willing to give himself for the well-being of all the members of his family. As Christ is both the Head and Servant of the church, moving from one role to the other, so a man who lives under the headship of Christ must be willing to exercise both headship and servanthood in the home. (Phil 2:8-9; Matt 20:26; 23:11; Mark 9:35; 10:43).

Ellen White expresses this truth with enviable clarity: “The Lord has constituted the husband the head of the wife to be her protector; he is the house-band of the family, binding the members together, even as Christ is the head of the church and the Savior of the mystical body. Let every husband who claims to love God carefully study the requirements of God in his position. Christ’s authority is exercised in wisdom, in all kindness and gentleness; so let the husband exercise his power and imitate the great Head of the church.”¹⁶

Conclusion. The egalitarian or partnership view of marriage, adopted by some Adventist scholars and recommended for adoption at the next General Conference Session, is largely based on a misinterpretation of the biblical teachings on husband-headship and wife-submission. The Bible presents these roles within marriage, not as the consequence of the Fall, but as an order established by God at creation to ensure unity and harmony in the home and the church. Paul effectively clarifies the meaning of headship and submission, by appealing, not to the consequences of the Fall, but to the model of Christ and the church. The purpose of this clarification was not to do away with role distinctions in the home and the church, but rather to ensure their proper expression in accordance with God’s creational purpose. It is my fervent hope and prayer that the delegates at the forthcoming General Conference session will examine the proposed egalitarian view of marriage and vote to uphold the scriptural role distinctions established by God to ensure the harmony of the home and church.

ENDNOTES

1. R. Paul Stevens, *Married for Good* (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1986), p.113.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Strike the Original Match* (Portland, Oregon, 1980), p. 42.
3. Quoted in Margaret M. Poloma and T. Neal Garland, "The Married Professional Woman: A Study in Tolerance of Domestication," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (August 1971), p. 533.
4. Nancy Vyhmeister, Ed., *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1998).
5. 1999 Annual Council Recommendations to the General Conference Session, p. 260.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 261.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Mercedes H. Dyer, Ed., *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry* (Berrien Springs, Michigan, 2000), pp. 65-110.
9. For a general discussion of the use of the term, see Gerhard Delling, "Hypotasso," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds., Gerhard Kittel and Hergard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974), vol. 8, pp. 41-46.
10. James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981), p. 142.
11. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA, 1958), vol. 1, p. 307.
12. Elisabeth Elliot, "Why I Oppose the Ordination of Women," *Christianity Today* 19 (June 6, 1975): 14.
13. Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, TN, 1952), p. 117.
14. Weldon M. Hardenbrook, *What Every Man Should Know About Fatherhood*, (Arcadia, California, 1987), p. 13.
15. Larry and Nordis Christiansen, *The Christian Couple* (Minneapolis, 1977), p. 142.
16. Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, TN, 1952), p. 215.

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSON: APRIL 15-22 “THE SABBATH AND THE SECOND ADVENT”

Many of you have encouraged me to continue posting few comments on our weekly Sabbath School Lesson. I will endeavor to offer this service as time permits. Please note that my comments are largely drawn from my book *The Advent Hope for Human Hopelessness*, which provides valuable insights into the topics covered by the lesson. I would be glad to make this timely book available to you and your Sabbath School Class at a special offer. Feel free to contact me.

The Connection Between the Sabbath and the Second Advent

As Seventh-day Adventists we acknowledge the close link between the Sabbath and the Second Advent in the very name we carry. Our church name indicates that we view these two Biblical doctrines not only as important but also connected *theologically* and *practically*. **Theologically**, both the Sabbath and the Second Advent invite us *to meet with the Lord*. The Sabbath invites us to meet with *the invisible Lord in time*, while the Second Advent invites us to meet with the *visible Lord in space*.

