

# REPLYING TO TY GIBSON ON “A Closer Look at Women’s Ordination”

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by Dr. Alberto R. Treiyer  
[www.distinctivemessages.com](http://www.distinctivemessages.com)

The first time I met Ty Gibson was in a Symposium on the trumpets of Revelation organized by 3 ABN, about five years ago. At that time, we both defended historicism before some brothers who had abandoned that principle of prophetic interpretation in regards to that particular issue. Now, it is with regret that I have to point out several fallacies about his conclusions on WO. As you will see in the brief answers I offer here, his problems have to do with partial readings and misconceptions on what the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy have to say about this topic.

Let us summarize the principal counterpoints I think can be made to Gibson’s article.

## **1. E. G. White recommended young men and ladies to the canvassing work as a preparation for becoming “pastors to the flock of God” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, 322).**

**Answer:** Why does Gibson omit several other statements of E. G. White (EGW) where she explains what she understood as constituting pastoral work? This ever increasing trend of isolating a few passages of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy as a means of arguing against WO, among other topics, is frankly quite incredible. It is possible that the above statement considered by Gibson could instead be referring to the work of a future minister’s wife, and how her experience with visiting homes via the canvassing of church books better enables her to assist her husband’s pastoral ministry. In EGW’s view, both the pastor and his wife constitute a team that in concert produce a much more effective ministry, with the wife being a suitable helper for the labor of her husband:

“The work of God demands most earnest labor, and the Lord would have ministers and their wives closely united in this work. *The husband and wife can so blend in labor that the wife shall be the complement of the husband...* The wives of many of the Lord’s servants have united heartily with their husbands in the work of saving souls. Through her unselfish interest to advance the cause of God, *the wife has made her husband’s work much more complete*” (6MR 43).

“When it is possible, let the minister and his wife go forth together. *The wife can often labor by the side of her husband, accomplishing a noble work. She can visit the homes of the people and help the women in these families in a way that her husband cannot*” (Ev 491). “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*” (5MR 325, 326).

In other statements, EGW offered more details as to the kind of pastoral work a consecrated sister could accomplish in the church.

“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” (RH, July 9, 1895).

This has always been understood by our church as a work well fitted for a deaconess or a biblical instructor. As you can see, EGW is talking about a part-time service or ministry, under the leadership and counsel of the church officers or the minister. See <https://www.adventistarchives.org/seventh-day-adventists-on-womens-ordination.pdf>.

## **2. E. G. White applies to “brethren and sisters” the prophecy of Isa 61:6, where the old prophet foretells that the people of God will be called priests of the LORD...,” and “be named ministers of**

**our God.” In Gibson’s mind, this means that in the new dispensation, both men and women may be elders and pastors.**

**Answer:** But in another writing she also applies that prophecy of Isaiah to the minister who enters new fields of labor, more specifically those in connection with medical missionary work (*Miscellaneous Collections*, How to open closed doors). As such, we could also understand her call to *brethren* and *sisters* to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah much in the same way as described in point one. Wives are to be engaged in the work of their husbands as a team in proclaiming the word of God in concert.

But what we find, emphasized again at the end of Gibson’s article, is a serious confusion regarding typology. He does not realize that the priesthood of both the people of Israel and those of the new Israel, the church, had and has to do with missionary work that concerns men as well as women (Exod 19:6; 1 Pet 2:9: “that you may declare the praises of him who called you... into his wonderful light”). The whole ancient nation of Israel as well as the whole church today are called to become ambassadors for God in the world. Did this fact prevent the social organization of the nation of Israel and the church today? It is interesting to note that the Bible consistently reveals God’s people as being organized with male rulers and leaders.

This confusion regarding the typological correspondence between the two dispensations (old and new covenants), is a slippery slope into *dispensationalism*—a way of interpreting the Bible without realizing the unity of the covenant in both testaments.

**3. He quotes the requirement of Paul for deacons to be “the husbands of one wife” (1 Tim 3:12), and then he mentions “Phoebe our sister, who is a servant (*diakonos*) of the church” (Rom 16:1). He concludes therefore that when Paul requires the same thing for elders (1 Tim 3:2), he is not necessarily excluding women from that position.**

**Answer:** Deacon means “to serve,” and it is a common word in the NT, and does not indicate a special appointment or ceremony of ordination. Paul was also a servant (*deacon*: Col 1:24-25), without necessarily implying by this that he possessed a nominated position. If Phoebe was nominated to serve the church, we are not provided with a list of requirements for her ministry, other than she was a good “helper” for the needs of many.

Either way, Gibson cannot provide a single example of a woman having been nominated as an elder/bishop/overseer. Why? Because the apostle excludes women from that position. Unlike deacons, the role described by Paul for elders was “to rule” the church (1 Tim 5:17). That role was never given by God to women over men in either dispensation (see Gen 1:26,28: *radah*, “to dominate” God’s creation; 3:16: *marshal*, “to rule” over woman). Actually, the leadership of elders carries over from the OT, where only men were nominated “elders” (*tsaquen*) and “heads” (*rosh*) of the people (Joshua 23:2; 2 Chron 5:2).

[Modern versions tend to translate the Hebrew term *rosh* (literally “head”) as chief, captain, leader, or other similar terms].

**4. Gibson believes that 1 Cor 14:28,30,34, and 1 Tim 2:11-12, where Paul requires women to keep silent and not teach, deals with a local problem, because according to other texts women could prophesy. In addition, we had a prophetess in our church who extensively preached.**

**Answer:** It is evident that our brother doesn’t understand the context and different meanings of the terminology employed. In order to understand what Paul actually said, we have to know what the people understood in his days by the term “to teach” (*didasko*). In ancient Hebrew, *rabbi*, “that means teacher” (John 1:38: *didaskalos*), was a proper term of address when speaking to a leader or superior who was invested with an authority that was to be obeyed. The people were to submit to that authority. This was well understood by Jesus when He said, “a disciple is not above his *didaskalos* (teacher), nor a servant above his master” (Matt 10:24-25).

Therefore, when Paul indicated that a woman is not permitted to “teach” a man (1 Tim 2:12: *didasko*),

he is referring to the fact that by divine order only a male elder or leader of the church was to exert such authority over the congregation as a whole, under the supreme leadership of Christ (see 1 Tim 3:2: “to teach”). This was not a cultural phenomenon, it was referring to what God had already commanded in the OT law (see 1 Cor 14:33-34). In exchange, both men and women could “pray” and “prophecy” (1 Cor 11:5; Acts 21:8-9; see Luke 2:36-37), and “expose” or “explain” the Word of God (Acts 11:4; 18:26; 28:23: *exezeno*), as well as become evangelists (John 4:39-42).

The word *nabi*, “prophet,” comes from a root meaning “to bubble forth, as from a fountain,” hence “to utter.” In other words, a prophet was a spokesman for God to man, a bearer of God’s message. This role was also fulfilled by E. G. White as “the Lord’s messenger,” without presuming or seeking to appropriate the authority of her husband in her home or of the leaders of the church, as she expressed it, definitively, more than once. “*No one has ever heard me claim the position of leader of the denomination... Neither then [when the work was just starting] nor since the work has grown to large proportions, during which time responsibilities have been widely distributed, has anyone heard me claiming the leadership of this people*” (8T 236, 237). In fact, she never baptized and she never officiated a marriage. All this in fulfillment of what God anticipated by prophecy, that the sons and daughters would prophesy, in agreement with the mission God gave to women (Joel 2:28).

**5. For Gibson, Jesus is the only Teacher (*didaskalos*) because He said, “you have only one Teacher (*didaskalos*), and you are all brothers” (Matt 23:8). Therefore, he concludes that Jesus is the only head of the church.**

**Answer:** Paul himself said that he was a *didaskalos* (1 Tim 2:7), just before denying that role to women (v. 12), and granting it to elders (1 Tim 3:2). Should we thus conclude that the apostle didn’t understand that Jesus was the only Teacher, and that no one else could become a teacher under His supervision? Again, to be a teacher (*didaskalos*) was one of the gifts of the Spirit given to the elders of the church (1 Cor 12:28-29; 1 Tim 3:2).