Practically, our preparation to meet our invisible Lord in *time* on the Sabbath constitutes in a sense a preparation to meet our visible Lord in *space* at His Second Advent. We believe that to be a *Sabbathkeeper* who welcomes the Savior on His Sabbath day also means to be an *Adventist* who is waiting to welcome the Savior at His Second Advent. Thus the preparation for and the celebration of the Sabbath offer a most effective vehicle to nourish our Advent Hope.

The Sabbath Nourishes the Advent Hope

In several studies I have shown how the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, both in the Bible and in the Judeo-Christian tradition, memorializes not only the past perfect creation and complete redemption, but also the future restoration of both the human and subhuman creation to be accomplished by the coming of the Lord.

In Old Testament times the experience of peace, rest, and liberation which both the weekly and the annual Sabbaths provided to the Jews served to epitomize and nourish the hope of future messianic redemption. Similarly in the New Testament the “Sabbath rest” that “remains . . . for the people of God” (Heb 4:9) is seen as a physical cessation from work to celebrate not only God’s past creative and redemptive accomplishments, but also His future restoration of this world and of our lives. Through its rich meaning and experience the Sabbath offers both *theological assurance* and *practical opportunities* to nourish and strengthen the Advent Hope.

Theological Assurance. Theologically the seventh-day Sabbath nourished our Advent Hope by constantly reassuring us that there is a future “Sabbath rest” that “remains . . . for the people of God” (Heb 4:9). In fact, the Sabbath offers us not only the assurance of the future rest, but it also challenges us to “strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience” (Heb 4:11). The allusion in the latter half of the verse is to those Israelites of the wilderness generation who, because of disobedience, failed to enter into the rest of the land of Canaan—rest of which the Sabbath rest was a type. That experience serves as a warning to us Christians who look forward to the rest of the heavenly Canaan—rest of which the Sabbath is also a type. If, like the wilderness generation, we become unfaithful and disobedient, then we will not enter into the future rest of the heavenly Canaan.

Historical Acceptance. The eschatological meaning of the Sabbath as the symbol of the future rest that awaits God’s people at Christ’s Coming has been widely accepted and taught throughout Christian history. The so-called *Letter of Barnabas* (dated about A.D. 130) offers the earliest example, when it says: “‘And he rested on the seventh day’ means this: When his Son comes and destroys the time of the lawless one, and judges the ungodly and changes the sun and moon and starts, then he will rest well on the seventh day.” For the author of this letter, then, the seventh day typifies the age

(seventh millennium) to be inaugurated by the coming of Christ, who, by destroying evil and establishing righteousness, will bring “everything to rest.”

This future meaning of the Sabbath rest as a symbol of the End-time rest has been held with variations and adaptations by a host of Christian writers such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Cyprian, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, Jerome, Augustine, Chrysostom, Peter Lombard, Calvin, and many more.

Augustine’s Eternal Sabbath. Perhaps the most sublime presentation of the Sabbath rest as symbol of the rest and peace that awaits the people of God in the earth made new is to be found in the writings of Augustine (A.D. 354-430). On the last page of the *City of God*, Augustine views the blessedness of the heavenly city as the ultimate fulfillment of the promised Sabbath rest. “There that precept will find fulfillment: ‘Be still, and know that I am God.’ That will truly be the greatest of Sabbaths; a Sabbath that has no evening, the Sabbath that the Lord approved at the beginning of creation . . . There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise.”

In his *Confessions*, Augustine earnestly prays for the Sabbath rest and peace which has not sunset: “O Lord God, grant Thy peace unto us, . . . the peace of rest, the peace of the Sabbath, which hath no evening. For all this most beautiful order of things . . . is to pass away, for in them there was morning and evening. But the seventh day is without any evening, nor hath it any setting, because Thou hast sanctified to an everlasting continuance . . . that we may repose in Thee also in the Sabbath of eternal life.”