In the Old Testament God is also called the “Head” of His people (2 Chron 13:12: “God is our *rosh*, Head”). But this fact didn’t prevent the “elders” of Israel to also be labeled “heads” (*rosh*), that is, leaders in ancient Israel (Joshua 23:2; 2 Chron 5:2), not only of their homes, but also of the people (Deut 1:15; Judges 10:18; 11:8-9,11; Micah 3:1, etc). Paul had this in mind when he said that man is the head of woman not only at home, but also in the church as an extension of the family unit, and this in spite of the fact that Christ is the head of man (1 Cor 11:3). Paul is not saying here that Christ is head of every husband, he is saying Christ is head of every man. The Greek lexicon tells us with countless examples that the terms *aner*, “man”, and *guné*, “woman,” employed here by Paul do not necessarily mean husband and wife (while this may be the case in Eph 5, we cannot generalize a parable to every other text, because here that parable is not evoked. See also the usage of these two terms in Matt 9:20; 13:33; 26:7; Rom 4:8; Eph 4:13; 1 Cor 13:11; also Luke 5:8; 8:27; Acts 8:12; 17:12; 1 Tim 2:8-9, in parallelism, etc.). This is the reason why translators use caution when translating 1 Cor 11. They prefer keeping the generic names of “man” as head of “woman,” in reference to a leadership position corresponding only to man.

Some reply that only married women wore a veil on their head. But this is not true. All women used veils on their head, be they maiden, married, or widow, sometimes even in the Greco-Roman world. In addition, some also veiled their face under special circumstances, indicating they were prostitute widows (Gen 38:14). But in Gen 24:65, Rebecca puts a veil over her head before knowing Isaac and before marrying him (though during the trip she could travel more comfortably without a veil). Even “the virgin daughter of Babylon,” according to the figure, used to carry a veil on her head, because in the text she is described as having to remove it with disgrace (Isa 47:1-2).

Given this context, the universalized expression in 1 Cor 11:5 (“every [or each] woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered”) implied not only married women, but also maiden and widowed women. According to Acts 21:9, four unmarried daughters prophesied, who lived under the care of their father. Anna, the prophetess, was a widow (Luke 2:36-37). All of them were under male leadership in the church. The same may be said in relation to the generic term “man”. The apostle referred to “every [or

each] man who prays or prophesizes,” whether married or not.

So what did E. G. White mean when she said “Christ is the only head of the church?” (21 *MR* 274; *DA* 817; *GC* 51). She explains it in the following statement: “He only has the right to demand of man unlimited obedience to His requirements” (21*MR* 274). This unlimited obedience cannot be required by the elder and leader of the church, and neither can it be required by such a man at home with his own wife and children. But then why did E. G. White also write that “Christ, not the minister, is the head of the church”? (*ST* Jan 27, 1890). The context of this statement reveals an unhealthy dependence on ministers, a warning against the all-too-common reality of ministry where the head (the pastor) works without the help of the body of laity! (See *Adventist Ordination Crisis*, 68).

For additional details please refer to two articles on my website ([www.distinctivemessages.com](http://www.distinctivemessages.com)):

1) How Typology Affects the Ecclesiastical Structure of the Church. In the context of the discussions on women ordination.

2) Divine Titles Quoted to Deny Complementary Roles in the Church. How to answer egalitarians on ecclesiastical structure.

A third document worthy of consideration is *Adventist Ordination Crisis* (prepared by Ordination Truth). I strongly recommend that book because in it you will find answers to most of the objections introduced throughout the years against man’s spiritual leadership role.

#### **6. Our brother interprets “headship” in the church as a kind of meddling or intrusion of a foreign man into the internal affairs of a couple, implying that a particular elder or pastor could usurp the place of other husbands over their wives.**

**Answer:** But this is not the biblical concept of headship. As already seen, biblical headship is only “unlimited” in Jesus. He is the first and the last (Rev 1:17; 2:18; 22:13; see Isa 41:4; 44:6; 48:12). All other heads under Him have limits. Nevertheless, elders and pastors have in their sphere a spiritual authority that is to be respected by my wife, other wives, and every member of the church, including me, without regard to gender. “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority... Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb 13:17).

This is not a question of culture. It is a divine mandate that has been interwoven into the society of God’s people from Genesis to Revelation. And because this concept or principle is distasteful to many in our rebellious generation, the unity of our church is jeopardized by some people who don’t want to submit to the authorities nominated by the Lord through the body of Christ, the church. This chain of submission, says the apostle, is to model Christ’s submission to the Father. Therefore, the husband (Eph 5:22) or elder or pastor of the church is to submit to Christ, and the woman to the headship or leadership of her husband at home and the elders or pastors of the church in spiritual matters (1 Cor 11:3). We are leaders and authorities under other leaders and authorities, being Jesus Himself the Chief-Shepherd of the elders of the church (1 Pet 5:1-6).

#### **7. Gibson argues that in 1 Tim 2:8 Paul says that men are to lift up their hands when they pray and we are not following him today with this requirement. Therefore we are inconsistent in other matters like the masculine qualifications required by the apostle for an eldership position.**

**Answer:** In 1 Tim 2:8, the emphasis is not in a physical position, but in the need of raising “holy hands” so that their prayers may reach the Lord in heaven. He said, literally, “I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.” This requirement comes from the OT, where David states that only “the one who has clean hands and a pure heart... will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God their Savior” (Ps 24:4-5). He also testified that “according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me” (2 Sam 2:21).

Lifting up hands was not the only physical way to humbly pray. The apostle Paul also said, “I kneel before the Father” (Eph 3:14). This was usually required and practiced by the people of God in both testaments (Ps 5:7; 95:6; Acts 6:70; 9:40; 20:36; Philip 2:10). We also find that when the glory of God

came down from heaven during the dedication of His earthly temple, the people knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord” (2 Chr 7:3). Similarly, when before the glory of God in Moses’ time, kneeling also took place (Lev 9:24). This shows us that raising hands is not the only physical way to pray. Even so, pastors today at times raise their hands to pray under special circumstances like that of baptism.

**8. Our brother Ty brings into consideration Paul’s advice to slaves to submit to their masters (1 Tim 6:1), which in Ty’s view is not a timeless moral mandate. He therefore concludes that Paul’s command to women of submitting to a man’s leadership in the church was valid only in that local and particular historical context.**

**Answer:** Paul didn’t agree with slavery (1 Cor 7:21-24), yet he advised Christian slaves and masters to treat each other not as masters and slaves, but as brothers (Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22-4:1; Phil 16). In doing so he maintained the same spirit contained in the laws of slavery that God gave to the people of Israel (Lev 25:39-43; Deut 23:15). Those laws were a kind of social security for many who would otherwise not survive the struggles of life. And they were designed to be temporary, lasting only until the seventh year (Ex 21:2). But pagan nations had cruel laws regarding slavery, which explains why God forbade His people to sell Israelite brothers to foreign nations (Ex 21:8; Lev 25:42).

Let us pay attention to how different the present condition of the world would be if, according to E. G. White, these old divine laws on poverty and slavery would be considered a timeless moral mandate:

“If the law given by God for the benefit of the poor had continued to be carried out, how different would be the present condition of the world, morally, spiritually, and temporally! Selfishness and self-importance would not be manifested as now, but each would cherish a kind regard for the happiness and welfare of others; and such widespread destitution as is now seen in many lands, would not exist” (*RH*, Sept. 17, 1889 par. 24).

“The principles which God has enjoined, would prevent the terrible evils that in all ages have resulted from the grinding oppression of the rich toward the poor, and the suspicion and hatred of the poor toward the rich. While they might hinder the amassing of great wealth, and the indulgence of unbounded luxury, they would prevent the consequent ignorance and degradation of tens of thousands whose ill-paid servitude is required to build up these colossal fortunes. They would bring a peaceful solution of those problems that now threaten to fill the world with anarchy and bloodshed” (*Ed* 44).

But it is not our purpose here to deal with the laws of slavery that God gave to His people in ancient times. Suffice it to state that they differed dramatically from that of surrounding pagan nations and were unlike what most people today envision when discussing slavery. [I wrote a book on this issue, titled *Jubilee and Globalization*]. The argument here is that today we don’t have those problems of slavery and as such we supposedly live in a different culture regarding the role of women in society and the church.

Let us directly point out the problem of our friend Ty. Paul respected the laws of the Roman society, but didn’t agree with some of them. He advised slaves to obtain freedom if possible (1 Cor 7:21-24). Is this what he said with the role of men and women in the church? Did the apostle advise women to seek to release themselves from all male leadership at home and in the church? Not at all. He instead agreed with the principle of male leadership that originated with Adam and had continued to his days, with settled principles that were expected to be maintained until the coming of the Lord. Those principles and laws were respected in the church (though greatly abused during the Middle Ages) until relatively recently. Our modern world seems to want everything upside down in society, in fulfillment of the warning of Jesus and the apostles regarding the dramatic corruption of society to take place before the coming of the Lord.