An Unresolved Contradiction. It is unfortunate that many Christian thinkers who have accepted, and often spoken eloquently of the symbolic function of the Sabbath as a type of the future and final rest that awaits the people of God at the return of Christ, have at the same time rejected the validity and value of seventh-day Sabbathkeeping for the present Christian life. One wonders, How can the principle and practice of weekly Sabbathkeeping have terminated with the first coming of Christ, when it is still a most valuable symbol of the final rest which awaits God’s people at the Second Coming of Christ?

To accept the Sabbath as the symbol of the *future* rest, while rejecting its *present* observance, is an open contradiction. How can the Sabbath nourish in the believer the hope of the future rest and peace, when its present celebration, which is a foretaste and anticipation of that future rest, is renounced or even denounced? This unilateral interpretation of the Sabbath as an exclusive future reality destroys the organic Biblical unity between the present and the future (temporal and eschatological) functions of the Sabbath. This unresolved contradiction illustrates what happens when the permanency of a divine precept, such as the Fourth Commandment, is tampered with.

The believer who accepts the organic Biblical unity between the present experience of the blessings of the Sabbath and their future consummation at the Second Advent finds in the celebration of the Sabbath a constant theological assurance that there is indeed a future “Sabbath rest” that “remains . . . for the people of God” (Heb 4:9)—a Sabbath rest that will be fully realized when Christ shall come to establish everlasting peace and rest upon this earth.

Practical Opportunities. The Sabbath celebration nourishes our Advent Hope by offering us not only theological assurance of the rest and peace of the world to come, but also practical opportunities to experience a foretaste of such blessings. A most rewarding aspect of life in the new earth will be an unprecedented experience of the presence of God among His people. “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them” (Rev 21:3).

The Sabbath affords a unique opportunity to experience a foretaste of the divine presence, peace, and rest of the world to come. In a sense the holiness of the Sabbath, spoken of repeatedly in the Scriptures (Ex 16:23; 20:8; 31:15; Deut 5:12; Neh 9:14; Is 58:13; Jer 17:22), consists of the promise God has made on and through this day to manifest in a special way His holy presence in our lives. To hallow the Sabbath means not merely to set aside a weekly day for rest and worship, but to welcome the Lord of the Sabbath, our Savior Jesus Christ, as our invisible and yet very real guest of honor.

God summons us on the Sabbath to be free from work in order that we may be able to cultivate more freely and fully the awareness of His presence and peace in our lives.

Through the Sabbath, as eloquently expressed by Thomas Aquinas, God invites us “*ad vacandum divinis*—to have a vacation with Him.”

We can enjoy the Sabbath vacation with God, not only during the formal worship service, but also during the informal activities of the day, because all of them spring out of a heart which has deliberately chosen to honor God on His Holy Day. This spiritual communion that we enjoy with the Lord on the Sabbath nourishes our Advent Hope by offering us a foretaste of the fuller communion we shall enjoy when we shall see Him face to face.

Delighting in God’s Creation. Another practical way in which the Sabbath celebration nourishes our Advent Hope is by affording the opportunity to delight in the goodness of God’s creation (Is 58:13-14). By inviting us to worship God as our perfect Creator, Redeemer, and ultimate Restorer, the Sabbath offers us not only the time but also the spiritual resources perceptively to enjoy God, people, and things. It invites us to look at the world through the eyes of eternity, that is to say, to view things not merely as they are, but as they must have been originally and as they will be ultimately.

The prevailing materialistic view of this world has resulted in an ethic of exploitation of nature to the extent that we have become aliens in our own habitat. The Sabbath is a movement away from the *exploitation* of nature to its *admiration*. The joyful celebration on the Sabbath of God’s creation, redemption, and restoration of all the natural order teaches us to act not as *predators* but as *curators* of the world. It teaches us to become responsible stewards of God’s good creation, since Christ at the End will restore it to its original perfection. Thus it nourishes our Advent Hope by offering us a preparation for and a foretaste of the delight and blessedness of the new world.

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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 or sbacchiocchi@csi.com
Web site: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com>