**9. Our friend repeatedly insists in making the patriarchal system a cultural issue, which he presumes is why gender discrimination remains in church leadership.**

**Answer:** The patriarchal leadership and the Levite priesthood prescribed by God were not copied from the pagan nations surrounding Israel. The majority of those heathen nations had female and homosexual

priests (see Koot van wyk [Dlitt et Phil; ThD], *Ordination of Women in Adventism: Short Notes*, May 30).

On account of this fact, many modern interpreters are trying to vindicate Jezebel for coming from a more advanced Phoenician society where men and women were equally enrolled as priests. As daughter of a pagan High Priest, they believe that Jezebel would have naturally been initiated into the priesthood of Baal. Her on-going conflict with the Prophet Elijah has been regarded as a cultural issue, with the prophet and his people considered less enlightened to the improved state of affairs afforded by a strong female ruler. We would see there, in this critical view, how a Phoenician princess would handle a situation without regarding the cultural norms of her husband's culture.

We believe in the divine origin of the Bible, so we accept what God said and did even if that was at odds with the predominant culture of that time regarding male headship in the social organization of His people. His intention was, on the contrary, to form a people who represented the principles of the heavenly government of God.

"I am the LORD your God, who has set you apart from the nations" (Lev 20:24). "You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own" (Lev 20:26). "Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession" (Deut 14:2). "You are to keep all his commandments. He has declared that he will set you in praise, fame and honor high above all the nations he has made and that you will be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised" (Deut 26:17-19), etc.

Is it not God similarly calling us out of the world today?

"Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you" (2 Cor 6:17). "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues" (Rev 18:4).

#### **10. Gibson implies that WO is not as important an issue as keeping sacred the true day of worship, that is, the seventh day Sabbath.**

**Answer:** But he contradicts this point by warning that if WO is not approved in our milieu, our church will be divided into two churches. So the matter seems to be too important for him as it has the potential of eventually causing our church to split. Let us keep in mind that the devil never begins his attempts to lead the church astray with big matters. He first introduces more subtle deceits into the church. Would it not be better for an evangelist and pastor like Ty Gibson to warn the church, akin to what Solomon did, about the danger of "the little foxes that destroy the vineyards" (Song 2:15)? Or like the apostle Paul when he asked: "Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?" (1 Cor 5:6).

#### **11. For Ty the approval of WO in our church is necessary for the sake of unity.**

**Answer:** But this conclusion conceals a trend towards *congregationalism*, because it opens the way for every congregation and every conference or union to do whatever they want. In practical terms, this instead means the end of unity in the church.

#### **12. Our brother doesn't accept a link between WO and the next step taken by other main protestant churches in ordaining homosexual pastors and elders.**

**Answer:** He doesn't realize that the arguments used to push for gender equality in church leadership are strikingly similar to those used by the LGBT agenda that argues for equality in all things. This was well understood by the Gay and Lesbian Christian Movement which stated, one week after the decision of the Church of England to ordain women to the priesthood: "Dear Sir, Please note that all the arguments used for the ordination of women can also be used for the ordination of practicing homosexuals" (cited

from Kevin Paulsen's in *Advindicate* where he responds to Gibson's article).

It remains a fact that today many are trying to eliminate gender differences. But for the Lord, this is an abomination. He required that men and women dress differently: "A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this" (Deut 22:5).

### **Conclusion**

Ty Gibson's views on behalf of WO do not have a biblical basis. He instead is seen isolating passages from the Spirit of Prophecy that favor his view while omitting others that do not seem to fit. Still worse, to accept his interpretation on this matter will make it easier for our church to go down the proven path of many other churches, and trend towards *dispensationalism*, *congregationalism*, and acceptance of *homosexual* church leadership. For this reason, my call to him and to all those who could have been miscarried by his arguments is: Come back, come back, come back to a sound interpretation of the Word of God and the Spirit of Prophecy! "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?" (Gal 3:1).